

- Universities, graduate schools and research institutions frequently hold lectures free to the public. These lectures cover many learning areas. The same applies for free seminars and free, or low cost conferences. Look out for VCE-tailored lectures.

Remember that covering a subject, or key learning area (KLA), isn't just about textbooks. Check out the education resources on the websites of venues and organisations that have school bookings and programs, such as Parliament.

- YouTube! You can find videos on pretty much any subject your child is interested in, from maths lessons to wood turning.

- Teens can often become more self-directed in their learning. Where there is an area of interest, such as science, for instance, resources are plentiful: YouTube channels, podcasts, blogs of scientists, social media, documentaries, public events and more.

- Excursions you can do as a family or with a group. Feel free to organise an excursion in the home ed community. Many venues have school programs you can book in to.

- Don't underestimate the value of conversation, especially about news and current affairs! Supplement these conversations with looking up information online.

- Work experience and volunteer work. This can also lead to further work or study opportunities.

- AYCE (Access Yea Community Education). The AYCE program follows the Victorian school curriculum but only requires attendance on campus once a week. The main campus is at Yea High School, with eight other off-campus centres.

What about university?

Does your teen actually want to go to university? Is it your expectation, or your extended family's? Is university even necessary for what your child wants to do down the track? Would TAFE be more suitable? Always be sure that this is your child's decision. Not going to university doesn't mean your child's future is ruined. Some kids prefer entering the work force and not going to university and that is perfectly okay.

University pathway example

One option home educated students have used successfully is studying some Open University Australia units (first year units), then enrolling in a university degree after completing those units and receiving credit for them. By completing these OUA units, the student satisfies entry requirements for a number of courses, without needing to go through the VCE process.

For more information on university pathways, please visit www.home-ed.vic.edu.au

Home educating teenagers: yes, you can do it!

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www.home-ed.vic.edu.au

Home educating your teenager: can it be done?
Yes!

Parents often feel pressure from those around them to put their children into school for the high school years. 'What about university?' is one of the most frequently asked questions of home educators. 'What about VCE?' is another.

Home educating your teenager isn't as big and scary an undertaking as some may have you believe. While it is understandable that parents feel a little apprehensive, rest assured there are many options available to complement your family's way of doing things, and many pathways available to your child.

Home ed students are accepted into university all the time, with some beginning their study years before school age peers. Home ed students get jobs, travel, study at TAFE or follow a path of their choosing. What is not as well known is that are the many ways this can happen.

Family relationships

Having positive family relationships is one of the more common reasons families choose to continue, or begin, home education in the teenage years. Kids at school are increasingly under so much pressure, with alarming statistics on mental health of school students frequently being reported in the media.

This is not to say that home educating your teen will be some kind of instant magic pill, where your family relationships will be 100% peachy. We are, after all, regular ol' families! We have our ups and downs, and our tears and challenges. But we are also free from one of the biggest stressors and triggers for kids: the negativity and stress that can come with being at school, the kind of negativity and stress that follow kids home and stay with them.

Having kids at home for the teen years is a much easier prospect than having them at school and having to deal with any fallout at home, particularly for kids who are struggling. If your child is struggling at school and you worry they won't learn anything at home, take a step back and ask yourself whether you learn anything when you are stressed. Can you absorb and retain information when you're in a state of anxiety or distress? If your child is feeling that way at school, are they learning? Or are they focused on just trying to survive another day?

If you have recently removed your teen from school, allow them the time to unwind, or 'deschool'. Deschooling is a period of adjustment some children may require when leaving a school environment and moving to home education. Don't feel you have to make your child do textbook work or anything schooly. Just let them decompress first. Talk to them, spend quality time together and just be. Don't stress about university or exams or 'they're not learning anything by staring out the window'. Focus on building up their mental health and confidence again, if that's applicable.

Home educating your teen allows you to have valuable one-on-one time to connect, whether that be at home together, discussing the latest news, going out to events together, or just letting them know you are there for them.

You can still get a feel for how they are going with their education when they're a teen. In this respect it's not much different from seeing your younger children having difficulty with a task or area and then stepping in to help or work together to modify things. There are always solutions. And yes, YOU CAN ABSOLUTELY DO IT!

Options for home education in the teen years

There's no one true way to home educate a teenager, just as there's no one right way to educate a younger child or adult. If you've been home educating all along, you don't have to

change what you do, but be sure to remain receptive to any changes your child may wish to make. Some teens may prefer to be completely self-directed, others may feel happier with a parent outlining tasks. It all comes down to doing what works best for your child.

You may feel a bit nervous about covering certain subject areas or providing opportunities for your teen. Some options which may work for your family include:

- Sign up to online courses. Some online short courses are free, such as those run by the Open2Study arm of Open Universities Australia, or very low cost if on sale. Look in to MOOCs.
- Hire a tutor. This doesn't have to be expensive. Shop around, or ask for recommendations from others in the home ed community. You may find a home ed parent who is happy to tutor or work out some kind of swap arrangement. A group of parents may wish to hire a tutor for a particular subject where families all cover the cost.
- Find a mentor. This may not be easy but think about everyone you know and ask people if they mind your child tagging along with them.
- You can arrange partial school enrolment for your child at a school if that fits them, and if the principal agrees.