

The Knowledge House Guide to: **HOMESCHOOL METHODS & CURRICULUM OPTIONS**

Compiled by Teri Ann Berg Olsen

www.KnowledgeHouse.info

There are many different methods of homeschooling and various types of curriculum used. As the parent, you must decide what you think will work best for your family. Consider each child's interests, abilities, and learning styles as well as how you view education, your role as teacher, and the amount of structure you want.

Classical Education

This method is based on the rigorous medieval model of education called the Trivium, which covers three phases of cognitive development. The Grammar period (grade school, ages 9-11) focuses on concrete thinking and memorization of facts and language. The Dialectic period (middle school, ages 12-14) covers analytical thinking, asking questions, and understanding the subjects. The Rhetoric period (high school, ages 14-16) covers abstract thinking, articulation, and learning how to present arguments in a persuasive and pleasing form. Specific subjects that help accomplish the goals of the Trivium are: Grammar (the science of language usage); Logic (the science of right thinking); and Rhetoric (the science of verbal and written expression). A classical course of study includes a rich exposure to the history, art, and culture of Western Civilization, its languages (Latin and Greek), philosophy, and literature (the Great Books of Western Civilization, beginning with Greek and Roman literature). (Examples: Trivium Pursuit, The Well-Trained Mind, Veritas Press)

Principal Approach

This method returns to the roots of American liberty, reviving America's historic Christian method of education in which God's Truth is the basis of every subject in the school curriculum and Creationism is the foundation of the sciences. In each lesson, Biblical principles are taught that expand and enrich the Biblical understanding of that subject. The Principle Approach also utilizes the tutorial method. Foundational to this method is the principle of individuality—that each child is uniquely created by God. Through the Principle Approach, students will acquire the reading, research, application, and writing skills necessary to study on their own. The students also learn from the knowledge, experience and stories of the teacher, who is a "Living Textbook." At the same time, the home educator learns as he or she prepares and teaches each lesson, a concept called "Teacher as Learner." (Example: The Foundation for American Christian Education)

Unit Studies

This popular teaching approach focuses learning around a particular topic or theme for a period of time. The teacher integrates material related to the theme from different disciplines. Unit studies involve a lot of reading, hands-on activities, craft projects, research and report writing. Unit studies often revolve around living books, character qualities, biblical principles, or the creation timeline. They work well for teaching history, literature, science, and specific topics such as holidays - but not as well for math. Unit studies are best used by creative families. They require a great deal of preparation time and trips to the library. Unit studies are also useful for instructing various age levels at the same time, which can help build family togetherness. (Examples: Amanda Bennett's Unit Study Adventures, Konos, Weaver)

Living Books (a.k.a. Charlotte Mason Method)

This method is based on the educational philosophy of Charlotte Mason, a 19th-century British educator who felt that children should learn from "living" books and not from cold, dry, boring textbooks. Her method has experienced a rebirth among American home schools. Living books have a narrative that absorbs the reader and characters that "come alive." Living books engage the mind, inspire the imagination, and thrill the heart. Biographies and autobiographies are living books for learning about history. The Charlotte Mason method is also characterized by short lessons and few lectures; no homework, tests, or grades; plenty of field trips, nature studies, and outdoor play. (Examples: Living Books Curriculum, Ambleside Online, Queen Homeschool Supplies)

Literature-Based

This method relies on real books with the addition of teaching manuals. There is very little workbook or textbook work, although there is more structure. All of the reading ties together in various subjects, but it requires less prep time than a unit study. The literature approach goes to the source of information, rather than relying on a textbook author's interpretation of history and science. (Examples: Sonlight, Five in a Row, Beautiful Feet Books)

Moore Formula

Homeschooling pioneers Raymond and Dorothy Moore are best known for their theory that formal schooling is better started late than early. In the Moore method, no formal study is required until at least age 8, perhaps even delaying it as long as age 10 or 12. Informal learning before that time happens as the child works and plays within the family. The Moore Formula homeschool curriculum is based on a blend of study, work, and service. Studies are practical, low-stress, interest-based units and projects. For example, history is taught by reading biographies. Work consists of doing manual chores, assisting with the family business, and the child's own entrepreneurial activities. Service includes helping at home, church, and in the community. Bible study and memorization is done daily. Emphasis is on the guidance and examples set by the parents. (Example: Moore Academy)

Montessori Method

Many homeschooling parents use the Montessori philosophy of following the child's interests and not interrupting the exciting process of discovery which leads to a love of learning. In this way, the Montessori method is similar to unschooling. The teacher's role primarily involves organizing a stimulating learning environment complete with cultural, artistic, scientific, and other educational materials. This method places an emphasis on children of all ages playing and working together, with the older children sharing their knowledge with the younger ones. There are no grades or other forms of reward or punishment. Assessment is by portfolio and observation.

Waldorf Method

This holistic liberal arts approach stresses the importance of educating the whole child – body, mind, and spirit... head, heart, and hands ... intellectual, artistic, and spiritual. The arts, humanities and sciences are interwoven with one another. There is an emphasis on arts and crafts, music and movement, nature and the outdoors. A Waldorf education truly cherishes childhood through play, singing, and storytelling. Lessons revolve around themes, religious celebrations, and seasons. No "formal" academics begin until the child reaches approximately 6 years of age. Children in a Waldorf homeschool do not use textbooks; instead, they create their own books. Electronic media such as television, computers, and hand-held games are viewed as detrimental to the healthy development of young children. (Examples: Oak Meadow, Wonder Homeschool, Waldorf Family Network)

Eclectic Approach

One of the great things about homeschooling is that you aren't limited to just one method – you can take what you like from each to maximize your child's learning. This can also be called a "mix-and-match" approach, because it combines a variety of different homeschooling methods and curricula, drawing from all available styles and utilizing the best components of each. For example, a family may use the classical method of education for learning about language arts and literature, unit studies for history, a textbook for math, CD-ROM for science, an online foreign language class, a private tutor for music, a co-op for art, and unschooling for electives.

Do-It-Yourself

Back in the early days of the modern home education movement, homeschool curriculum was not commonly available so parents had to design their own. Some well-organized, independent-minded individuals still do it that way. If you are homeschooling on a shoestring, you may be equipped with only a library card. When you create your own homemade curriculum, you get to decide on the methods, the books, the schedule, and everything else related to your child's education. The main disadvantage is that making up your own lesson plans and tests from scratch is extremely time-consuming. Parents using this method trust in their instincts and determine what each child needs based on the child, custom-designing the curriculum to suit their child's needs.

Unschooling

The term "unschooling" can refer to any unstructured teaching method that enables children to pursue their interests in the context of daily life, with the world as their classroom. This method is also known as "child-directed," "delight-directed," relaxed or flexible homeschooling. Educator John Holt first described the unschooling approach to education in his book *Teach Your Own*. According to Holt, children's natural curiosity about the world motivates them to learn what they need to know when they need to know it. He suggests that children don't need

any formal curriculum, just adult guidance to help the children explore their interests at their own pace in order to learn the most from their experiences in the real world.

Structured Curricula

This method is similar to a traditional classroom approach. In fact, many of the following homeschool curriculums are also used in Christian schools. Types of structured curricula include:

Curriculum-in-a-Box or packaged curriculum makes it convenient and easy for the new homeschooler to simply purchase a curriculum and get started. It's also a great time saver for the busy home teacher who would rather just get everything off the shelf and have it ready to use. You can buy a complete package that has all the materials you will need for a particular grade level, or you can buy complete curriculum for an individual subject. Included in these packages are items such as: textbooks, workbooks, teacher manuals, supplemental reading material, and more. (Examples: Abeka, Alpha Omega Publications, Bob Jones, Rod & Staff, School of Tomorrow)

Textbooks used in homeschooling are like those used in schools. They may be hardbound or softcover. You will usually find student textbooks with accompanying parent/teacher's manuals. Since they are non-consumable, they can be re-used and passed down to younger siblings. (Examples: Abeka, Apologia, Bob Jones, Saxon)

Worktexts are consumable workbooks with complete text included. They are self-contained, easy to use, and require little or no preparation time. They are relatively inexpensive, but cannot be re-used since they're written in. (Examples: Alpha Omega Lifepacs, School of Tomorrow)

Workbooks are bound pages of basic skills worksheets, often used for practice and review. They may include instructions, but they do not provide the detailed explanatory text that is necessary for a complete curriculum. (Example: McGraw-Hill Comprehensive Curriculum of Basic Skills, Remedia Publications, Milliken Publishing)

CD-ROMs include complete grade-level curriculum programs as well as individual subjects. Ideal for independent study, needs no preparation or grading time. (Examples: Robinson Curriculum, Switched-on Schoolhouse, Phonics Tutor, WordSmart)

Videos/DVDs may be purchased or rented; available for individual topics or as a complete curriculum. (Example: Abeka Video School, DIVE Math)

Correspondence Schools require sending lessons on a regular schedule to an assigned teacher or program administrator for grading, and can be used to fulfill state requirements. They keep records, prepare transcripts, and often provide accredited diplomas. (Examples: Calvert, Christian Liberty Academy, Sycamore Tree)

Online Academies are the modern version of a correspondence school, in which all schoolwork is done on the computer and students communicate with the instructor via e-mail. They will also keep transcripts and provide a diploma at the end of the course of study. (Example: Alpha Omega Academy, Calvert Online)

Dual Enrollment allows high school students to enroll in certain college classes part-time. Community colleges will usually let high school juniors or seniors attend regular classes. The course credits will be applied to both high school and college transcripts simultaneously, giving the student a head start toward their college degree.

Umbrella Schools are usually private, Christian schools or correspondence schools that act as representatives for homeschool parents with their local authorities and maintain the student's records. These schools usually provide facilities for testing and counseling, and offer curriculum recommendations. In addition, homeschoolers can often participate in sporting programs, band, drama, and other electives offered by these schools.

Co-ops (a.k.a. Cottage Schools) are a collaboration of effort between homeschool families to facilitate regular group academic or extra-curricular classes. Co-op stands for "cooperative learning," in which a group of homeschool parents help each other educate their children. If science or math is your strength, you could teach that subject in the co-op while your kids participate in classes taught by other moms that would be challenging for you. In this way, each mom is teaching something that she loves. Co-ops are beneficial for pooling resources and enabling the purchase of more expensive equipment such as microscopes. Homeschool co-ops are typically informal, taught by volunteer moms out of their homes, although some meet in a "mini private school" environment, perhaps even hiring an "expert" to do the teaching. But families must usually be willing to volunteer in some capacity toward the common good of the co-op.