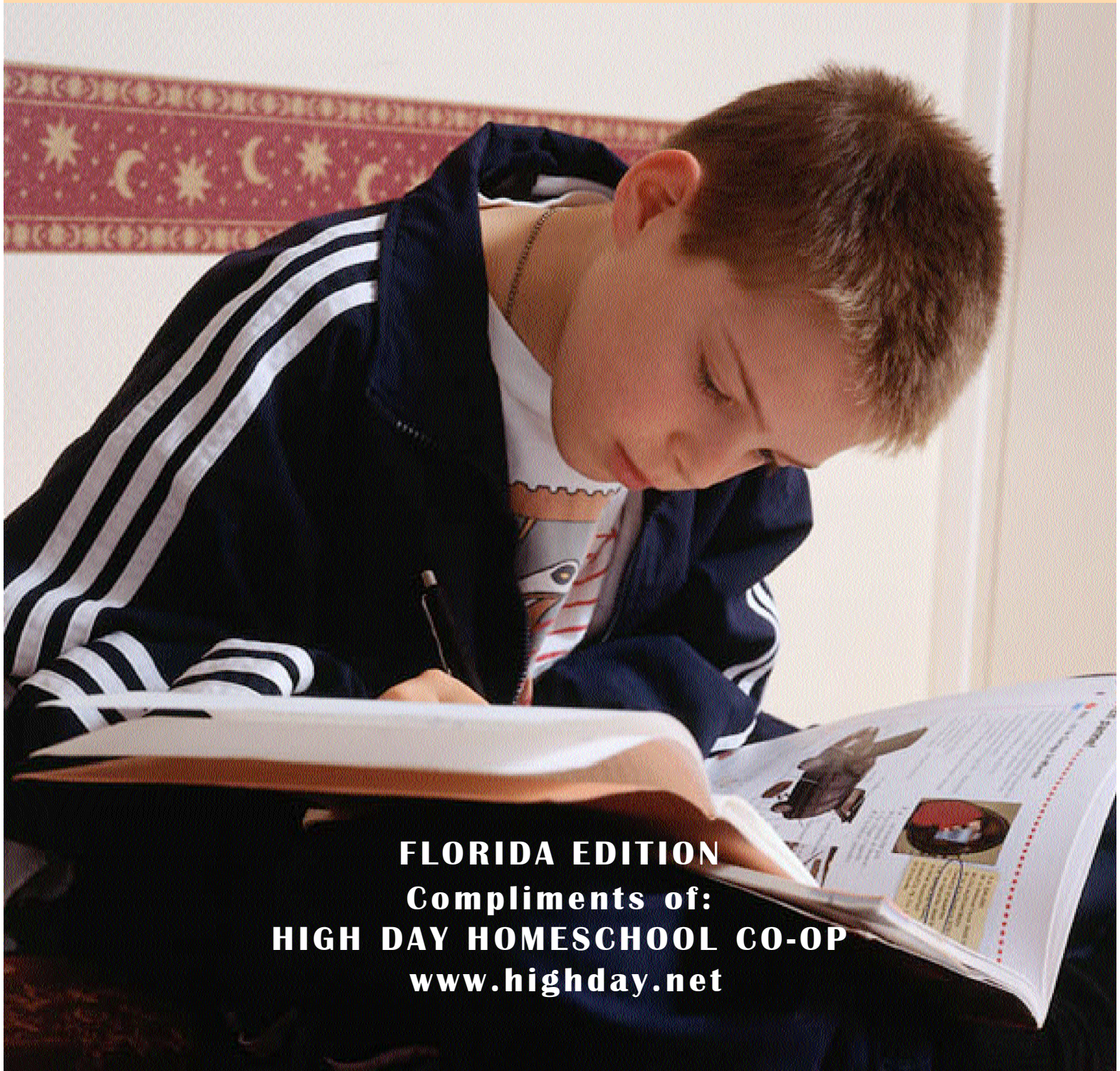


Homeschool - How to Get Started

**by
Cindy Downes**



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PART 1 - GENERAL INFORMATION

What is Homeschooling?



Parents begin homeschooling the day their child is born. They teach him how to walk, how to talk, how to behave properly, how to say his abc's, how to count to 10 and write his name. Perhaps they even teach him how to read. Then at age five, they make a decision to continue home schooling or to send their child to a "real" school. Here is a brief timeline of education history*:

- For over 4000 years, education was received in the home, parents being a child's only instructor. Homeschooling was the norm.
- During the next 1600 years, parents continued to teach their children at home. With the advent of the synagogue, many Jewish parents sent their male children to teachers at the synagogue who taught them the law using the rolls of the sacred Scriptures as their textbooks.
- It has only been during the last 400 years that schooling outside the home has become more of the norm. The first educational institution outside the home in the American colonies was established by John Cotton in 1635. The purpose was to establish a school for poor children and orphans so that they could read the Bible and obey the laws in the community. Most families continued to teach their children at home, while wealthier families hired tutors to teach their children either at home, at the home of the tutor, or at small community schools run by the parents.
- From the founding of our country until the early 1800s, the over-all literacy rate was higher than it is today. (A list of famous homeschooled Americans: <http://www.knowledgehouse.info/famous.html> and <http://www.home4schoolgear.com/famoushomeschooler.html>) Very few people were unable to read. Children were taught a trade by their parent or in an apprenticeship program. Most children who entered small community schools already learned how to read and write at home. Colleges were established in the 1700s but were for biblical and classical studies.
- In 1805, DeWitt Clinton helped to form a school for "the education of poor children, who do not belong to, or are not provided for, by any religious society." It is the first secular school in America. The creation of a uniform common school system also required standardization of curriculum and instruction. This is the beginning of the graded school and graded textbook resulting in a one size fits all curriculum.

- In 1856, a German immigrant establishes the first American kindergarten based on the idea that children should be trained to be servants of the state.
- In 1857, the NEA (National Education Association) is formed.
- By the early 1900s, the authority and responsibility of education shifted from the parents to the state.
- In 1914, World War I begins. WWII follows shortly after and continues through 1945. During this time, many women in America work in factories producing equipment and supplies for the military while their husbands fight in the wars. This is the beginnings of American women working outside the home and mandatory public school attendance.
- In 1930, all states have passed compulsory education laws.
- In 1934, the Teachers College of Columbia University urges the remaking of American society through the schools.
- In 1965, the Head Start program begins.
- The return to homeschooling begins in the 1960's & 70s.
- By the year 2000, an estimated 1.7 million children are being homeschooled once again.
- For more information on the history of homeschooling, read History of Homeschooling on AtoZ (<http://homeschooling.gomilpitas.com/weblinks/historyHS.htm>) and Politics of Survival on HSLDA's site (<http://www.hslda.org/docs/nche/000010/PoliticsOfSurvival.asp>).

*Sources of information for Homeschool Timeline:

1. The Right Choice by Christopher J. Klicka.
2. The American School 1642-1985 by Joel Spring. 1986 by Longman Inc.
3. Can't Buy Success by Marvin Olasky, World Magazine, May/June 2001. Pgs. 7-14.
4. Our Schools in War Time and After by Arthur D. Dean. 1918 by Ginn and Company.

Why do people homeschool?

The answers are varied. Here are a few:

- Religious: A majority homeschool to give their children an education that includes a Biblical perspective on all subjects.
- Scholastic: Statistics has now shown that home educated students do far better academically than most public schooled children. The individual attention that the child gets in homeschooling can help a delayed learner catch up and an advanced learner go at a pace that will challenge him to work at his potential.

- Financial: Parents who would prefer sending them to a private school but cannot afford the tuition often opt for homeschooling as the next best alternative.
- Family Time and Influence: Many homeschool so that they have more quality time with their children. Flexible scheduling allows them to school around the parent's work or travel schedule. This in turn helps family to experience a closeness that is not possible with a normal school/work schedule.
- To Prevent Negative Influences: Parents homeschool to keep them from destructive influences such as unsafe school environments, negative peer pressure, and humanistic teaching.

Read these comments about school from some former Noble Prize Winners:

http://learninfreedom.org/Nobel_hates_school.html

Ten Signs you need to find a different kind of education for your child:

<http://www.edrev.org/tensigthatyo.html>

Is it Legal?

Yes, homeschooling is legal in all 50 states. The laws here in Florida are as follows:

Homeschoolers are required to file a "Notice of Intent" with their local district superintendent. (Example: http://www.fpea.com/forms/Letter_of_intent.pdf .) The only information required on this form is names and birthdates of children, and home address. This notice must be filed within 30 days of establishing a home education program.

You must maintain a portfolio of your program, containing a log of activities and reading materials, as well as work samples for each student. This portfolio must be kept for at least 2 years and be made available for inspection by the school district upon request.

You must provide some type of annual evaluation. Any one of the following methods is acceptable under the law:

- 1) A state certified teacher selected by the parent will evaluate the student's progress through a review of the portfolio and interview with the child. The teacher will then provide a signed letter for the parent to file with the district. (Example: <http://www.fpea.com/forms/Evaluation.pdf>.)
- 2) The student shall take a nationally normed achievement test, administered by a certified teacher. Or, the student can take the FCAT (Florida's Comprehensive Assessment Test) administered at a local public school to fulfill this requirement.
- 3) The student may be evaluated by a licensed psychologist.
- 4) The student may be evaluated by any other measurement tool mutually agreed upon by the district superintendent and the parent.

Homeschoolers are subject to compulsory attendance laws, which for Florida state: The compulsory school attendance laws apply to all children between the ages of 6 and 16 years.

If you choose to cease homeschooling, you must file a letter of termination with the district within 30 days. (Example: <http://www.fpea.com/forms/Termination.pdf>.)

Parents may choose to operate their homeschools through a private "umbrella" school in which they register with the school rather than their local public district. They are not considered homeschoolers by law, but rather private school students, and are not subject to the above requirements. They must instead meet the requirements established directly by the private school.

For detailed information, please see: <http://www.hslda.org/laws/analysis/Florida.pdf> and <http://homeschooling.gomilpitas.com/laws/bIFL.htm> and the Florida DOE site: http://www.flsenate.gov/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=Ch1002/SEC41.HTM&Title=-%3E2002-%3ECh1002-%3ESection%2041

Do homeschooled children get into college?

Homeschooled students go to college at the same rate as public schooled students.

Most colleges admit homeschoolers, even ivy-league schools.

Scholarships are given to homeschoolers.

Many homeschoolers do not go to college and are perfectly happy. They start their own businesses, work in the technical fields, get married, go into ministry, go in the service, or go in the military.

The biggest problems for homeschoolers, as stated by colleges and schools who have accepted homeschooled students, are:

- Lack of good skills in advanced math. Remedy: Use a good curriculum. Send them to Co-op. Hire a tutor. All colleges require Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II. If the child does not have it in high school, he will have to take it in college as a noncredit course.
- Lack of good composition skills. Remedy: Spend more time on composition than grammar. Your children will learn grammar while doing composition, but this is not necessarily true in reverse.
- Trouble in meeting deadlines and follow through. Remedy: Get your children in the habit of finishing assignments. Set deadlines and insist that they meet them. Have consequences if they don't. Set a good example. Don't sign up for things and then not follow through. Show commitment.

What about Socialization?

What do you mean by socialization? If you mean . . .

- Do your children work well in a group or on a team?
- Are your children awkward in social situations?
- Do your children use appropriate manners in public?
- Do your children respect others?

Research during the past 20 years confirms that homeschoolers are just as well or better adjusted than traditionally schooled children. I've personally noticed that if parents (whether public schooling or homeschooling) are well-adjusted socially, their children are also, and vice versa. It's not the type of school they attend but rather the social skills modeled by the parents.

There are an abundance of social opportunities available to homeschooled children today including extracurricular classes, sports programs, co-op classes, support group activities and field trips, volunteer programs, and church activities. After the first year or two, most homeschool families have more problems trying to keep the number of outside activities under control!



For more information about socialization, read HSLDA's article on the research done by Dr. Brian Ray: <http://www.hslda.org/research/ray2003/Socialization.asp>

Should I Homeschool?

Here are some questions to ask yourself that may help you decide. If you answer yes to all of them, then you are a great candidate for homeschooling. If you answer no on any of these, you might want to get additional counseling, determine if you can change that answer, or consider another option.

- I have the time to homeschool my children. (No one is going to do it for you.)
- I have the financial resources to buy curriculum for my children. (Contrary to some opinions, it does take money to homeschool. I recommend allowing \$300 minimum, up to \$1000+ per year. It will cost more the first year and in high school.)
- My spouse (and/or custodial parents) and I agree on homeschooling our children. (DHS may get involved if there is no agreement.)
- I love to read and enjoy learning myself.
- I am able to maintain control of my children in the home.
- I am committed to work on a schedule and complete tasks as needed.
- I am willing to make the commitment to homeschool (one year at a time).
- If I have a high school student, my high school student wants to homeschool. (High school is usually not the time to pull your child out of school if your child is not in agreement. Too much depends on his/her motivation at that age. There are exceptions to this, but rare.)

Homeschooling is a wonderful alternative for many families and its success has become well documented. However, it is NOT a miracle worker. It does not guarantee that your child will graduate early, get a full scholarship to college, obtain a super job, or become someone famous. None of us are perfect. As parents, we're not perfect teachers. Our children are not perfect students. But with the right motivation, a good plan of study, and a commitment to persevere, homeschooling can be a good solution for many people. If homeschooling is not for your family, look into alternatives such as switching schools, private schools, tutors, or online learning.

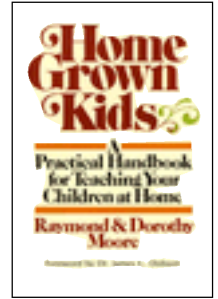
Recommended Reading: 16 Greatest Mistakes Homeschool Moms Make (<http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/15mist.html>).

PART 2 - GETTING STARTED IN HOMESCHOOLING

First, learn all you can about homeschooling.

Read books about homeschooling.

- *Homeschooling for Dummies* by Jennifer Kaufeld. ISBN 0764508881. This is one of my personal favorites. Focuses on the basics, especially on multi-level teaching and unit studies.
- *The Ultimate Guide to Homeschooling* by Debra Bell. ISBN 0849975751. My other personal favorite. Focuses on the basics and college preparation. Very balanced.
- *Home Schooling: The Right Choice!* by Christopher J. Klicka. ISBN 1929125070. Excellent for those who are not sure whether to pull their child from public school.
- *Things We Wish We'd Known* by Bill & Diana Waring. ISBN 1883002427. Short articles written by homeschool moms with a lot of good advice. A must read for all homeschool parents.
- *Home Grown Kids: A Practical Handbook for Teaching Your Children at Home* by Raymond & Dorothy Moore. ISBN 0849930073. Do you have a struggling learner? You must read this book. This is the book that led to my son's education success.
- *Learning in Spite of Labels* by Joyce Herzog. ISBN 1882514130. Excellent resource for parents of children with learning disabilities.



For more reading recommendations, see the OKHS website:
<http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/getstart.html>

Sign up for the OKHS Newsletter: <http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/newsletter.html>

Read Cindy's Blog at: <http://www.homeschoolblogger.com/EmptyNestMom/>

Join a Local Homeschool Support Group:

- **HIGH Day Homeschool Co-op**
("We have our Hearts in God's Hands.")
4000 S. Conway Rd.
Orlando, FL 32812

Phone: 407-277-3554 (Melissa Lehman, Registrar)
E-mail: admin@highday.net
Website: www.highday.net

Read Homeschool Magazines:

- The Old Schoolhouse Magazine Christian based, wonderful articles and info, and they have a great website and blog! (<http://www.thehomeschoolmagazine.com/>)
- Homeschooling Today A magazine geared toward multi-level teaching with unit studies. Christian based. (<http://www.homeschooltoday.com/>)
- Practical Homeschooling Christian homeschool magazine by Mary Pride. (<http://www.home-school.com/>)
- Home Education Magazine. Homeschool magazine for the general reader. (<http://www.homeedmag.com/index.html>)

Listen to Homeschool Talk Radio: <http://www.homeschooltalkradio.com/>

Read about home schooling in the news: at: <http://www.homeschoolbuzz.com/>

PART 3 - HOW TO PLAN YOUR SCHOOL YEAR

Do these things with your child while you are planning your school year:

- Drill weak areas in math and phonics.
- Read library books together, both fiction and nonfiction in all subject areas
- Do art and science projects together.
- Have your child work on penmanship (elementary) or begin a journal.
- Keep track of days spent on this in your daily log as this counts towards your 180 days.

Supplies Needed for Your Homeschool

Many new homeschoolers think they have to go out and purchase a desk, blackboard, and all the other equipment that goes in a traditional classroom because that is how they were taught. Homeschooling is different - that's why it works. You can homeschool in your living room, in the kitchen, in your backyard, at the supermarket, and in your neighborhood park. (Thomas Edison's schoolroom was in a tree house, in his basement lab, in the kitchen, by the river, and on a train!) All you really need is some very simple supplies:

- Textbooks (See Step by Step Guide to Choosing Curriculum below.)
- Paper (type depends on age of child)
- Notebooks, pencils, pens, scotch tape, stapler, glue sticks, etc.
- Art supplies (crayons, markers, paints, brushes, etc.)
- A kitchen table is great for doing written work.

- A computer is a necessity today. Also recommend high-speed internet.
- A library card - lots of good stuff in the library and it's free!
- DVD to play educational movies that you buy or borrow from the library
- TV to watch educational television shows.
- CD player for listening to good music
- A nice, comfy sofa to snuggle up with your kids while you read together
- Older kids usually want privacy. A well-lit desk in their room would be good for them.
- Lots of bookshelves for all those great books you are going to collect for your library!



When should I homeschool and how long should I teach each day?

Most states require that you homeschool 180 days per year. Included in these 180 days are 10 days which can be used for sick days, field trips, or teacher in-service days (include workshops and homeschool conferences here).

Some homeschoolers teach year around taking longer or more frequent breaks during the year. Others teach from August to May like the schools.

Public schools meet for five hours a day to allow time for students to earn the required number of Carnegie Units for graduation. This amounts to 900 hours per year. It has been estimated by some educational professionals that out of that 900 hours, approximately 200 hours are spent on one-on-one or on-task teaching. The remainder is spent on all the other things that happen in schools such as correcting papers, recess, lunch breaks, managing classrooms, etc. That is the equivalent of 66 minutes per day! Considering that the average homeschool family teaches one on one approximately 1-1/2 to 3 hours per day, it's no wonder they are scoring better on standardized testing! (See Sample Homeschool Schedule below.)

A Carnegie Unit is the amount of credit given for successful completion of a course which meets 40 minutes per day, five days per week, for at least 36 weeks or the equivalent amount of time within the school year.

The North Central Association makes the following statement in Provisions for Granting Credit on their website (<http://www.ncacasi.org/standard/emsu>):

- Independent Study Programs: "The school may provide planned programs of independent learning in which the student need not attend a specific amount of time during a semester. In such instances, credit may be granted for satisfactory performance on proficiency examinations or for successful completion of curricular units, steps, or phases established by the school as comprising the equivalency of a unit of work.

The average amount of time spent on one-on-one instruction in a homeschool varies from 30 minutes/day in preschool to 3 hours/day or more in high school.

The remainder of the day is spent in character training, spiritual training, chores, creative play, field trips, educational projects, family reading, volunteer work, extracurricular activities, and homework (child working on own).

Limit television and computer use as entertainment, especially during traditional school hours. Encourage them to find other ways to entertain themselves such as reading on their own, working on art or science projects, etc. I kept a special "school-time activity box" stocked with special art supplies, educational games, etc. that the children could play with during school hours only. This box was off limits at other times which made it a special. Activities like this will help to increase your child's creativity and ability for self-government. Here is a website for ideas on keeping your child busy without TV: <http://www.insteadoftv.com/things-for-kids-to-do.html>

For more information about scheduling your homeschool and your life in general, see Fly Lady's website - lots of great ideas: http://www.flylady.com/pages/FlyBaby_HS.asp

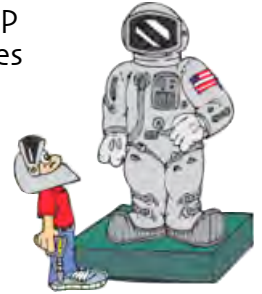
How do I know I am teaching my child everything he needs to know?

The answers most given by "experts" are: follow the guidelines from the national standards established by the NEA, follow a scope and sequence published by textbook companies, use the Worldbook scope and sequence (<http://www.worldbook.com/wc/browse?id=pa/tcs>), or pick up the books, *What Your 1st (2nd, 3rd, etc) Grader Needs to Know*. All of the above are good resources but they are not necessarily the final word on what your child should be taught.

Following is a basic teaching timeline recommended for homeschoolers:

- Kindergarten through 6th grade: Teach basic reading, writing, and arithmetic; introduce your child to history, science, art, music, etc. You can do most of this with library books, hands-on activities, and simple workbooks. Only a few textbooks are needed at these grade levels.
- Continue working on phonics and reading practice until your child reads fluently.
- Continue penmanship until your child writes well in both manuscript and cursive. (Some homeschoolers choose to teach Italic handwriting instead of manuscript and cursive.)
- Keep in mind the real question is not "What grade is my child in?" but "What basic skills is he lacking." Once you discover what he is lacking, select your curriculum accordingly. For instance, if he is struggling with fractions, work on more problems with fractions. If he has mastered fractions, only require enough practice to review. You do not have to do every problem or even every page.
- Keep your child in the grade level that is appropriate for his age, but use textbooks on, above, or below grade level as needed. This may mean using a 5th grade math book and a 3rd grade reading book for your 4th grade child.

- 6th -12th: After all basics are mastered, it's time to prepare your child for college, trade school, to own his own business, or go into the ministry.
- Work on improving composition, explore subjects in more depth to help your child discover his interests and skills, and given him specific courses that will help him meet his specific career goals.
- This is also the time to teach him home management skills, family life skills, and to help him to grow spiritually so that he is ready to do what God has called him to do for his family, his community, and his church.
- If he is finishing up high school, make sure he has the courses he needs for graduation and for the college and/or career in which he is interested.
- Make it a priority to spend time praying about, researching, and exploring potential career goals during his middle and high school years. (See my website article - Career Training for more info: <http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/careertraining.html>)



Accreditation:

Public schools in the midwest get accredited from North Central Association (www.nca.asu.edu). Public schools in other areas of the country get their accreditation from other organizations. These organizations set the standards for granting credit for high school level work in the public school systems.

Private and homeschools are not accredited by any of these public school organizations. Instead, private and homeschools set their own standards for graduation.

PART 4 - SAMPLE HOMESCHOOL SCHEDULE

Many of the homeschool moms try to do too much every day. You don't have to classroom education at home. You will accomplish more in less time in a home-school environment. Even if your state requires you to teach five hours a day, this five hours should not be all academics.

A normal school year is 36 weeks, 180 days. You can teach homeschool on the same schedule as your local school or you can customize your teaching schedule to suit your family's needs.

You do not have to do every subject every day of your school year. You can spend longer on a subject two or three days a week rather than doing five short days.

You don't have to enroll your child in every class or outside activity that your friends do. I recommend that you only enroll your child in one (if any) out-of-the-home activity during the school year, especially if you have several young children in the home. Use weekends, Friday, or summer for special classes and activities. Leave Monday through Thursday during the school year for school at home.

The amount of time spent on each subject depends upon the age, small motor skills, learning style, and abilities of each child. Typical teaching times per subject are as follows:

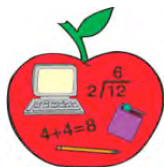
- 3-5 minutes for preschoolers
- 10-20 minutes for 1st -3rd graders
- 20-45 minutes for 4th - 6th graders
- 45 minutes or more for 8th - 12th graders

More time can be spent on each subject if your child does it orally than handwritten, especially for children who have difficulty with handwriting. For these kids, save their handwritten work for handwriting practice and for final copies of their composition projects.

The typical number of hours spent each day in one-on-one instruction ranges as follows:

- thirty minutes in Kindergarten (broken up into several five-minute sessions)
- one to two hours in grades 1 - 6
- two hours or more in grades 7 - 12

The remainder of the school day is spent having the child read on his own, participate in playtime activities with his siblings and friends, do his "homework", take a special class, go on a field trip, complete his own "chores", experiment with science projects, practice an instrument, create art projects, and/or participate in any other activity that can be done independently. I recommend that you do not allow playing video games or watching television (other than for educational purposes) during school hours.



Here is a recommended sample curriculum plan. Adjust this to the needs of your child.

Math

- An ability-appropriate level math textbook for each child. 4 days per week.
- Drill work on math facts, 3-10 min/day, 5 days per week (while learning math facts).
- Math reading: Each Friday or 1st Friday of the month, as needed.

Language Arts

- Phonics: (for beginning readers), daily.
- Handwriting: (while learning penmanship), 2 days per week, Tuesday & Thursday.

- Spelling: Monday, Wednesday & Friday.
- Grammar: 2 days per week, Tuesday & Thursday.
- Reading Practice and Literature: (read-alouds, personal reading, fluency reading, vocabulary development, reading comprehension, american and world literature) daily, integrate into other subjects such as history and science, as able. See Multi-Level teaching.
- Composition: 2 - 3 days per week, Monday, Wednesday & Friday. Use compositions to reinforce grammar instruction as well as for additional handwriting practice while your child is learning penmanship.
- Vocabulary: one day per week as a special class (Fridays) or integrate into reading/literature, as needed.

History/Geography/Citizenship

- Use a grade-level history textbook daily or complete 3 to 6 history units per year. If doing units, spend 1-1/2 to 2 hours per day, 2 days per week (Tuesday and Thursday) for 36 weeks, incorporating reading, hands-on activities, art, music, and composition, as appropriate.
- Integrate citizenship into history curriculum or complete one or two special classes per year.
- Geography and Mapping Skills: Fridays
- Current Events: daily

Science

- Use a grade-level science textbook daily or complete 3 to 6 science units per year. If doing units, spend 1-1/2 to 2 hours per day, 2 days per week (Monday and Wednesday) for 36 weeks, incorporating reading, hands-on activities, lab work, art, music and composition, as appropriate.

Art

- Each Friday or 4th Friday each month, as needed.

Music

- Each Friday or 2nd Friday each month, as needed.

Technology

- Each Friday and/or integrate technology into other subjects, as needed.
- Keyboarding: daily (after child has learned to write in cursive and until he can type a minimum of 40 wpm with only 1-2 errors).

Physical Education

- Keep track of 75 minutes of physical activity per week or special class on Friday, as needed. Kids who like sports will want to do more. Just make sure it doesn't interfere with other school work on Monday - Thursday.

Health/Safety

- Integrate into science curriculum or do one - two special classes per year, as needed.

Electives:

- Bible: daily
- Logic: each Friday or 1st Friday each month, as needed.
- Foreign Language: special class on Friday or Monday - Thursday, as needed.
- Family Living: integrate daily into regular household activities as needed.
- Test Preparation practice: once per month on 3rd Friday each month or as needed.
- Volunteer Opportunities: Fridays, weekends or as needed.
- Field trips: Fridays or occasionally substitute for Monday - Thursday school day, as needed.
- Social Activities: daily play time with friends after school, during field trips, Fridays, special classes, or weekends

Life can get hectic for homeschoolers. One way to manage your busy schedule is to plan your meals ahead of time. For help on menu planning - check out *Menu Planning Made Easy* by Sheri Graham. She has put together a neat little booklet that will give you some great tips that will make your life easier!

Part 5 - Recordkeeping

Keeping good records is essential not only to comply with state law but also to keep track of what your child has learned. Most state's requires that you keep tract of 180 days of school in a log book. I also strongly recommend that you keep a portfolio for each child (required in some states). You may need any or all of these records for college admissions, job applications, and/or problems with Department of Human Services. Another good reason to keep them is so that you can go back and see that you actually have accomplished something!

Log Book

Although, parents are required to keep account of 180 days of school, they have a lot of freedom in deciding when to teach required subjects and how much time to devote to them. Parents are not required to teach every subject every day. Many parents teach two major subjects per day (ie. history and language one day, science and math another day). They spend larger amounts of time on those two subjects and cover in one day what would normally be covered in two or three days. Some parents teach history for one-half year and science the other half. Until a child has mastered his basic reading, writing, and math skills; however, it is important to do a little of each every day, even if for only 10 - 15 minutes per day.

Most record/log books are geared toward a traditional classroom and have predetermined blocks of time allowed for each subject each day. We recommend using a record book that leaves out the subject and time headings, allowing you to write only what you need each day. Draw vertical lines to add a second or third child. Be sure to write down all extra-curricular activities, volunteer opportunities, work experiences, and field trips. For recommended log books, see my website: <http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/log.html>

Portfolio

Why a Portfolio? A portfolio requires extra time to put together each year, but it's well worth the effort. Not only will you enjoy looking through old portfolios and reminiscing about the activities and school work in which your children were involved, but some colleges prefer portfolios over grades for homeschooled students. A portfolio is more relevant to homeschooling and is an excellent way of demonstrating the type of education your child has had and what resources were used in giving him or her that education.

Supplies Needed: You will need a 3-ring binder at least 3 to 4 inches thick (You can use your child's own artwork in front if you buy one with an insertable cover.), dividers, photo album pages ("magnetic" pages for mounting photos), and clear protector pages for each child. At the beginning of the school year, place the following items in the front of each portfolio.

- Title Page (Include the child's name, age, grade, birthday, and a recent photo.)
- Medical Records - Use this section to keep track of immunizations and medical, optometry, and dental checkups.
- Learning Objectives - Include a list of goals for the year in each subject. [Example: English, to include language, literature, speech, and composition. (1) gain a solid

foundation in basic grammar, (2) develop clear and effective writing, (3) learn to read with discernment various types of literature, (4) continue to practice verbal communication through oral reports, speeches, and drama participation.]

- Resources - Include a list of books and materials used during the year to teach the various subjects. Arrange by subject and include the title and publisher or author.
- Reading List - Include a list of books your student read on his own. List the title, author, and type of book (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, etc.).
- Evaluations - Include copies of report cards, transcripts, achievement test results, or professional evaluations, if applicable.
- Awards - Include any awards, certificates of completion, and/or diplomas received from classes or outside activities which are not included in the sections below.
- Subject Sections - Divide the remainder of the notebook into subjects. Throughout the year add to your portfolio by including the following (Don't wait until the last minute or you won't do a good job!):

Language Arts: Include copies of language arts worksheets and writing projects illustrating what he has learned in penmanship, grammar, mechanics, spelling, vocabulary, and composition. I recommend including at least one or two compositions per month showing the improvement made during the year. Include a list of literature or poetry read or include this in the Reading List above. Include certificates of completion or report cards of language arts classes he takes outside the home, illustrations or drawings your child does related to language arts, and photos of any awards your child receives related to this subject. If your child has his or her work published in any publication, include tear sheets from the publication.

Math: Put in sample pages of your child's math workbook, one or two lessons per month to illustrate what he has learned during the year. Also include samples (or list resources) of additional math activities such logic, consumer math, history of math, and math games. Include certificates of completion or report cards of math classes he takes outside the home, illustrations or drawings your child does related to math, and photos of any awards your child receives related to this subject.

Science: Include samples of written lab reports and compositions related to science, photos of your child doing lab activities (example: building a volcano), photos and brochures of field trips that are science related, certificates of completion or report cards of science classes he takes outside the home, illustrations or drawings your child does related to science (examples: a diagram of a cell or a print-out of a multimedia presentation of the planets), photos of any awards your child receives related to this subject, and sample workbook pages, if applicable.

Social Studies/History: Include samples of written compositions, photos and brochures of field trips that are history related, certificates of completion or report cards of social studies classes he takes outside the home, illustrations or drawings your child does (examples: mapwork or a print-out of a multimedia presentation of a period in ancient history), photos of any awards your child receives related to this subject, and sample workbook pages, if applicable.



Technology: Include samples of written compositions related to technology, samples showing his use of word processing software, samples of your child's internet research (examples: printing out a fact sheet on Egyptian pyramids or a diagram of the heart), photos and brochures of field trips that are technology related, certificates of completion or report cards of technology classes he takes outside the home, illustrations or drawings your child does on the computer, a print-out of a database or spreadsheet your child created, a print-out of a multimedia presentation, photos of any awards your child receives related to this subject, and sample workbook pages, if applicable.

Art: Include samples of written compositions (related to art, art appreciation, and art history), samples or photos of your child's artwork, photos and brochures of field trips that are art related, certificates of completion or report cards of art classes he takes outside the home, photos of any awards your child receives related to this subject, and sample workbook pages, if applicable.

Music: Include samples of written compositions (related to music, music appreciation, and music history), photos and brochures of field trips that are music related, certificates of completion or report cards of music classes he takes outside the home, photos and programs of your child's participation in music lessons or other music activities (examples: singing or playing on a praise and worship team or ministering to the elderly), samples of music compositions your child has written, photos of any awards your child receives related to this subject, and sample workbook pages, if applicable.

Physical Education/Health: Include photos of your child playing softball, bowling, swimming, doing aerobics, riding bicycles, attending gymnastic classes, etc. Include samples of compositions or illustrations related to health (example: diagram of the food pyramid). Include certificates of completion or report cards of physical education or health classes he takes outside the home, photos of any awards your child receives related to this subject, and sample workbook pages, if applicable.

Extracurricular Activities: Be sure to include photos of your child interacting with other children as proof of socialization such as playing soccer, playing games, attending church or youth group, attending birthday parties, or volunteering together to clean up a community park.

Part 6 - High School Credits, Grades & Transcripts

Awarding High School Credit:

North Central Association (the accrediting agency for public schools) assign credits as follows:

- **Semester Hour:** This is the amount of credit given for the successful completion of a course which meets 40 minutes daily, five days per week, for at least 18 weeks, or the equivalent amount of time within the school year. The equivalent time is 60 clock hours. (1 credit)
- **Carnegie Unit:** This is the amount of credit given for the successful completion of a course which meets 40 minutes daily, five days per week, for at least 36 weeks, or the equivalent amount of time within the school year. The equivalent time is 120 clock hours. (1 unit)
- **Credit by Performance:** The school establishes guidelines by which credit may be given on a performance basis by means of approved assessments of varying kinds covering the content ordinarily included in a regular school course in the subject. A school also may use assessments as the basis for admission of students with educational experience for which transcripts of credit are not available.
- **Independent Study Programs:** The school may provide planned programs of independent learning in which students need not attend classes a specific amount of time during a semester. In such instances, credit may be granted for satisfactory performance on proficiency examinations or for successful completion of curricular units, steps, or phases established by the school as comprising the equivalency of a unit of work.
- **Work-study programs.** Credit may be given provided the program is under the supervision of the school.
- **Credit through extension, correspondence, and televised courses.**
- **Credit for study abroad and military experience.**

For more information, check their website at: <http://www.ncacasi.org/standard/ems>

Highschool Credits

As a homeschooler, you are the principal, counselor, and teacher of a small private school. Like a small private school, you grant credit according to the standards you set up. Your diploma will not be "accredited" by the public school system just as private schools are not "accredited" by the public school system; however, this will not prevent your child from getting a job or getting into college or trade schools.

It is recommended that you use the same terminology and grading system as the public schools to prevent confusion. Have your child complete the same number of credits and/or units required at public schools, minimum. Most homeschoolers complete far more credits that required by the public school system simply because they have more time to spend on academics.

Use your common sense. If your child's work seems comparable to public high school level work, then award the credit. Public schools grant high school credit not only for courses in advanced calculus, but also in remedial reading and special education math.

In general,

- "Academic" subjects such as English, Math, History, Science, Government, etc. are usually assigned one unit (2 credits) per year.
- "Non-academic" subjects such as home economics, physical education, music, art, woodworking, etc. are usually assigned .5 unit (1 credit).

The difference between an "Academic" and "Non-academic" subject is that the "Academic" subject includes an instructional component. An instructional component is the addition of reading, research, and written assignments to the subject being studied.

For example: To earn a unit in music appreciation, in addition to taking piano lessons, the student could read biographies of great musicians and listen to a variety of music styles and forms. They could do some research on musical instruments, music terms, and the history of music and then create a written report about their study in music. (See Elective Course Descriptions for more information - <http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/courseDesc.html>.)

Physical education is no longer required for high school graduation in many schools. If giving credits for physical education, credits are usually earned at a rate of .5 unit (1 credit) per year.

One unit of music and art are required in many states. This can be earned by the student taking music or art lessons at a rate of .5 unit (1 credit) per year. If you add an instructional component to their music or art lessons during the year, they would earn one full unit for the year.

Bible is usually earned at a rate of .5 unit (1 credit) per year unless an instructional component is added. This is not a required subject.

If there is no instructional component to the course, list it as an "extracurricular" activity.

For more information on recording elective credits, see *Making the Most of Extracurricular Activities* on my website: <http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/ExtraCArticle.html>.

Grades and Report Cards

In most states, grades and report cards are not required for homeschool students. (See your state requirements.) Grades are mainly used as a sorting mechanism in school systems. Some students have to score at the top, some at the bottom, and the rest in the middle.

Grades do not necessarily give an accurate picture of what a child has learned. A well-kept log book and portfolio are better indicators of what homeschool children have studied and learned. (See "Log Book" and "Portfolio" above.)

In homeschool, especially during the elementary and junior high years, you can assess your child's learning through narration, composition projects, hands-on projects, or other means. In high school, however, you will need to create a transcript for your child. Although many colleges are now asking to see portfolios, a copy of the child's transcript is still expected.

In most states, parents can elect to award letter grades, pass/fail, or no grades at all (in which case credit is awarded for completion of the course). The most commonly used grading symbols used and recognized are A, B, C, D, and F on a 4.00 grading system. Generally they are understood to mean the following:

- A= Excellent, Outstanding, Superior Achievement, Completed all assignments as required. (4.0)
- B = Commendable, Good Achievement (3.0)
- C = Acceptable, Adequate Achievement (2.0)
- D= Minimal, Poor Achievement (1.0)
- F = Failure, Unacceptable Achievement (0)

If you choose to award letter grades and choose your own method of arriving at grades, add this information to your child's portfolio.

Don't be afraid to award A's to your child on subjects you feel your child has mastered or completed as required. Tell the college admissions officers how you awarded the grade. They are not as much concerned with the grades received as what your child actually studied and how (s)he went about studying it. Again, this is best demonstrated through a portfolio.

Transcripts

As soon as your child begins working on high school level subjects, start a high school transcript. You can either buy software to do this (ProSara Software, <http://www.prosara.com/>) or make up your own. (Sample and blank available here: <http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/forms.html>)

How to prepare a transcript.

Include the following at the top of the page:

- The student's full legal name, birth date, sex, address, phone number, and social security number.
- The name of the parents or legal guardians.
- The name of the school, if applicable.
- A list of the subjects studied, the dates studied, the grade awarded, and credits earned.
- Designate the units earned for each subject studied.
- Include a write up about extracurricular activities in which your child participated.

- Include a write up about any special awards your child received.
- It is especially important to list any leadership roles the child has had and volunteer or work-study programs where particular skills were learned. Be sure to list the skills learned.
- List any hobbies or home businesses in which the child participated where he learned particular skills such as bookkeeping, graphic arts, marketing, etc. This might be another area where you can add an instructional component to create a credit course.

How to Figure GPAs.

- Write the course name and the grade received for each course taken.
- Assign a numerical value to each grade earned as follows: A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0. This is the Grade Point.
- Write in the number of Units earned for each course.
- Multiple the Grade Point times the Units earned for each course to get the Extension.
- Total the Units and Extensions.
- Divide the total Extensions by the total Units to compute the GPA.

Sample: <http://www.northwestcollege.edu/campusserv/advice/policies/gpa.htm>

Free GPA calculator: <http://www.hamline.edu/administration/sas/r&r/gpacalc.html>

Part 6 - Learning Styles

Before you choose curriculum, assess your own and your child's learning style. You may see that you need to make an adjustment in order to accommodate each of your learning styles. A Read/Write parent will have difficulty teaching a Kinesthetic child, etc. Use the results from your learning style assessment to help you select curriculum.

Learning Styles Assessment Resources:

- VARK: <http://www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp> (click on "using VARK", then "Printable VARK Questionnaire for Younger People, pdf document) Take the learning style assessment yourself, then go to "Using VARK", click on "Printable VARK questionnaire for younger people," and administer that test to your child. Compare the results of your test to your child's.
- Multiple Intelligence Survey from Family Education (<http://familyeducation.com/topic/front/0,1156,21-12410,00.html?etvo4107>). I prefer the VARK Learning style assessment because it's simple to use and understand.

- Learning Styles: <http://www.chaminade.org/inspire/learnstl.htm>
- Learning Styles Online: <http://www.learning-styles-online.com/inventory/>
- Hemispheric Dominance Assessment: <http://brain.web-us.com/brain/braindominance.htm>
- Learning Styles Assessment: <http://www.homeschoolviews.com/quiz/quiz.html>

You don't have to teach every subject according to your child's learning style, but use it as often as you can - especially for subjects in which your child has difficulty. (Your child will need to learn to work in a read/write environment eventually as most schools teach that way.)

For example: I am a Visual/Read-Write/Kinesthetic learner. My daughter is the same; however, my son is a visual/kinesthetic learner. This made it difficult for him to learn using traditional curriculum. During K-8th grade, I tried to incorporate his learning style as much as possible by reading to him, using books that contained color illustrations, charts, graphs, and maps; by using hands-on projects for "seatwork" and assessment; and incorporating the use of word processing and multimedia software for written projects. Even though he did not enjoy the read-write environment, I had him hand-write his math problems including all the steps taken as well as the solutions, hand-write an occasional composition lesson and worksheet, read an occasional textbook entry, and practice multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank test-taking skills in order to prepare him to work in this type of environment. Even his learning was delayed in elementary school (he did not read fluently nor do much arithmetic until age 9-1/2), by age 15, he was not only on-level, but was also admitted to college as a concurrent enrollment student. Don't let anyone tell you they can't catch up!

Following is a list of the four learning styles and type of curriculum that I recommend for each (see Curriculum Recommendations for information on purchasing these books: <http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/CurrRec.html>):

Visual Learner:

This child likes videos, pictures, posters, slides, textbooks with illustrations, graphs, charts, lecturers who use visual aides, multi-media projects, and underlining their books with colored highlighters.



- I recommend colorful books, textbooks, and/or unit studies involving a lot of visual aids for this child. Allow him to create projects (posters, video productions, multi-media reports, illustrated booklets, etc.) instead of requiring him to do a lot of traditional worksheets and testing. See Curriculum Recommendations for specific suggestions for each subject.
- Cutting, pasting, and coloring are good for this type of learning as long as his fine motor skills are developed. (Most boys and some girls do not fully develop their fine motor skills until between the ages of 8 and 9. Read Dr. Raymond Moore's book, Home Grown Kids for more information.)
- Art is usually a favorite subject for this child. Be sure to give him art lessons, both traditional and computer art. Try to integrate art into as many of his other subjects as possible.

Auditory Learner:

Prefers information that is “heard.” This child likes lectures, tutorials, audio tapes and CDs, listening to a tape recorder of a lecture, group discussion, speaking, web chat, and talking things through.

- Get a copy of the catalog: SingNLearn (<http://www.singnlearn.com/>). Not everything in their catalog is for the Auditory learner, but you will find plenty of resources that are.
- Lyrical Learning is a terrific science program for your Auditory learner in 6th-9th grader.
- History of America tapes are a great way for Auditory learner of all ages to learn about American history.
- Teach from books and textbooks by reading to them rather than requiring them to read it on their own.
- Music is usually a favorite subject for this child. Make sure you give him music lessons!

Read/Write Learner:

Prefers information displayed as words - emphasizes text-based input and output - reading and writing in all its forms. The majority of teachers and curriculum publishers have a preference for this style which is why students who do not learn in this mode have difficulty in school.

- They like all forms of reading and writing and usually enjoy school. They like lectures, writing stories, creating books, making lists, and have no problems with fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, and essay questions on a test.
- Alpha-Omega, A Beka, BoB Jones, and most curriculum publishers use this mode. This is the easiest curriculum to find as almost anything works as long as it involves reading and writing.
- These kids often like to write. Give them lots of writing assignments including creative writing.

Kinesthetic Learner:

Prefers information acquired by the use of hands-on experience and practice (simulated or real). These kids are often misdiagnosed as “ADD” in school. With firm discipline and the right learning environment, these kids often excel at home.



- This child prefers hands-on projects that involve all the senses—sight, touch, taste, smell, hearing. They like field trips, collecting things, building things, experimenting, drama, computing, creating exhibits, photographs, recipes, lecturers who give real-life examples, anything that involves a hands-on approach.

- I recommend multi-level teaching and unit studies for this child. Allow him to participate in projects instead of requiring him to do a lot of traditional worksheets and testing. Have him do experiments, build things, put on a play that shows what he has learned, create an exhibit of what he has learned, cook recipes related to the topic, etc.
- Sports, computer games, and physical science are often favorites of this child. Try to integrate these into his learning.

Part 7 - Teaching Methods

When I started homeschooling in 1981, I did not know about teaching methods. There was very little curriculum available for homeschoolers; and, since I had no one to tell me what a teaching method was, I had to come up with my own method - probably much like families did in the early history of our country. I now know that the method I used is called "eclectic." I used real books (fiction, nonfiction, biographies, historical fiction), art supplies, science equipment, travel, nature study, and an occasional textbook/workbook as I found ones that were suitable.

Today, there is so much curriculum to choose from, it's hard to know what to buy. Curriculum Fairs are brimming with vendors selling the newest products created especially for the homeschooled student. How do you choose? To help you in your quest, you might want to know a little about the teaching methods used by homeschoolers. Here are the major ones and a brief description. For more information, check out the resources listed with the method.

Charlotte Mason

- Focuses on outdoors and nature.
- Children learn through reading real books, narration (tell about what they just learned - oral not written), copywork (copy sections of good literature), and creating Nature Notebooks.
- They study the fine arts and foreign Languages.
- Use few, if any, textbooks or workbooks.
- Instead, they read literature related to the topic of study.
- Quality is more important than quantity.
- Goal is to instill a love of learning.

Charlotte Mason Resources:

- ABC's of Charlotte Mason: <http://homepage.bushnell.net/~peanuts/faq1.html>.
- A Charlotte Mason Companion by Karen Andreola.
- The Charlotte Mason Study Guide by Penny Gardner
- For The Children's Sake: Foundations of Education for Home and School by Susan Schaeffer Macaulay.
- Learning Language Arts Through Literature, Grade 3, Yellow - curriculum based on Charlotte Mason.

Classical

- Focuses on the “trivium,” (grammar, logic, rhetoric)
- Formal instruction in logic, Greek, Latin, and the Great Works of Western Literature.
- Socratic method of teaching includes Public speaking, drill work, memorization, and a full day.
- Goal is to train future leaders and to teach them to think for themselves.

Classical Resources:

- Classical Homeschooling: <http://www.classical-homeschooling.org/contents.html> (includes a complete scope and sequence)
- The Well-Trained Mind: A Guide to Classical Education at Home, Revised and Updated Edition by Susan Wise Bauer
- The Story of the World: History for the Classical Child; Volume 1: Ancient Times & workbook by Susan Wise Bauer (curriculum based on Classical method)
- Early American and World History by Rea C. Berg (curriculum based on Classical)
- Greenleaf Guides - <http://greenleafpress.com/>. (curriculum based on Classical)
- Tapestry of Grace: <http://www.tapestryofgrace.com/usingTOG.htm> (curriculum based on Classical)
- Covenant Home (<http://www.covenanthome.com/>) (Structured, distance learning based on Classical)

Unit Studies

- Learning that is focused on a particular topic or time period
- Each child completes age-appropriate activities that relate to the topic
- Teach all ages of children at once
- Integrate social studies, science, fine arts, language arts, religion, and occasionally math.
- Based on a theme, historical event, science topic such as rainbows, a character trait such as honesty, a piece of literature, the life of a person, or a piece of artwork.
- Usually one on one teaching is done in the morning and afternoons are set aside for hands-on projects and field trips.
- The goal is to instill a love of learning.

Unit Study Resources:

- Konos (<http://www.konos.com/>)
- Five in a Row, Volume 1 by Jane Claire Lambert
- TRISMS (<http://www.trisms.com/>)
- American Government Unit Study on CD-ROM by Amanda Bennett
- Oceans Thematic Unit by Teacher Created Materials
- Oklahoma Homeschool: <http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/unitstudies.html>
- Four Wheelers: <http://www.thefourwheelers.com/units/>
- Unit Studies Made Easy by Valerie Bendt

Unschooling (also called natural learning)

- Focus on a child's natural desire to learn as they experience life.
- Quote from website: *"What it isn't: Unschooling isn't a recipe, and therefore it can't be explained in recipe terms. Unschooling isn't a method, it is a way of looking at children and at life. It is based on trust that parents and children will find the paths that work best for them - without depending on educational institutions, publishing companies, or experts to tell them what to do. Unschooling does not mean that parents can never teach anything to their children, or that children should learn about life entirely on their own without the help and guidance of their parents. Unschooling does not mean that parents give up active participation in the education and development of their children and simply hope that something good will happen. Finally, since many unschooling families have definite plans for college, unschooling does not even mean that children will never take a course in any kind of a school. Quote: Our son has never had an academic lesson, has never been told to read or to learn mathematics, science, or history. Nobody has told him about phonics. He has never taken a test or has been asked to study or memorize anything. When people ask, "What do you do?" My answer is that we follow our interests - and our interests inevitably lead to science, literature, history, mathematics, music - all the things that have interested people before anybody thought of them as "subjects".*
- The goal is to teach them to think for themselves, train them in practical life skills and allow them to be self-educating.

Steve Wozniak, inventor of the Apple Computer, once said: "Do what you love, and learn to do it very, very well, and some day someone will pay you very, very well to do it for them!" I think this goes very well with the unschooler's philosophy.

Unschooling Resources: http://www.naturalchild.com/guest/earl_stevens.html

Robinson Self-Teaching Curriculum

- Focus on the 3 Rs, adding other subjects only if needed.
- Lots of reading
- Saxon math
- College-level science in high school
- A full school day
- No TV, no sugar,
- No calculators until after calculus is mastered.
- The goal is to move them to be self-educating as soon as possible.

Robinson Resources: <http://www.robinsoncurriculum.com/>

Montessori

- Learn from real life toys
- Instructor's main job is to observe and mentor, no planned lessons or homework
- Allows child to follow his own interests in choosing what to learn (math is taught in a somewhat more structured manner)

- Maintain an enriched, uncluttered learning environment, large family library, art & music supplies, science equipment, no junk food, no TV or computer
- Self-correcting teaching tools
- Goal is to instill a love of learning and teach life skills.

Montessori Resources:

- <http://www.montessori.edu/homeschooling.html>
- <http://www.michaelolaf.net/1CW612math.html>

Principle Approach

- Focus on the worldview of America's founding fathers.
- Teach using classical, pro-liberty literature
- Primary documents
- Vocabulary from Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary
- Use the Notebook method (Research, Reason, Relate, Record)
- Colonial-style math and reading
- Lectures
- Lots of writing
- Memorization
- Full school day
- Goal is to Implant Christian character, virtuous leadership and a Biblical worldview

Principle Approach Resources:

- The Christian History of the American Revolution: Consider and Ponder
- Website: <http://www.principleapproach.org/>

Traditional Curriculum (Most public and private schools)

- Focus is on the national (or private institution's) standards. This is what most of us grew up with.
- Involves lectures, grade-level textbooks, workbooks, drill and memorization, practice problems and review, testing, and grades
- Lots of reading and writing
- Full school day
- Goal is to learn what is required for graduation and to produce good citizens

Traditional Resources

- A Beka (Christian), <http://www.abeka.com/>
- Bob Jones University Press (Christian), <http://www.bjup.com>
- Seton Home Study School (Catholic), <http://www.setonhome.org/>
- Calvert (secular), <http://www.calvertschool.org>
- Ablaze (secular), <http://www.ablazelearning.com/>
- Laurel Springs (secular), <http://www.laurelsprings.com/>
- Rod and Staff (Christian), ?
- Christian Light Education (Christian), <http://www.clp.org/>

- School of Tomorrow (Christian), <http://www.schooloftomorrow.com/>
- Alpha Omega (Christian), <http://www.aop.com/>
- More on website: <http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/textbookpub.html>

Eclectic

As you continue homeschooling, you may move from one method to another until you find one you are comfortable with. Most homeschoolers end up using a variety of teaching methods, depending on their needs and resources. This is called the Eclectic method.

Part 8 - Scope and Sequence

What is a Scope and Sequence?

A scope and sequence is a road map for what to teach when. Scope and sequences are written by educators/publishers who have predetermined goals or outcomes that they desire their graduates to attain. They base their scope and sequences on these predetermined outcomes, which is a good plan. However, the specific goals chosen by these educators may or may not be the same as you desire for your child. Secular curriculum publishers ask themselves questions such as: What do children need to be taught in order to benefit society as a whole? What will train these children to be good servants in a global economy? There is no consideration for God or His gifts and callings on the child's life. Christian curriculum publishers do better in that they make room for God and plan for their graduates to know how to serve Him; however, because they are writing for classroom situations, it is necessary that it be mainly a "one-size fits all" type of curriculum.

The homeschooling family has the advantage in that they can customize a scope and sequence to meet the specific needs, gifts, and callings of each of their children. Here are two examples:

Mrs. Green has twin, six year old boys, one who loves school and workbooks, the other struggles with reading, writing, and arithmetic. Children mature in different areas at different ages. Some children learn to read early, as early as four years old; others struggle for years and finally click in sometime between age eight and eleven. (This "delayed learner" is often gifted in some other areas that schools do not necessarily address.) This is normal. (For more information on this, read Dr. Raymond Moore's book, "Home Grown Kids.") The child who is an early learner and works well with workbooks will do great with curriculum such as Horizon Math, A Beka reading, and similar curriculum. The child who is a delayed learner will not do well with this type of curriculum. (Thomas Edison was this type of learner. He spent his early years being read to and working in his "lab." Read his biography if you have a delayed learner.) If Mrs. Green follows a scope and sequence from most curriculum publishers, both children would take nearly the same subjects in elementary school; one would get good grades and appear to be a great student; the other would get bad grades and appear to be "learning disabled".

Mrs. Brown has two teenage children, one who desires to become a lawyer and the other who wants to start his own graphics art studio. The student who wants to become a lawyer needs to study more history, government, and college preparatory math than the one who wants to be the business owner. The business owner would benefit from taking more courses in art, advertising, marketing, accounting, and business management. If Mrs. Brown followed a scope and sequence

from most curriculum publishers, both children would take nearly the same courses during their high school years.

The best solution is to create your own scope and sequence and mix and match curriculum to suit each child's individual needs. The Checklist was written to help you with this (<http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/checklist.html>).

If you're not that brave, and most of us weren't when we first started, the next best solution is to purchase a curriculum written for homeschoolers. I recommend Sonlight curriculum as it was created by Christians for homeschooling missionaries. Once you get the idea of how to do it, you will probably get braver your second year.

Part 9 - Textbooks

Questions to ask before purchasing textbooks:

Are you the type of person who likes to "do it yourself?"

If so, you will prefer a mix and match curriculum and writing your own lessons plans after you figure out how to do it.



Do you need step by step instructions?

You will probably prefer a correspondence course such as Sonlight, K-12, Alpha-Omega, Bob Jones, A Beka Books, Calvert, and others.

Consider the time you have available. Do I work part time? Have an in-home business? Volunteer? Have a newborn? Many young children? Children on several grade-levels?

If time is short, you will need to incorporate multi-level teaching as much as possible. See my website for more information, <http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/MultiLevel.html>.

What budget do you have for buying curriculum?

If you are stretched thin in your budget, look for used curriculum and make use of the local library. Unit studies can be cheaper than traditional textbooks.

Is your education lacking in a particular subject area?

Don't be afraid to homeschool if this is you. I learned as much as my children did during our homeschooling years. We learned together! If you don't have the time to learn together, I suggest using a tutor, homeschool co-ops, local community courses that are open to homeschoolers, and online or video courses.

What is your learning style? What is your child's learning style?

Consider you and your child's learning style before choosing curriculum.

Does your child have a physical disability or a diagnosed learning problem?

If so, you will need to seek help from professionals and experienced homeschool parents who deal with these problems. See Special Education (<http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/specialed.html>)

I recommend that you go through the Step by Step Guide to Choosing Curriculum (Part 11) before purchasing textbooks.

Part 10 - Set Goals and Plan Your Year

Set Goals.

The Bible says in Proverbs 29:18, "Where there is no vision, my people perish." (Perish means to go wild in the sense of wandering.) Write up a list of goals you want your child to accomplish by the end of the year. Ask yourself questions such as these:

- Is my child able to read fluently?
- Can he communicate clearly in writing?
- Does he know his basic math?
- Is he able to do the math needed to take care of his personal financial needs?
- What do I want him to learn this year about God and His creation?
- What are my child's specific gifts, strengths, and weaknesses?
- Does my child have the necessary spiritual training to serve God personally, in his family, in his church, and in his community?
- Does my child have good work habits and the skills needed to support a family?
- What courses does he need to complete high school?
- What kind of post-high school education will my child need in order to pursue his professional, technical, or ministerial career goals.

Keep in Mind That No One Can Learn All There is to Know.

We are in the Information Age. Statistics show that the combined knowledge of the world (all the knowledge acquired since the world began) has doubled in the last two years and will double again in the next two years. Curriculum publishers pick and choose what topics they will cover each year based on their perception of the needs of the school community. Frequently, in order to make it appear that the students are learning "everything they need to know", they condense a topic that should be covered in several chapters into one or two paragraphs or sentences. I recommend that you cover less topics per year but spend more time covering those topics in detail. Your child will learn more and retain it longer. (See my website for more information, <http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/MultiLevel.html>.)

Stick to your plan.

Make a list of curriculum you want to purchase each year. Don't deviate after talking with another mom who uses something different! She has different children with different learning styles and different goals. Blank planning form: <http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/forms.html>

Part 11 - Step by Step Guide to Choosing Curriculum

Step 1: Print off the following forms (<http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/forms.html>):

- Curriculum Planner Worksheet, Part I, (pdf document)
- Curriculum Planner Worksheet, Part II, print one for each child (pdf document)

Step 2: Record your child's name, age, and grade on the top portion of the Curriculum Planner Worksheet, Part II.

Step 3: Assess your child's math and reading skills using the following website resources.

- Math: Saxon math placement test (<http://www.saxonhomeschool.com/pg/index.jsp>)
- Reading: Reading Competency Test at <http://www.nrrf.org/readtest.html>

Record the results of these assessments on the top portion of your Curriculum Planner Worksheet,

Step 4: Determine your child's Learning Style (and your own). See Learning Styles above.

- Administer a learning-style assessment to both you and your child. VARK: <http://www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp>.
- Complete Step 4 of Curriculum Planner Worksheet, Part I for each child and yourself.
- Record results of learning style assessment on Part II for each child.

Step 5: Choose a Teaching Method (See Teaching Methods above.)

- Complete Step 1 of Curriculum Planner Checklist, Part I, (Format)
- Complete Step 2 of Curriculum Planner Checklist, Part I, (Faith based or nonsectarian)
- Complete Step 3 of Curriculum Planner Checklist, Part I, (Teaching Method)

Record the Teaching Method on Part II for each child. (You may use more than one and/or different ones for each child.)

Step 6: Complete Step 5 of Curriculum Planner Checklist, Part I, (Budget)

Step 7: Complete Step 6 of Curriculum Planner Checklist, Part I, (Summary)

Step 8: Using the summary from the Curriculum Planner Checklist, Part I, go down the left side of Curriculum Planner Checklist, Part II and write in criteria (shopping guides) as to what type of curriculum you are looking for. (for example - 3rd grade math, video and manipulatives)

Step 9: Go through catalogs or online (<http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/CurrRec.html>) to locate resources that will meet these criteria and write them in the right hand column (in above example, "Math U See" could be written in this column.) This is your shopping list.

Step 10: Now go out and shop to find the best price to meet your budget. Shop on my website:
<http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/order.html/> or:

Curriculum and textbooks may be found in many places, both locally and on-line. The yearly annual FPEA (Florida Parent-Educators Association) convention is held in the Orlando area in late May and provides the opportunity to view and purchase a wide scope of teaching materials. There are also various smaller curriculum swaps and meets which are announced through-out the year. You might also wish to visit these websites:

- 1) Learning Things: <http://www.homeschooldiscount.com/>
- 2) Discount Homeschool Supplies: <http://www.dhss.com/shop/>
- 3) Pennywise Learning: <http://www.pennywiselearning.com/index.html>
- 4) The Homeschool Super Center: <http://www.homeschoolsupercenter.com/>

If you aren't sure what package or materials may be right for you, visit Homeschool Reviews at <http://homeschoolreviews.com/> to see what other parents have to say about them.

And don't forget, your local library and the internet are two fabulous resources that can provide educational materials for you at little to no cost!

Don't forget to purchase *The Checklist* if you are planning on using a mix and match, unit study, Charlotte Mason, or eclectic style of homeschooling! For more information, check my website at: <http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/checklist.html/>.



I hope this booklet has been helpful to you in planning your homeschool. Please consult the site map on my website for additional information:

<http://www.oklahomahomeschool.com/sitemap.html>

Have a great school year!

Cindy Downes



For more information about homeschooling in Florida, contact:

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