THE HONEST STARTER GUIDE

Airtable for Your Homeschool

A companion to the *Homeschooling with Technology* episode. You will not build anything. You'll open one that's already built and type in it.

Read this part before you sign up

Airtable is not a planner. It will not tell you what to do tomorrow. If a planner is what you want, keep the paper one — seriously, close this guide, you're fine.

What Airtable is, is a filing cabinet you can search. It's a list you keep online that can hold more than words — a photo, a date, a file. It's built for companies, so it has a hundred features you will never touch. You're going to use about two percent of it, and that is completely fine.

It's worth twenty minutes if…

You're in a state that asks for a portfolio or a log · You have a high schooler and a transcript coming · You have several kids and several years of stuff you can't reconstruct · You keep losing the photo of the project.

Skip it if…

You want something that plans your week · You only want to remember books (a notebook or a free reading app does that with less friction) · Your current system is working. Don't fix that.

Rule one: do not build anything

This is where almost everybody quits — they sign up, get an empty grid, and try to design the perfect system. Don't. Airtable has free ready-made ones sitting there waiting.

1. Go to **airtable.com** and make a free account.
2. Go to their templates and search for **book catalog**. It's free.
3. Click the **Use template** button. It lands in your account, already set up.
4. Delete every column you don't care about. Click the little arrow at the top of a column and choose delete. Be ruthless — you want it nearly empty.
5. Type in the last ten books your family read. **Then close the laptop.** That is the entire assignment.

If you open it again next Saturday and add ten more, it worked. If you don't, you've lost fifteen minutes and learned something true about yourself — which is also a fine outcome.

Rule two: three columns

Not eight. Three. Everything else is optional forever.

Keep	That's the whole thing
The book	Title. That's the name on the entry.
Who read it	So you can pull up one child's year later.
When they finished	A date. This is what makes it a record instead of a pile.

One optional fourth, and only once the first three are a habit: a column that holds a photo. Snap the narration page or the finished project, drop it in, and it's filed with the book instead of buried in four thousand camera-roll photos. This is the single most useful thing Airtable does that a spreadsheet cannot.

> **If you're adding a seventh column in week one, stop.**
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> You've stopped keeping a list and started building a system. That's the moment it dies. Nobody has ever regretted a list that was too simple.

When you're ready for a second list — and not before

Give the first one three weeks. If it stuck, these are the two worth adding, in this order:

- **What we own and what we're actually using.** Resource, subject, which child, and one column for “would I use this again?” That last one is worth real money at curriculum-sale time.
- **The proof file.** Date, child, subject, one honest sentence about what you did, and a photo. For portfolio states this turns a panicked April into a fifteen-minute export.

What it costs

The free plan gives you	Which means
About 1,000 entries per list	Roughly a decade of reading
1 GB of photos and files	Hundreds of pictures of real work
5 people who can edit	Plenty for a family; tight for a co-op
Unlimited people who can look	Grandparents can see it without breaking it
2 weeks of history	Not a long-term undo button

Paid starts at $20 per person per month. A homeschool family will almost certainly never need it. *(Airtable's published limits, August 2026 — check their pricing page for current numbers.)*

The five ways people quit

- **They build instead of type.** Two hours designing, zero entries. Use a template.
- **They set it up on a phone.** Set up on a computer; use it anywhere after.
- **They chase the fancy features.** You can use this for a year and never touch them.
- **They abandon something that was working.** Keep the paper planner. Use this for the record you wish you'd kept, not the thing you already do well.
- **They stop after three days.** It's a habit, not a fix. A messy list you update beats a beautiful one you don't.

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