

Home Schooling Your 4-6 Year Old
by Kim Gray

You Can Do It

People choose home schooling for many reasons: quality, individualized education, character development, religious training, and special needs are among the most common. Whatever your motivation, I want to assure you that you *can* do it. I have written this booklet because I have seen many young mothers feel unsure and inadequate about their abilities to home school. Many women are facing strong opposition from well-meaning family and friends, and I want to be your voice of encouragement. I want to give you some practical how-to's, inspiration, and guide you towards resources to give you a strong start in this journey of home education.

The contents of this booklet are suggestions; take what you like but don't feel overwhelmed or obligated to do it all. Choose what appeals to you most and start small. God has created you the mother/teacher of your home, so your home school will be unique.

Many think of “schooling” as something that needs to begin at age 5 and consists of textbooks, workbooks, drill, and lectures. I would like to challenge you to think of education as a lifestyle and to consider your family's activities as contributing to your child's education. Education is about developing relationships—with God, nature, ourselves and others. It is giving your child the tools to learn and not standing in the way by lectures or contrived lessons. The common educational philosophy sees children as empty vessels, needing information dumped into them. This is not true. Children are born *persons*. Susan Schaeffer Macauley says in *For the Children's Sake*:

Do not see him as something to prune, form, or mold. This is an individual who thinks, acts, and feels. He is a separate human being whose strength lies in who he is, not in who he will become.

I know it is very tempting to want to buy cute curriculums that promise great things and make you feel secure. These are unnecessary and are often marketed to play upon your fear that your child will be behind without them. To quote Charlotte Mason, a 19th century educator:



Let us consider, in the first two years of life they manage to get through more intellectual effort than any following two years can show. [She proceeds to catalog the marvelous accomplishments that occur in the self-education of these young persons under two] . . . If we have not proved that a child is born a person with a mind as complete and beautiful as his little body, we can at least show that he always has all the mind he requires for these occasions; that is, that his mind is the instrument of his education and that his *education does not produce his mind*.

There also arises an insecurity that your child is missing all the expensive toys, gadgets, and experiences of a formal school program. Please put your mind at ease. What they are gaining by learning real life skills and values from spending their time with you in the “real world” far outweighs any advantages of time spent in a contrived room with people only their age and a few caregivers who could never give them the time, love, care and attention you can. YOU are your child’s best teacher.

Suggested Reading:

For the Children’s Sake by Susan Schaeffer Macauley

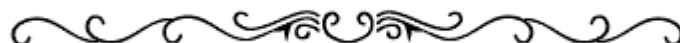
A Charlotte Mason Companion by Karen Andreola

Educating the Whole Hearted Child by Clay and Sally Clarkson

The Article found here on Imparting Living Ideas to Children:

<http://amblesideonline.homestead.com/LivingIdeas.html>

Charlotte Mason's 6-volume *Original Home schooling Series*



The “S” Word: Socialization . . . or “What About the Prom?”

The first and most common question ALL home schoolers get asked seems to be around the question of socialization. Those who argue against home schooling seem to think that because we home school, we will no longer be involved in our community. On the contrary, with the freedom to create our own schedules and pursue our own interests, we can develop much more well-rounded children who know how to serve, work, and relate to many different kinds of people.

I could argue more, but I can do no better than to quote Clay and Sally Clarkson in *Educating the Whole Hearted Child*:



The family is God’s only authorized institution for the socialization of children. If the goal of socialization is greater maturity, that comes from being around mature adults. Every home-educating parent hears it with numbing regularity—“But aren’t you afraid they won’t get enough socialization?” First, you must understand what is being said. To most non-home schoolers, socialization means “regular exposure to peers of the same age and grade,” a woefully inadequate definition. A more acceptable understanding is “the process of instilling social skills necessary for relating effectively to other people.” *A properly socialized*

child, then, knows how to relate well to other people, whether young or old, male or female, different or similar. You can be confident, given the correct definition, that the Christian home is a far better socializing environment than the public (or private) school. . . . Research and testing has consistently shown home-schooled children to be significantly above the public school norms for social skills and development, and for “self-esteem.”

The reason seems clear. In the home school, the primary models for effective relationships are adults—father, mother grandparents, family friends. This kind of *age-integrated socialization* simply does *not* take place in a public school where the models are primarily other foolish, immature children, and where supervision and intervention by mature adults is minimal. . . .

Studies show that constant and excessive interactions and activities (such as in school) have a negative impact on children; limited interactional environments (such as a home) have a positive impact. Home schooling families can easily find opportunities for interaction with other children through church, field trips, support groups, lessons, sports and other activities. And all of that time is under the loving supervision of mature adults who have a vested interest in the social development of their children. . . .

Those who say that home-schooled children aren't in the "real world" just aren't thinking straight. School is the false world. Never in the rest of their lives will your children be forced to live and interact with 20-30 age-mates in a sterile, isolated classroom totally segregated from real living experienced. The real "real world" of home, family, work and ministry prepares children to work with people of all ages in actual situations that they will experience as adults. Schools can't even counterfeit that kind of life experience. Tell those naysayers to "Get real!"



Find Your Philosophy

There are many different philosophies and styles of home schooling—no two homes are going to be alike. Reading the suggested materials in this booklet will help you see beyond a public school-type system of education. It may take years for you to decide on a particular method, with trial and error. I initially thought I would like unit studies, but soon found that they did not suit me. I was thrilled to find Charlotte Mason's philosophy, which fits perfectly with our family. I've included links to Charlotte Mason web sites at the end of this booklet.

Please send for Elijah Co.'s catalog. It has many helpful articles such as: *Why Home School?*, *Viewpoints Influencing Home Education*, *Determining your Child's Real Needs*, *Creating a Learning Environment*, and more. Please read their web article on the common teaching approaches to explore which philosophies appeal to you:
<http://www.elijahco.com/help/articles/teachingapproaches.htm>

Becoming informed on the options of home schooling and developing your own philosophy will give you the confidence to stand up to the negativity you may experience from non-home schoolers who do not understand your decision or method. It will also help you stand up against the onslaught of marketing schemes from home schooling curriculum companies! Unfortunately, home schooling has become big business and those glossy catalogs can become very enticing. Knowing your philosophy and sticking to it can save you much money.

TV or not TV

If your child has developed a TV viewing habit, I would suggest you reconsider it. Do not be deceived by "educational" programs, as your child's brain is as close to being asleep as it possibly can be while watching TV, and many of these programs may actually lead to shorter attention spans because of their rapidly moving pictures. You may think that allowing your child to watch TV is helpful to you, but you will actually find that your child has less energy and more behavioral problems after having watched television. You will also be thrilled to see how creative and imaginative your child can be when watching a TV program is not an option. Give it a try—I'm sure you'll be pleased.



Resources for further research on brain development and effects of television:

The Plug in Drug by Marie Winn

Endangered Minds by Jane Healy



Nature Study

Children naturally love nature and are curious about the world around them. Our job is to nurture that love and provide them with opportunities for exploring, allowing them to delight, understand and be intimate with the outdoor world. Gently leading your children in nature study will be a joy to them the rest of their lives. Think how different it is to read a book about birds versus being able to look out your window and identify the birds in your yard, know what they like to eat, what type of nest they build, whether they migrate or not, and what their call sounds like simply by observing. This is truly developing the types of relationships we should encourage in our child's education.



One of the ways God reveals himself to us is through the natural world. In Job 38 & 39, God tells Job to look to nature for a deeper understanding of Himself. Give your children regular opportunities to get in touch with God's creation, and they will have a better understanding and awe of the Creator.

Observing, collecting, classifying, and identifying will provide a basis for scientific observation and possibly experimentation. Look for obvious connections, and your child will start finding them on their own as they grow in understanding. Just start by observing, walking around your neighborhood or nature trail, sit still and listen/watch what's going on around you. Encourage your child to remain quiet during nature walks. Choose something to focus on, such as trees, birds, flowers, rocks, to study and learn more about. Start with what you know, or gather field guides and learn together. These observation skills will be very valuable to your child throughout their life.

Below are some suggestions on bringing nature study to your home.

- ❖ Plant native plants around your home in order to attract creatures to your yard which are common to your region. Check the your local Nature Center or Farmer's Market for ideas on native plants.
- ❖ Encourage butterflies and moths to your yard by planting those bushes that attract them. I found a Milkweed plant at the Farmer's Market, which is the only plant a Monarch will lay their eggs on.
- ❖ Place a bird feeder right outside a window, or purchase the kind that suction-cups to your window. Purchase a simple field guide for your area, then help your child observe and name those birds that come to the feeder. Notice what they eat, how they fly, which birds are dominant, what their song sounds like, etc.

- ❖ To further attract birds, set out a birdbath. You'll need to change the water frequently.
- ❖ Keep a pet in a jar. Worms are easy! There is a book by the name of *Pets in a Jar* that will give instruction on how to care for many small animals.
- ❖ Grow a garden. Start something from seed. Sunflowers and marigolds are easy and very rewarding. Also consider planting a vegetable or two.
- ❖ Look in your own home! Start by observing any pets you may have: what are their habits, how do they communicate their needs, classify them, etc. Frequenting your local pet store will also be helpful in observing some creatures such as lizards, snakes, rabbits, etc.
- ❖ Buy a craft box/tackle box to store your nature finds. It is a clear plastic box with removable dividers that can be found at Wal-Mart or a craft store.
- ❖ Consider starting a nature journal for yourself.

Thornton Burgess books are adorable books to help familiarize your child with those creatures he cannot commonly observe. They are fictional stories that teach characteristics of many different animals.



Resources for Nature Study:

A Pocketful of Pinecones by Karen Andreola

Handbook of Nature Study by Anna Comstock. This is a worthwhile find to save for, as you will use it throughout your life.

Field Guides (check your local used bookstore or conservation center)

Kids Garden by Avery Hart and Paul Mantell

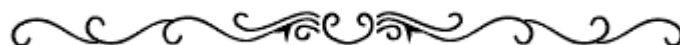
Thornton Burgess books can be found inexpensively at <http://store.doverpublications.com>

Find nature posters and other resources here: www.conservation.state.mo.us

www.insectlore.com sells kits to grow live animals such as butterflies, ladybugs, ants, and tadpoles.

Here are two good online articles worth reading relating to nature study:

http://www.christianity.com/CC_Content_Page/0,,PTID61309|CHID452232|CIID,00.html



Art

Many home educators may feel overwhelmed at the thought of art instruction because they do not have an extensive art background. Do not be tempted to exclude this important aspect and do not underestimate its importance.

Please read *Young at Art* by Susan Striker. This is all the art instruction you will need.



Provide your children with ready access to paint, brushes, sponges, play-dough, clay, crayons, markers, blo-pens, paint pens, bingo markers, stickers, pipe cleaners, fabric scraps, different papers, cardboard, found objects, beads, scissors, glue, etc. Make sure you buy good quality art supplies. Keep an art cabinet, box, or drawer that is easily accessible. I use a child-size shoe hanger with pockets filled with art supplies and nailed next to a child-size desk.

And then stay out of the way!

My suggestions are that you do not use coloring books, and do not have your child create an object conceived by you, no matter how cute those pumpkins, Christmas trees, and bunnies are. Also, do not cut up your child's creations into recognizable images, do not ask your child what the image is, but only make helpful observances such as, "I see you made a straight line, then a curving line," "You used brown and then black," "I like the dots you made in a circle."

There are a few neat art appreciation books I have found. One is entitled *I Spy* by Lucy Micklethwait that has a reproduced work of art on each page corresponding with a letter of the alphabet, and you are to find something in that picture that begins with that sound. For the young, I wouldn't worry about the letter, but just look at the picture together, maybe asking "can you see an elephant?"

Other art appreciation books I like are *Spot a Dog*, and *Come Look With Me*. The idea is to simply observe and appreciate. Maybe have them observe then close their eyes and tell you about it, or ask them how the picture makes them feel and why.

A few good art project books are *Don't Move the Muffin Tins* and *Dribble Drabble* and *More Dribble Drabble* by Deya Brashears.



Reading

A “living book” is hard to define, but you will begin to know them after practice. It is a book written by a single author who is knowledgeable and passionate about their subject. It conveys ideas and has an excellent literary quality. It’s the kind of book that you enjoy reading multiple times and typically don’t cringe when your child brings the book to you for the fifth time in as many days.



Keep your eye out for quality stories and illustrations, but get a variety, not just ones that appeal to you. (Don’t miss Beatrix Potter’s little books.) Avoid any TV, movie, or popular character books, as these are typically not of good literary quality. *Honey for a Child’s Heart* by Gladys Hunt and *Books Children Love* by Elizabeth Wilson provide lists of good books for you to look for at the library and will give you a good idea of what “living books” are.

Go to the library as often as possible, taking two book bags and filling them up. Read to your child at regular times every day, and at any other time they ask! Books on tape can help save your vocal chords and be helpful when you’re trying to prepare dinner or while traveling. Check your library or the Resources for Books on Tape at the end of this booklet.

Make sure to include poetry and nursery rhymes into your everyday reading. Some suggestions are:

Cecily Parsley’s Nursery Rhymes and *Appley Dapple’s Nursery Rhymes* by Beatrix Potter

Mother Goose books. Read here for an article on Mother Goose:

<http://amblesideonline.homestead.com/MotherGoose.html>

Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Child’s Garden of Verses* illustrated by Donna Green

The Complete Poems of Pooh by A.A. Milne

Christina Rossetti’s *Sing Song*—can be printed from this website:

<http://amblesideonline.homestead.com/RossettiBabyPoems.html>

Edward Lear

Poems to Read to the Very Young

Marigold Garden by Kate Greenaway.



Choose a few poems for you and your child to memorize. Simply read them frequently and you’ll be surprised how fast they learn it. Robert Louis Stevenson’s

poems have been put to song in *A Child's Garden of Songs* and also put to classical music in *A Child's Garden of Verses: scores with classical music*.

Get into the habit of showing your children how valuable books are by making a tradition of buying a book at each birthday, let them see you reading books, and teaching them how to care for their books.

Studies show that children taught to read at early ages have no advantages, and that by the time they are 6-7 will be no more advanced than their peers. Actually, those children who were allowed to manipulate materials and given an understanding and appreciation of nature will show more readiness for school. There is no advantage to pushing your child to read, or even to know the letters of the alphabet.

If your child wants to learn some of the alphabet, then teach letter sounds, not letter names, in a natural way. Start with the first letter of their name, and then move on to other familiar words. Having them draw letters is not necessary at this age, as they are doing just that—drawing, not writing. If **they** would like to, then help them learn their name. Use a tray of cornstarch or sand to help them trace letters in. It would be *more* helpful to allow them to draw their own shapes and designs, which will eventually lead to them learning to draw circles, straight-lines, curves, dots, and all those shapes that will later be necessary for writing. Try not to stand in the way of this natural development by requiring the writing of letters or specific shapes.

When it is time to teach phonics, do not feel you need to spend a lot of money on a curriculum. There are many no-cost and low-cost resources that do an excellent job and do not have the distractions of the flashy phonics programs. Also, do not assume that all children are ready to read by 5. When a child is ready, it will come easily and naturally, so do not push it.

Here are some recommended resources for teaching reading:

Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons by Engelmann, Haddox and Bruner

Home Start in Reading by Ruth Beechick

Pecci Reading Method <http://www.onlinereadingteacher.com>

Phonics Pathways <http://www.dorbooks.com/phonics.html>



For penmanship, I suggest italic handwriting. This is what Elijah Co. catalog has to say about Italic handwriting in reference to the Getty & Dubay series that they sell:

When we discovered the *Italic Handwriting Series*, we knew we had found **the** handwriting method that assists the natural movements of the hand and produces legibility with speed. With the *Italic Handwriting Series*, the child learns only one simple way of writing the alphabet that is both manuscript and cursive, the cursive being created by adding joiners between those letters that are natural to join. The program consists of an unjoined set of letters in grades one and two.

Near the end of second grade or beginning of the third, the child adds entrance and exit strokes (serifs) and joins. There is no transition period except for the addition of the joins. However, when children learn conventional cursive, they are confronted with virtually 26 new letter forms to master and the addition of awkward joins promotes frustration for the learner as well as illegibility.

Penny Gardner has also developed an italics penmanship program:

<http://www.digis.net/~gardnerp/italics.html>

In doing penmanship, make sure the child is ready for the fine motor skills required. Requiring one perfect letter is far better than a whole line of gradually declining letters.

Resources:

A Home Start in Reading by Ruth Beechick

Better Late than Early by Raymond and Dorothy Moore

Honey for a Child's Heart by Gladys Hunt

Books Children Love by Diane Lopez

<http://kids.nypl.org/reading/recommended2.cfm?ListID=61> lists 100 Recommended Picture Books to read



Bible

The Bible is the greatest work of literature we possess! I would suggest reading directly from the Bible rather than a watered down children's version. Read from whatever version you enjoy, as well as trying new versions. In reading from cartoon story Bibles, children are given the message that the Bible is an adult book not for them, and you are underestimating a child's capacity to understand and hear from the Holy Spirit.

There are some graphic passages from the Old Testament that I would not care to read to a preschooler—that would be left to your judgment. Penny Gardner has compiled a list of scriptures to read by episode, one for the Old Testament and one for the New Testament. I alternate our readings in this manner: Monday—OT, Tuesday—NT, Wednesday—Proverb, Thursday—OT, Friday—NT. Here is a link to her website: www.pennygardner.com

Having said the above, I do like Catherine Vos' *Child's Story Bible*. It is not dumbed-down, has a few tasteful illustrations, is written in story form and gives insight into the history and connections of the Bible. It's like having your grandmother telling you Bible stories.

Here is one quote from Charlotte Mason concerning Bible reading:

The rhythm and cadence of Biblical phraseology is as charming to a child as to his elders... Read your Bible story to the child, bit by bit; get him to tell you in his own words what you have read. (Charlotte Mason Study Guide, p. 97)

Be gentle in your request for the child to tell you the story in his own words, and only in small pieces, not entire chapters. This is a developed skill called narration that is really expected to begin closer to ages 6 and 7.

Here are some suggestions on appropriate Scriptures to memorize:

1 Timothy 4:4a
Philippians 4:13
Hebrews 12:14a
Hebrews 13:16a
Luke 1:37
John 14:15
Exodus 20:12a
Hebrews 13:6b
Psalms 143:3a
James 1:5
Galatians 5:13b

Psalms 100:2
Deuteronomy 6:18a
John 6:47
Psalms 24:1
Mark 10:14b
John 14:1
1 Corinthians 10:31
John 14:15
Matthew 22:37a
Luke 10:27b
Psalm 86:5a

1 John 1:9a
Psalms 147:1b
1 Corinthians 15:3b
2 Corinthians 9:7b
1 Samuel 12:20b

Some Activities to do with Preschoolers:

Most importantly, include them in your everyday activities. Attempt to find a way for them to join you or help you. If you're painting, give them a bucket of water and a paintbrush. If you're cooking, find things they can do to help, such as breaking eggs, pouring in pre-measured ingredients, or filling muffin tins. If you're dusting, put an old sock over their hand and allow them to dust. Don't be afraid of the mess and don't re-do something they've done. It is tempting to exclude children from these daily activities because they will take longer, but the benefits are well worth it—a child who feels valued and valuable. The relationship you are building and confidence you are instilling are far more important than having a perfectly dusted house! This is true education!

- ❖ Provide musical instruments and quality music to dance and move with.
- ❖ Provide them with child-sized gardening tools.
- ❖ Play catch, preferably with a “gertie” ball which can be found at Gold Minds. Move to smaller balls as they master the gertie ball. Also cut the bottoms off of two milk cartons and use these to throw and catch a small ball while holding the handle of the carton.
- ❖ Tape a line on the floor and walk along it, making it varied each time.
- ❖ Cut various-sized holes in the bottom of a Velveeta box so that when you turn it upside down on the kitchen floor you can roll marbles into it, trying to get them into the holes. Write numbers on the top of each hole, so you can add up your score.
- ❖ Allow practice with good-quality scissors. Do not expect them to cut out figures, but just allow them to cut strips of paper. When they are ready, trace a straight line in thick marker on a paper and allow them to cut it. Gradually move on to curving and zig-zag lines. Cutting “snakes” of play-dough is a good way to practice as well. If they are having difficulty with these motor skills, try a few activities such as using tongs to remove and replace cotton balls from a container or provide a container with clothespins and allow them to attach the pins to the sides.
- ❖ If you've got a mother or grandmother who has collected spools (as I was fortunate enough to have), ask if you can have them to create a stringing game. If not, you can buy them.
- ❖ Make or buy lacing cards.
- ❖ Make a discovery box by wrapping a lidded box in wrapping paper, cut a hole in the lid, and then staple two pieces of hosiery to the inside of the lid in order to create an opening that will open and close around the child's hand. Place an object in the box and have the child put their hand through the hole, feel the object, and guess what it is.

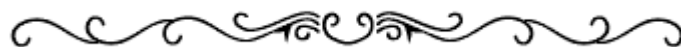


- ❖ Wind up a musical toy and hide it while the child is in another room. Have them use their ears to find the object.
- ❖ Provide toys that allow for creativity and imagination, avoiding electronic games and toys, or toys that are themed and limited in their use. See below for web site suggestions. However, I would advise against spending much on toys. You can often make items similar to what you find in catalogs—be creative. It's become a joke, but it is true that the child would often rather play with the box than the toy. Give them junk to play with! ☺
- ❖ Draw on the sidewalk with chalk.
- ❖ Play with puzzles. Check them out from the library for variety.

Article by Karen Andreola titled: *What to do with Preschoolers*
http://www.homeschoolhighlights.com/01_preschoolers

Some web sites for cool toys and games:

www.mindwareonline.com
<http://www.constructiontoys.com>
www.turnoffthetv.com
<http://www.gamepreserve.com/Default.htm>
<http://www.bigfuntoys.com>
<http://www.niftycool.com/index.html>
<http://www.familypastimes.com>
<http://www.hearthsong>



Sensory Fun

Use a shallow Rubbermaid tote or something similar to create a sensory table. Use rice, sand, cornmeal, bird seed, oatmeal, or whatever other idea you have. Rice can be colored easily by placing a small amount of alcohol in a bowl, putting in food coloring, and then enough rice to absorb the liquid. This is a great lesson in color mixing and lots of fun! Provide funnels, toilet paper rolls, spoons, cups, and anything else your child imagines. If you use sand, get it wet so that it will hold shapes. Putting down a vinyl tablecloth will protect most of your floor. ☺

Before you mop, allow your child to stand at the sink with slowly running water and some various kitchen utensils. Place a towel directly under them to absorb most of the spills. Have fun with a “will it sink or will it float” game.

Allow your child to play with mud outside. This is a fabulous sensory and art activity. You can also have them put mud into a muffin tin and let it dry for a few days, then you’ll have mud bricks to build with.

Another activity you may prefer to do outside is shaving cream. If you’ve got a child-size table you can use outside, spray shaving cream on it and allow them to do whatever they want. It’s easy to hose off. Alternately, try using the bathtub.

Don’t forget to use the bathtub as a fun sensory time by providing cups, funnels, ladles, boats, etc.

Here is a link to an article for more ideas on sensory tables:

<http://www.geocities.com/aslansavz/sensory>



Math

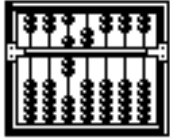
Very little math instruction is needed in the early years if you give your children opportunities to join you in learning “real math” in every day situations. Give your child the opportunity to count and match with real objects, such as setting the table for dinner (how many people are there, so how many forks will we need?). Associate written numbers with numbers of objects. Allow your child to help you cook, pointing out the different measurements used; tell them how many cups of flour you need and have them keep count of how much they put in. Decide together how you need to cut a pie in order to serve a certain number of people.

If you weren't good at math in school, or aren't good at math now, don't let that discourage you. You can and will learn math along with your children. And if there ever does come a time when you feel you can't teach math, you can always look to co-op with a friend who can, or to rely on a self-teaching curriculum—but that's many years from now.



Some early math activities I have done:

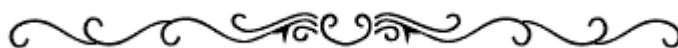
- Cut fish out of multiple colors of fun foam and number them 0-9. Attach a paper clip to their mouths. Tie a magnet to a string, then to a stick, and “fish” for colors or numbers.
- Cut out ladybugs from felt, glue on google eyes and number them 1-10. Cut out black dots from felt, about the size of a quarter. Match the correct number of dots to the corresponding ladybug.
- With an empty egg carton, write numbers 1-12 on the bottom of each cup. Write corresponding numbers on small slips of paper for them to match. Later, have them put in the correct number of cheerios into each cup.
- Buy a calendar (preferably with beautifully reproduced art work on it) and cross off each day as you come to it, saying the name of the month, day, year, and mentioning the season occasionally. Draw pictures for any specific upcoming activities and count the days left ‘til that activity. You could also buy the magnetic calendars found at educational supply stores that you change each month.
- Use a file folder to make your own generic game board to be used with dice, skill cards, counting, etc. You could use stickers as spaces and match colors. Just take a look at the games being sold for your preschooler and you’ll find you can typically make something for much less money.



Avoid the temptation to buy math workbooks, as these cover most the subjects your child has learned naturally—matching, shapes, counting, etc. Teach addition and subtraction with dominoes or counters, or even cheerios and M&M's.

When you are ready for a math curriculum, at around age 6 or 7, (1st grade) I suggest using Math U See. This curriculum has given me many “a-ha” moments. It teaches math very logically and systematically, using the same set of manipulatives throughout the program. It includes telling time, money, and measurements. Through the use of many helpful hints and tricks, the child learns to solve problems without counting on their fingers. I love this curriculum!

Their web site is: www.mathusee.com



Music

Here is a quote from Wendi Capeheart that can be found at:

<http://amblesideonline.homestead.com/Music.html>

The goal is not to have children who can give a lecture on music theory. It is to have children learn to enjoy classical music and tell one piece from another just as naturally as they learn the difference between, say, *The Farmer in the Dell* and *When the Saints Go Marching In*—because they are both familiar with and fond of what they are hearing. The more they are exposed to good literature, the better they get at reading the themes and language of literature. In art and music, the more they are simply exposed to pictures and music, the more they learn to 'read' the themes of the world's classic compositions.

With reading we don't begin with the mechanics, the grammar and punctuation, nor do we begin with a biography of Beatrix Potter before we read *Peter Rabbit*. With music, we should begin in much the same way—simple exposure. Our children may read and be familiar with Beatrix Potter's children's stories for years before we would move on to Shakespeare, biographies, the history of 'English Literature.' So they can simply play around with music, listening to it, plinking away on musical instruments without being burdened with facts about the lives of composers, music theory, technique, and composition.



I suggest listening to classical music in your home and car. If there is a particular composer you are fond of, start there, but don't be afraid to try new composers either. Favorites in our house are Mozart, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky. Do not think that children need to listen to "children's music."

We also listen to folk and celtic music because we enjoy the music and it is part of our heritage. Our favorite CDs are "Gimme Elbow Room" by Bonnie Rideout, "Hey, Ludwig!: classical piano solos for playful times" by Ric Louchard, "Wee Sing America," Michael Card's "Starkindler," and Burl Ives "A Twinkle In Your Eye". We highly suggest them all!

www.homesteadpickers.com is the web site for a group that performs at Silver Dollar City and also travels to other countries. They have put together a 2-CD set of folk songs for the Ambleside curriculum.



***"A Formidable List of Attainments for a Child of Six",
a reprint of a curriculum outline from a CM school in the 1890's
from Summer 93 Parents Review pub by Karen Andreola
with my notes in italics.***

1. To recite, beautifully, 6 easy poems and hymns
nursery rhymes, A.A. Milne, and Robert Louis Stevenson are good choices.
2. To recite, perfectly and beautifully, a parable and a psalm
3. To add and subtract numbers up to 10, with dominoes or counters
4. To read--what and how much, will depend on what we are told of the child
5. To copy in print-hand from a book
I am going to use the Italic Penmanship book for this. One perfectly copied letter is better than a line of gradually declining letters. Once individual letters are mastered, then move on to copying a word, then a sentence.
6. To know the points of the compass with relation to their own home, where the sun rises and sets, and the way the wind blows
"The sun rises in my back yard, which is the East. The wind blows from the front of my house, which is the West." These things can be taught in simple conversation.
7. To describe the boundries of their own home
"Towards the South, there is a lawn containing three trees that ends in a road."
8. To describe any lake, river, pond, island etc. within easy reach
9. To tell quite accurately (however shortly) 3 stories from Bible history, 3 from early English, and 3 from early Roman history
You may want to substitute early American history here.
10. To be able to describe 3 walks and 3 views
11. To mount in a scrap book a dozen common wildflowers, with leaves (one every week); to name these, describe them in their own words, and say where they found them.

12. To do the same with leaves and flowers of 6 forest trees
13. To know 6 birds by song, colour and shape
14. To send in certain Kindergarten or other handiwork, as directed
Handiwork is a useful skill learned, such as finger knitting, paper weaving, simple sewing, cross-stitching, clay modeling, drawing, etc. Charlotte Mason suggests afternoon time should be spent in useful occupations such as nature study and handiwork.
15. To tell three stories about their own "pets"—rabbit, dog or cat.
16. To name 20 common objects in French, and say a dozen little sentences
Substitute your own choice of foreign language.
17. To sing one hymn, one French song, and one English song
18. To keep a caterpillar and tell the life-story of a butterfly from his own observations.



Resources

Resources for your Home School to begin collecting:

Encyclopedia

Children's Dictionary

The Timetables of History by Grun

Art supplies—consider asking for art supplies as gifts.

Field guides

Children's World Atlas

Children's Atlas of the Bible

Nature collection boxes

Globe

Wall maps

A child-size desk or table. I found an old school desk at Salvation Army for \$5.

Classical CDs

Begin to build a library of books, music and art

Chalk and marker board or easel

General Home Schooling Books

For the Children's Sake by Susan Schaeffer Macaulay—please read this one!

A Charlotte Mason Companion by Karen Andreola

Educating the WholeHearted Child by Clay and Sally Clarkson (see a link to their web site under “home school catalogs”)

Charlotte Mason Study Guide by Penny Gardner

Dumbing Us Down by John Gatto (not a book about home schooling, but rather the negative effects of public schooling)

Parenting Books

Hints on Child Training by Clay Trumbull—excellent book!

How to Really Love Your Child by Dr. Ross Campbell

Six-Point Plan for Raising Happy, Healthy Children by John Rosemond

The Story of Me by Carolyn Nystrom—the first book in four dealing age-appropriately with God's design for sex

Creative Correction by Lisa Welchel

www.nogreaterjoy.com has many interesting articles.

Home School catalogs:

Elijah Company This is more than a catalog; they offer many helps including a description of the different home schooling philosophies. Definitely check this one out: www.elijahco.com

WholeHeart www.wholeheart.org

The Book Peddler www.the-book-peddler.com

Lifetime Books and Gifts www.lifetimebooksandgifts.com

Timberdoodle www.timberdoodle.com

Dover Publications www.doverpublications.com

Library and Educational Resources <http://www.libraryanded.com>

Charlotte Mason web sites:

<http://home.att.net/~bandcparker/cmlinks.html>

<http://www.utmost-way.com/bookfair/bftime4tea.htm>

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Meadows/4380/cmason.html>

www.pennygardner.com This is an excellent site worth exploring.

Ambleside curriculum: <http://amblesideonline.homestead.com> This is the curriculum I use. It has many articles that would be worth reading.

Here is Ambleside's "Year 0" that is well worth reviewing:

<http://amblesideonline.homestead.com/Pre1.html>

Used book sites:

[www.vegsource.com/home school](http://www.vegsource.com/home%20school)

www.bookfinder.com

www.ebay.com

www.half.com

www.alibris.com

Other web sites:

<http://donnayoung.org>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CM4earlyyears> is a discussion group for those implementing Charlotte Mason's philosophy in the early years.

www.enchantedlearning.com resources and printables for Pre-K and K

<http://www.learningtreasures.com>

<http://www.easyfunschool.com/index.html>

Books on Tape Resources:

<http://www.blackstoneaudio.com> They offer a 50% discount to home schoolers if you phone in your order.

www.singnlearn.com Look for Jim Weiss story tapes here.

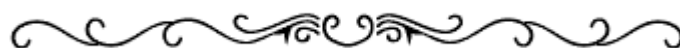
<http://www.belovedbooks.com>

Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA): I would advise joining this organization. Home schooling continues to be under attack by the NEA and their powerful lobbyists. This organization has been invaluable in defending our right to home school. If you are ever questioned by the authorities and are a member of HSLDA, they will come to your aid. Please read through their web site.

www.hslda.org

Even if you don't join HSLDA, be aware of your rights and the law—your local social service agencies are not. On HSLDA's web site, click "In Your State," then click on your state to see legislative alerts and the law that applies to your state.

<http://www.conservation.state.mo.us> Missouri Department of Conservation web site has free posters and educational materials to send for.



Charlotte Mason offers the following timeless advice on educating our children.

Quotes from Charlotte Mason from Vol. 1 of her 6 Volume Series

Collected by Wendi Capeheart

A mother's chief responsibilities for the first six years is to secure for her children "Quiet growing time- and free growing time- the freedom of real play (not lessons that look like play) and of ordering one's own life. (page 194)

The games mother and baby play together naturally, without any special training or effort, are exactly what a baby needs to develop properly- at least to age 2 (190).

From 2-5 avoid the over stimulation of too much time with age mates. She says that "...the mixed society of elders, jrs., and equals, which we get in a family..." gives the right mix of rest and individual development. Be careful not to supplement nature so much that we supplant her and "deprive her of the space and time to do her own work..." page 191

Natural development as opposed to any too carefully organized system- a "child... left to himself ...will think more and better, if less showily" page 196

Tommy should be free to do what he likes with his limbs and his mind through all the hours of the day when he is not sitting up nicely at meals. He should run and jump, leap and tumble, lie on his face watching a worm, or on his back watching the bees.... Nature will look after him and give him promptings of desire to know many things, and somebody must tell as he wants to know; and to do many things, and somebody should be handy just to put him in the way; and to be many things, naughty and good, and somebody should give direction. page 192

...Health, strength, and agility, bright eyes, and alert movements, come of a free life, out-of-doors, if it may be, and as for habits, there is no habit or power so useful to man or woman as that of personal initiative. The resourcefulness which will enable a family of children to invent their own games and occupations through the length of a summer's day is worth more in after life than a good deal of knowledge about cubes and hexagons, and this comes, not of continual intervention on the mother's part, but of much masterly inactivity. page 192

The part of the mother in early years is to 'sow opportunities, and then to keep in the background, ready with a guiding or restraining hand only when these are badly wanted... wise letting alone is the chief thing... Nature... arranges for due work and due rest of mind, muscles, and senses.' page 193

Let him go and come freely, let him touch real things, and combine his impressions for himself, instead of sitting indoors at a little round table while a sweet-voiced teacher suggests that he build a stone wall with his wooden blocks, or make a rainbow out of strips of coloured paper, or plant straw trees in bead flower-pots. Such teaching fills the mind with artificial associations that must be got rid of before the child can develop independent ideas out of actual experiences. page 196

Definite lessons begin around 6 or 7 (page 193), and 'A child will have taught himself to paint, paste, cut paper, knit, weave, hammer and saw, make lovely things in clay and sand, build castles with his bricks; possibly too, will have taught himself to read, write, and do sums, besides acquiring no end of knowledge and notions about the world he lives in, by the time he is six or seven. What I contend for is that he shall do these things because he chooses (provided that the standard of perfection in his small works be set before him. page 194

An excellent summary of her ideas is on page 177/8: "(a) That the knowledge most valuable to the child is that which he gets with his own eyes and ears and fingers (under direction) in the open air. (b) That the claims of the schoolroom should not be allowed to encroach on the child's right to long hours daily for exercise and investigation. (c) That the child should be taken daily, if possible, to scenes- moor or meadow, park, common or shore- where he may find new things to examine, and so add to his store of real knowledge. That the child's observation should be directed to flower or boulder, bird or tree; that, in fact, he should be employed in gathering the common information which is the basis of scientific knowledge. (d) That play, vigorous healthful play, is, in its turn, fully as important as lessons, as regards both bodily health and brain-power. (e) That the child, though under supervision, should be left much to himself- both that he may go to work in his own way on the ideas he receives, and also that he may be the more open to natural influences. (f) That the happiness of the child is the condition of his progress; that his lessons should be joyous, and that occasions of friction in the schoolroom are greatly to be deprecated."

Miss Mason insists on the importance of learning principles rather than strict "what to do" lists, and she also stresses the importance of staying current with the science of the day, with child development, and says, "As far as education is a science, the truth of even ten, much more, a hundred years ago is not the whole truth of today." Page 185 and that "We may not have an educational pope; we must think out for ourselves, as well as work out, those things that belong to the perfect bringing-up of our children." Page 185

One of things Miss Mason does stress for the early years is training in good habits- she has a lot to say about it, and I found nearly all of it overwhelming, until I found the following encouraging passage:

on page 192, Miss Mason says "The busy mother says she has no leisure... and the child will run wild and get into bad habits; but we must not make a fetish of habit; education is a *life* as well as a discipline. Health, strength, and agility, bright eyes, and alert movements, come of a free life, out-of-doors, if it may be, and as for habits, there is no habit or power so useful to man or woman as that of personal initiative. The resourcefulness which will enable a family of children to invent their own games and occupations through the length of a summer's day is worth more in after life than a good deal of knowledge about cubes and hexagons, and this comes, not of continual intervention on the mother's part, but of much masterly inactivity."

I sincerely hope that this booklet has been helpful and encouraging in your decision to home school. I encourage you to begin reading some of the resources listed. Most importantly, I want you to know that *you can do it*.