

Birmingham Zoo Homeschool FAQs 2025-2026

1. Where should I park?

You may park anywhere in our main lot. Please escort your child to the main entrance for sign-in

- Homeschool Participants **may not** enter the zoo without a guardian present.

2. Where do I drop off and pick up my child?

Your teacher will meet each class directly inside the main entrance of the Zoo by the fountains. Your teacher will be at your meeting spot approximately 5 minutes prior to the start of class. Pick-up will happen in this same location. Please refer back to your registered class for your drop off and pick-up time.

3. Where do I go if I'm running late to class?

We will make every effort to start class on time, so if you are running late, please check in at the Membership Office or call **205-910-0907**. A Learning staff member or volunteer will greet you and your child and escort them to the class.

4. What if there is inclement weather?

Homeschool classes will happen rain or shine. Weather forecast is checked the day prior. If chance of precipitation in that window exceeds 70% on average, an email would be sent to parents/guardians by 3:00pm the day before to notify of a postponed class as needed. Inclement weather *postponements are not cause for a class refund*.

5. My child has a learning disability. Are they expected to speak, read, and/or write?

All speaking, reading and writing is voluntary during our Educational Programs at the Zoo. We will only select students to read aloud or write for the class if they have indicated that they would like to do so. Additionally, please communicate any accommodations on the medical form provided during registration, so that we can ensure a wonderful experience for your child(ren).

6. May I attend a class with my child?

Parents/caregivers may attend one class with their child with *prior approval* from your teacher. **This class may not be the first class of the school year.** This allows us to encourage independent learning in our students, and to focus on the material in hand.

7. What supplies should my child bring to class?

Your teacher will supply your child(ren) with all necessary materials to complete the assigned project for that day. No outside supplies are needed. Students are welcome to bring any exploration items such as binoculars, magnifying glasses, ect.

8. What should my child wear to class?

A significant part of each class will be spent outdoors, and classes are held rain or shine. Please dress appropriately for daily weather, such as rain jackets for wet weather and warm jackets for colder weather. Clothing should be comfortable and appropriate for the weather. **Closed toed shoes should be worn to every class.** Closed toed shoes are required to enter any “behind-the-scenes” areas.

9. May my child bring a drink and snack?

We encourage your child to bring a reusable water bottle to remain hydrated throughout class. With two hours as the maximum length of class, *snacks are not suggested.* If your child has a medical condition that requires food during those two hours, please be sure to communicate this accommodation ahead of time.

10. What precautions does Birmingham Zoo take to avoid the spread of illness?

- Increased cleaning and sanitizing protocols Zoo-wide
- On average, two-thirds of class time is spent out in the Zoo where students can socially distance as preferred
- Mask-use is currently optional for students, teachers, and all Birmingham Zoo staff and guests. If transmission levels in Birmingham/Jefferson County reach high levels of certain illnesses, masking indoors may become required. Communication will be provided, should this shift be required.

11. My child has a life threatening nut allergy. What precautions does Birmingham Zoo take to ensure my child’s safety?

The Birmingham Zoo is a facility that uses nuts and nut products for animal diet purposes. Traces of nuts or nut products may be found in areas where animal feedings are conducted and areas where educational animal demonstrations occur. The safety of our guests remains a top priority and the Zoo takes precautions to provide a safe environment. Zoo Education Staff will not offer students any food containing nuts or nut products and will ensure that no nuts or nut products are used as any part of class activities (not involving a live animal demonstration). The Learning & Engagement Department staff are trained to recognize symptoms that indicate an allergic reaction is occurring, and the proper measures to take when a student has a reaction. Staff are trained to properly use Epi-Pen. In the case of an allergic reaction where an epi-pen is used, EMS will be called. For the safety of those who have severe allergies, parents of children who attend Education programs at the Zoo are strongly discouraged from sending foods that contain or may contain peanuts, tree nuts, or any seafood / shellfish.

12. Can someone else pick up my child from class if I am not available?

Your authorization form is included in your registration process online. You should have listed all individuals that are allowed to pick up your child throughout the school year and include one individual in case of an emergency. You may change or add individuals who

are allowed to pick up your student via email to education@birminghamzoo.com. You must show valid identification each time your child is signed out.

13. Will there be homework assignments?

Educators will not assign homework. Your teacher may provide a take-home letter via email after each class outlining material covered in class, as well as additional ideas to expand upon at home.

14. Can I stay at the Zoo while my child attends class?

If you would like to stay in the zoo during class time you will need to purchase a General Admission ticket or enter using your membership.

15. If the Zoo is closed due to unforeseen circumstances during the date of my child's class, will there be a makeup class or prorated refund?

Every attempt will be made to hold classes on-site on the scheduled date. If this is not possible, classes may be rescheduled in a reasonable time period on-site. Prorated fees are permitted only for registrations past September.

Please contact the Education Department at education@birminghamzoo.com for any additional questions that you may have.

