

Homeschool co-ops are not for every homeschooling family, and we certainly do not necessarily expect our co-op to be perfect for your family. As a matter of fact, we would rather you determine that our co-op is not a good "fit" before you make the commitment to participate for a full 14-week semester. The following 15 reasons why you may not want to join our co-op are based on feedback from former members for whom our co-op did not work out.

If you experience *any* of these situations, please, please, *please* do not join our co-op!

**1. If you have a full time job or a busy extracurricular schedule and already have limited days for "book learning" at home, then you will find co-op way too time-consuming.** Co-op takes a full day out of your week because you must be at co-op if your child is there. You certainly do

*not*

have to teach, but you can serve as a class helper or team teacher or on the clean-up crew for part of the day. Our co-op is truly a "cooperative" effort, so we rely on everyone to make it work successfully, and we expect members to honor their commitment when they join. If you already don't have time for co-op, don't sign up!

**2. If you have health problems or family obligations to help ailing parents or other relatives, focus on those priorities first.** Do not add more stress to your life by committing your family's precious time and energy to our co-op. If you and your children will not be able to meet your weekly obligations, you will let yourself, your family and the co-op down.

**3. If you are moving or will move this year, this is not a good time to join a co-op.** Understandably your first inclination would be to get involved in as many activities as possible. However, you and your family face a big adjustment with the move, so give yourselves time to adjust. You would do better to participate in a local support group rather than in our co-op; in a support group, you are not required to attend every event, whereas your membership in co-op obligates you to attend every week, unless you are sick. Similarly, if you plan to move during the semester, even just across town, you will already have enough to do preparing to move without having to make time for co-op. In either case, wait until you're comfortably settled in your new home before joining co-op.

**4. If you already know that you may miss three Tuesdays per semester, please do not join our co-op as your family will already miss a full quarter of classes -- and that's before illnesses!** Of course, we understand that illnesses and emergencies occur unexpectedly (and we do not want you to attend if you are sick!), but we also respect the time and effort that teachers put into their classes. They deserve the mutual respect of having students (and parent helpers!) in class and on time. We ask parents to honor their commitment and make punctual attendance a priority. Schedule appointments and vacations during co-op breaks, and take steps to eliminate tardiness if you are a chronically late kind of person, or reconsider joining altogether. Once you've committed to co-op, however, please don't let your absences due to illnesses or other emergencies worry you, but instead let us help you work through them; finding temporary substitutes for a few weeks is much easier than securing

permanent replacements for a family who quits.

**5. Similarly, if your children are prone to frequent illnesses, you may want to wait until their immune systems build up because you will likely miss too many days to make co-op worthwhile.** We do not want co-op to be a source of sickness for any family, so if you or your children are sick or recovering from an illness, even the common cold or a sinus infection, please do *not* attend co-op that week. We have a [list of illnesses](#) , and we expect parents and children to stay home until they are symptom-free. If you will likely miss a lot of co-op due to illnesses, you should not join.

**6. If this is your first year homeschooling, you really need to take a year to adjust and find out what style works best for your family.** Co-op is *not* a substitute or alternative to schooling at home. Indeed, jumping right into a co-op before adjusting to homeschooling may overwhelm you and your children.

**7. Similarly, if you are joining co-op as a substitute for school or so you won't have to teach your children at home, then co-op will not meet your needs.** Classes meet only once a week, so the parent is still the primary teacher. Ultimately, you are responsible for your children's education because the bulk of their education is completed at home and, as the parent, you know your children better than any teacher ever could. Co-op parents ensure that their students keep up with homework, and they may need to assign supplemental coursework at home. Additionally, parents administer tests at home and determine final grades.



**8. If you homeschool because your child could not learn in a classroom environment or if your child does not do well in a group setting, you probably will not be pleased with our co-op.** Although classes typically range between 4 and 10 students, *as with the creative writing class pictured at right* , we still group students by grade/age and expect "classroom manners" -- although, since most are lifetime homeschoolers, they don't always know to raise their hands! Also, whiteboards, tables and chairs make our classrooms very efficient for teaching a class, but give the classes a bit of a school-like feel -- however, with homeschooling parents as teachers, our class activities are

usually more out-of-the-box! Additionally, with even a small group of families, we must rely on some rules and guidelines to maintain order and efficiency. If you unschool, you and your child may not feel comfortable even in our relaxed setting.

**9. If you homeschool because you feel no one else can adequately teach your child what he needs to know in any given subject, you will not be satisfied with any parent who teaches a co-op class.** Instead, accept that others may not teach a subject the way you would and relinquish some control; at home, focus on subjects not taught at co-op to maximize your time. Alternatively, accept that you will be supplementing at home to a certain extent, or plan to teach that subject at co-op yourself. If you're not okay with these options, you should not join any co-op.



**10. If you join co-op for purely socialization reasons, you will likely find the classes too academic.** All high school classes and most junior high classes require homework. Also, a few classes, such as the Apologia sciences and computer programming classes (pictured left), require lessons at home during winter break in order to finish the course in one year. Even kindergarten and elementary classes have lessons incorporated into their activities and games. Also, while our children see each other at other homeschool events and clubs, our co-op does not schedule extracurricular activities. You would do better to join one of the many local homeschool support groups for socialization opportunities.

**11. If you join co-op for rigorous, college-prep courses, you may find the classes not challenging enough.** Unlike some co-ops, we do not administer tests nor do we assign grades. The parents remain the primary teachers of their own children. Kindergarten and elementary classes have neither homework nor lesson plans to follow at home. High school students read the material and do a week's worth of homework to prepare for class discussion or experiments. Although most high school courses are college-prep, a weekly class for only 14 weeks cannot possibly cover all there is to know in a particular subject. Depending on the subject, you may want to supplement at home by assigning extra books or research.

**12. If your junior high or high school students already have a full load of schoolwork at home or are members of another co-op, they may not be able to complete the homework for Academy Days.** Please focus on one co-op at a time.

**13. If you have babies and toddlers in your family, you may want to wait until they are a**

**little older.** We no longer offer a nursery at co-op, so you will need to engage a reliable sitter or wait until they are three years old and fully potty-trained to enroll in the preschool classes. Plus, little ones usually get sick more frequently than older children, which could cause your family to miss a lot more of co-op than you want.

**14. If your child is undergoing obedience issues, or a "clingy" phase, or social or behavioral problems, this is not a good time to join a co-op.** Focus on the character and emotional growth of your child before putting him in a situation for which he may not be ready, whether the cause is behavioral or developmental. This applies to all children, whether preschool, kindergarten, elementary, or high school. Additionally, because most parents are not equipped to teach or maintain discipline in classes containing children with severe disabilities, if you have a special needs child, co-op may not fit the needs of your child at this time.

**15. If you are on a tight budget or live a good distance from our location, you may not want to make the financial investment.** Class fees are minimal (between \$1 and \$15 for a //

14 weeks) and cover supplies only, but fees do add up for a large family. Also, gas prices may be prohibitive if you live a considerable distance from Coosada Baptist Church in Coosada (near Millbrook, Alabama).

No co-op will fit every family. Before joining our co-op, or any homeschool co-op for that matter, you should consider what the Lord may have planned for your family this year. Ask yourself if participating in a co-op right now would help or hinder your family at this particular time. Also, examine your reasons for joining a co-op. Consider what you expect from participating in this co-op, and ask other members if this co-op will likely meet those expectations. If not, don't worry. You definitely do not need a co-op to homeschool successfully!



### **About the Author:**

Carren W. Joye is the author of *Homeschooling More Than One Child: A Practical Guide for Families* (ISBN 0-595-34259-0), *Alabama State History Curriculum* for grades K-9, and *A*

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Read more:

[12 Benefits of a Homeschool Co-op](#)  
[How We Overcome Common Co-op Problems](#)  
[10 Ways To Make Co-op Work for You](#)