

OHC FAQ

Who can join?

Any South Carolina Option 3 homeschooling families may join. Joining is done by having a DownToMeet account and satisfactorily answering the entrance questions. We welcome all ages from newborn to 18 years, all grades K-12, as well as families of any background.

When do you meet?

Our meeting days are Tuesdays (sometimes Thursdays), and we meet year-round. The exact schedule can vary from year to year depending on leadership.

How often do I have to attend?

We ask that members make a full-faith effort to attend regularly by making the group a priority, part of your schedule/routine, and that members arrive on time. We will be spending 4-5 weeks at each location to spark and grow a love of nature by truly exploring surroundings. Students will naturally get to know a place, learn their own abilities, and their classmates' abilities, as they revisit the same site again and again over the session. With each new session we rotate to another site and start the process over again. Children will have the chance to experience how these locations change between the seasons with a group of classmate friends they grow to know and trust. For these relationships to flourish we have goals for attendance, not to establish rules, but with the aim of ensuring regular contact. As gas prices rise, we know that it will impact members' ability to join every location and/or every week. If it is too far away this month, come every other week, or skip and resume next month. We ask families to choose at least half of the months between September-May and make a solid commitment to each session they choose.

Where do you meet?

We will be taking advantage of the varied ecological sites the Charleston SC Lowcountry has to offer. We mainly serve Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester counties, and occasionally get members from outlying counties as well. We do our best to rotate locations around those main counties from September-May with the understanding some sites may be close, while at times may be a longer drive away, but it is temporary and worth it. This provides a great way for our kids to truly experience all the natural wonders of our unique area, learning in a variety of locations – nature at the beach, nature in the saltmarsh of a county park, nature in the trails of a state forest, and even nature in a downtown city park. All sites are intended to inspire a sense of free “wild” play without any distractions from unnatural objects or playgrounds. Therefore, meetings are toy-free, and our gathering spot will be as far from playgrounds as possible.

Do you still meet up in the summer?

Yes. Summers are less formal and are more drop in branch outs/play dates typically near water

like the beach or river.

Do you have any costs?

Our co-op is free. Homeschooling families often are one-income households; our founder was adamant that this group always remain free to join aside from transportation and park entrance fees. We frequent County and State parks hoping that members can purchase annual passes which will be utilized for meetings but also a great value at other times during the week and weekends. If purchasing a pass is not an option, we recommend:

- Checking out a pass from your local library.
- Carpooling, as most locations charge by the car not the person, and this helps with gas savings too.
- Investigate if there is free parking available nearby therefore avoiding the parking fee. • Attend the free locations days.

We really want to come but aren't sure about the incurred costs. Any suggestions? In the months that are super far away from home when gas prices are too high - skip a month. You could also see about carpooling with others to save on gas, checking out the state park pass through your library, getting the park passes on sale during the holidays, requesting birthday or Christmas gifts be gas cards or park passes, etc.

Where can I find events?

All events get posted to our Down to Meet group. We utilize Facebook for information but no longer post events there for safety reasons and as the group has grown. We ask members to RSVP your intentions to each event on DTM.

What kind of expectations do you have of members?

As a co-op, participation is required of all families. Each family's required contribution will be to work as a team with other families to prepare/present lessons/activities for one month of meetings. Families should also encompass our three rules: Kindness, Consent, and Safety.

I'm still not sure this is the group for me. Do you have a trial run?

If you think we could be a good fit, we recommend coming at least three times before deciding! If it's not a fit, we would love feedback! There are lots of other co-ops in this area so don't feel pressured to stay where it won't work well.

Is this group religious or secular?

Secular. We have members from all different backgrounds.

Can I drop off my older child?

No. This is not a drop off or a playdate. We are an all ages homeschool group. You are responsible for all the children you bring with you at all times.

I think my oldest would enjoy this but I'm worried about keeping up with my younger children. Do you think this would work?

Many moms come with littles and older kids. Baby carriers help with toddlers and babies. In certain locations strollers and wagons can be utilized but some locations have rougher paths where this might be harder to do.

What should we bring to meet ups (aside from ourselves)?

Always bring water and snacks! Each meeting has a built-in lunchtime when we picnic. Make sure you have the correct gear for the weather (jackets for cold, rash guards for sun, rain jackets for rain, etc.), change of clothes/towel if needed, and comfortable shoes. There are lots of benefits to being barefoot, but some locations may require extra foot protection, so be sure everyone is prepared and comfortable. There might be times that specific supplies are suggested (branches or cotton twine for a journey stick, journal/pencil to draw in, etc.).

I have a 13-year-old looking to make friends. Are there kids that attend in that age range?

When parents bring them, they will come. The ages fluctuate each year (so some years we have a lot of 11-year-olds and some years we have tons of 5-year-olds) but we encourage all ages to attend. There are many benefits to being around more than just your own age group. If there are not many similarly aged children to a child, please do not stop coming! So often families will come, not see kids of a certain age, and not return. If each of those families remained, then we would have a larger network of each age group.

What is meant by child-led learning?

We give children the freedom to choose their own actions; to play, explore, participate, move, ask questions, think aloud – as only then can they get wiser, practice and master the knowledge and skills they will need as adults.



Can I bring our puppy with us?

No. This is a pet free group.

Can I bring someone visiting from out of town?

Sure, you can bring a visiting guest.

What is a Branch Out?

Branch Outs are like playdates. Each one is individual, stand alone. These tend to be locations that don't work so well during a full month (they are closed on Tuesdays, don't have restrooms, etc.) and are usually on Thursdays or during the summer months. A session or course is a series of meet-ups at one place and the days have more structure with a progression of learning and relationships, even a specific skill being taught, so commitment to high attendance for that particular session is asked.

Are you always outside?

Yes. Rain or shine, hot or cold, we are outside, aside from extreme weather like hurricanes or thunderstorms. The benefits of the outdoors are endless, but here are some examples: •

Develop personal and social skills

- Work through practical problems and challenges
- Use tools to create and build
- Discover how they learn best
- Pursue knowledge that interests them
- Learn how to manage failures
- Build confidence in decision-making and evaluating risk
- Develop practical skills
- Understand the benefits of a balanced and healthy lifestyle
- Explore connections between humans, wildlife, and the earth
- Regularly experience achievement and success
- Reflect on learning and experiences
- Develop their language and communication skills
- Improve physical motor skills
- Become more motivated
- Improve their concentration skills

What are the beliefs of this group?

We are Homeschoolers who believe:

- In the power of unstructured, child-led, outdoor learning, and the positive impacts it can have on children's social, emotional, and intellectual growth.
- That to know the world, you have to live in the world.
- That children need to be free to choose their own actions – to play, to explore, to participate.
- That children need to be free to move, free to ask questions, free to think aloud, and most of all, free to make comments so that they will get wiser.

- That nature cultivates Open Attention – a widely focused, relaxed, alert state of mind that maximizes learning capability.
- That children are sponges, hungry for information – they naturally observe, absorb, practice, and master the knowledge and skills they will need as adults; they cannot not do this anymore than they could not breathe.

What are some recommended articles or books to read?

Here's a few (just ask... we have a lot more):

<https://amzn.to/2St959V>

<https://simplehomeschool.net/core-phase/>

<https://www.yourmodernfamily.com/outdoor-time/>

<https://carolblack.org/on-the-wildness-of-children/>

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2444866416301234>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/freedom-learn/200807/learning-requires-freedom>

<https://discoveryelc.blogspot.com/2018/10/more-harm-than-good.html>

<https://teachertombsblog.blogspot.com/2020/05/this-is-where-happy-healthy-adultscome.html#.XqwfGi8AV5Q.facebook>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/freedom-learn/200809/why-we-should-stop-segregating-children-age-part-i>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/freedom-learn/200809/why-we-should-stop-segregating-children-age-part-ii>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/freedom-learn/200809/why-we-should-stop-segregating-children-age-part-iii>

<https://www.1000hoursoutside.com/blog/5-books-every-parent-should-read-before-enrolling-kids-in-extra-curriculars>

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid0AnzsAb8orx2KBK1v1ffRyuBK1Cug9T2VgAU5S4mCShk6KiekSRd2DJS1vUnawoel&id=100064041760545

Anything else I'm missing?

Communication is key! We try to keep up with everyone but it's just not possible to always do. If you have questions, need to skip a month, are having a hard time, or have suggestions - please contact one of the leaders!