

Starting Your Homeschool Journey





Congratulations, you are making the commitment to homeschooling your children. Since change is always unsettling, most parents struggle with numerous questions, especially if you were not homeschooled yourself. Give yourself time and grace to grow in your understanding of God’s will for you and your family. The following documents have been put together to assist you in your transition.

Please note that you, as a parent, are the teacher of your child. At Roots we strive to respect that. Therefore, this document is meant as a tool for your use, not a prescription that must be followed.

Table of Contents

Frequently Asked Questions page 3

- Choosing curriculum
- Outside activities
- Time needed
- Plans
- Fulfilling realistic plans
- Words of wisdom

Common Teaching Approaches page 7

The 15 Greatest Mistakes Homeschooling Moms Make page 14

May God continue to bless you in your exciting journey with Him and your family,

Lesley George
Roots Principal-At-Large

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Questions will abound: some will be easy to answer while many others will take time and discernment on your family's part to process the answers for yourself. Roots cannot answer all of your questions because many of the answers are entrenched in discerning God's will, your unique children, your parent leadership skills, your goals and your shortfalls. However, our staff and other homeschooling mothers are willing to help you talk through options. Seek God's counsel above all; He is the source of all wisdom.

I don't know what curriculum to use. How do I decide?

1. Start with seeking God's will for your family.
2. As parents, determine some basic goals for your family. These could include spiritual, academic, character, physical education, etc. Actively involve older children in this process as well.
3. Make careful observations of your children. Do they:
 - enjoy workbooks?
 - Learn best when they're moving or handling objects?
 - Do well with lots of colour and pictures?
 - Find too much colour and stimulation overwhelming?
 - Become distracted easily?
 - Read for information?
 - Enjoy reading?
 - Work independently? If so, in what subjects or for how long?
 - Need to talk in order to learn?
4. Determine your family's needs. Are there health concerns? Work obligations that affect the family? A baby that requires specific care? Special needs?
5. How much time and energy are you as parents realistically able to spend one-on-one with each of your children? With them as a group?
6. What will be mom's role? Dad's role? Are grandparents willing to assist?
7. Are you desiring/able to utilize classes for instruction in any area? Remember, classes consume your time as well – driving, ensuring assignments are completed, etc.
8. Successful homeschooled children continually move towards being independent learners. Therefore, from the very beginning of your homeschooling program, we encourage you to move towards this goal in whatever capacity your child is able.
9. Talk to others (friends, support group moms, facilitators, coordinator) to see what they've used and why they've enjoyed it or why it hasn't worked for them. Listen for clues that will enable you to make a good match to your child's and to your family's specific needs.
10. Without any children, take an afternoon or evening to view one of the major curriculum suppliers listed in the handbook. Parents frequently choose curriculum that would work well for their learning style, which too often doesn't meet their child's needs. Therefore, give yourself time to process the implications and make wise choices. Remember your basic goals, the needs of your children and the needs of your family to make the best match. Staff at these stores are excellent. Don't hesitate to ask questions!
11. Prayerfully discuss your options with your spouse. Roots staff are also available to support you but this decision is yours to make. God will lead you; trust Him.



I want my child to be involved in some activities outside the home. Can you give me some suggestions?

1. This isn't the issue most families think it will be. There is so much available for homeschoolers that if you're not careful families can spend so much time in extra activities that they don't have time to homeschool! I urge you to carefully consider the implications of your choices.
2. Roots & our volunteers plan multiple fieldtrips through the school year. Registration and information about each trip can be found on the Roots website under the "Events" heading.
3. Your church and other churches in your area may have programs suitable for your family's needs.
4. If you're looking for a specific type of class or group, pray about it and ask around. For our own family, God has sent great resources from unexpected places.
5. If you discover an opportunity that you want your children to participate in, advertise it in the Roots newsletter or private Google Chat and get a group together. We all benefit from these scenarios.

How much time do I need to homeschool?

There is no one right answer to this question because there are so many questions you need to answer first:



1. What do you call homeschooling? Is it just the time spent with the books or does it also include devotions, sports, home economics, time talking about issues in the car or at the table, etc.
2. What are your goals for your child?
3. How old is your child? The older the child, the more time normally expected and the more independent one would expect your child to be able to function.
4. How well do you use your school time? Well-planned lessons, clear goals and motivated learners accomplish considerably more in less time.

Here are a few efficiency suggestions you can apply to your own program:

1. Talk and listen to your children. This sounds so simple, yet teaches children to think, to listen and to express their thoughts in words. For example, when you are driving and see a mailman delivering the mail discuss what their role is and how he supports your community. Or, have your older children take notes during your Sunday sermons and discuss them at the dinner table. Encourage them to think with discernment.
2. Utilize little bits of time during the day to educate. For example, listen to a book on tape or play little learning games while driving in the car, keep educational books and games readily available for your children and teach your children practical skills that will free up time for Mom and Dad.
3. Plan at least your day and preferably your week or even your month ahead of time. This is time well spent and will reap huge rewards for both the parents and the child. It gives a structure under which you can function taking away the "What should we do today?" fog that can be frustrating for everyone.
4. Set boundaries to your homeschooling day and week. Yes, homeschooling is very important but there's much more to life than just homeschooling. Your child has many years in which to obtain a basic education, so everything doesn't have to be completed this year.

5. Include your children, when possible, in your planning. For example, if you want to finish this math program before the end of May, you'll have to complete a lesson every day. Are you willing to do that? Older children can set their own schedules.
6. Set deadlines for assignments and give your children consequences for not meeting them. The type of program you choose, and the age and temperament of your child will determine what this will look like. However, accountability is a part of life.

It's a great idea to plan, but where do I start?

There are different levels of planning:

1. Realistically, new homeschooling parents need to give themselves considerable grace as they experiment to determine what works for their family. Given that, your planning will be considerably more productive and satisfying if parents, as a couple, set goals for their family. Putting these on paper will clarify who you are and where you are headed. I strongly encourage couples to take a weekend retreat to seek God's will, brainstorm, write and rewrite a mission statement for your family.
2. Then ask yourselves what your mission statement would look like in your family. Now you know where you are headed for success and you know what success will look like for you.
3. Once this is complete, and you have chosen curriculum for your children, you are ready to write your program plans for the year. For more information on this, see the section titled "Program Plans."



Once I have my mission statement and program plans complete, what practical tips can you give me that would lead to success?

Families have successfully chosen a wide variety of approaches with the crucial criteria being, "Does it work for your family?" Here are some options, but I strongly encourage you to also talk to other homeschooling moms for more ideas:

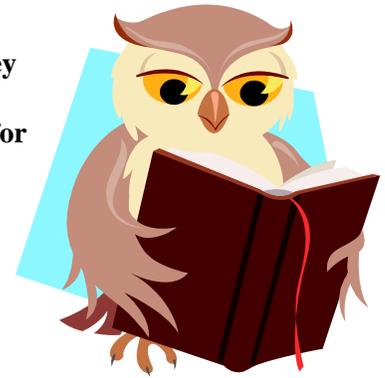
1. Start by breaking your goals into smaller pieces. For example, if you want to develop a love of reading in your child, determine how much time you want to spend daily reading to your child and having him/her read to you. Or, if you have a list of science topics you want to cover, set a designated amount of time aside for each subject. Some curriculums are divided into daily assignments, so you simply have to determine how many need to be completed in a week to meet your completion goal. Some families study either Social Studies or Science, spending one month on Science and then the next on Social Studies. This allows them to spend intensive time in the area we were studying and may make planning and preparation easier.
2. Plan specific assignments at least a week in advance. Although this takes time and discipline on the parent's part, it gives your children confidence that you are in control, greatly increases a family's chance of meeting their goals, increases time management exponentially and allows families to realistically keep their priorities.
3. Younger children often like having their assignments written on a white board or listed on a piece of paper. Once they're finished, they can erase the assignment or cross it off. If it's not finished, they have to be able to explain to their father that evening why it's incomplete (accountability).
4. Families with young children sometimes concentrate their academic studies in the afternoon when the baby is sleeping or in the evening after the youngest children are in bed. Experiment with what works for you.
5. When children are in junior high, parents can write out their weekly assignments on an excel sheet, breaking it down into daily assignments. The degree to which each day was planned was

dependent on each children's ability to do their own planning. Each child was expected to complete all of his/her academic subjects before lunch, leaving the afternoon open for music practice, PE, free reading, meal preparation, field trips, visits to the library, etc. The schedule included church classes, chores, when they cooked dinner, field trips, specific times set aside for group work, etc. This may help you realize if your expectations were unrealistic. Also, the excel sheet could be easily copied from one week to the next, making it easy to change page numbers for specific curriculum, maintain weekly schedules, etc.

6. One Roots facilitator gave her daughter an agenda when she was in grade six. Her mother gave her the assignments she needed to complete but it was her responsibility to schedule them into her week. What a great idea! Be sure to give her time to do her scheduling.
7. In your plans, feel free to include household responsibilities, character goals, devotional times, service projects, etc. Growth in all of these leads to a rich homeschooling program.
8. Schedule less academics for December and the end of the school year, replacing them with more "fun" activities.
9. Curriculum is meant as a tool to serve you; you are not meant to serve your curriculum. Therefore, it's okay to skip sections of the text or to decide that a particular topic is so interesting you'll obtain more resources from the library to enrich your learning.
10. Life will throw you unexpected situations. Turn them into learning experiences and give yourself the freedom to change your schedules. They are NOT written in stone!

Words of Wisdom (hopefully!)

- **Enjoy your children thoroughly for who they are. They are made in God's image and are so very special.**
- **Plan, but give yourself the freedom to do what is best for your family.**
- **As a couple and family, unite to honour God, develop your talents and serve one another.**
- **Husbands, support your wives with your time, energy and love. Wives respect your husbands and teach your children to respect them as well.**



May God bless you richly,
Lesley George



COMMON TEACHING APPROACHES

By Ellyn Davis (reprinted with permission)

All home schooling materials fall into two main categories: traditional textbook curricula and non-textbook curricula.

THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH

In the Traditional Approach, graded textbooks or workbooks follow a scope and sequence that covers each subject in 180 daily increments over a span of 12 years. Teacher's manuals, tests, and record keeping materials are usually available that correspond to each of the texts. Textbook curricula assume you will run your home school like an institutional school.

Worktext programs present textbooks in consumable workbook format. The student learns his lesson, is given assignments, and is tested all in the workbook. The worktexts include tests or checkpoints to ensure that the material in each section is mastered before the student moves on to the next. Worktexts also allow more independent study and require minimal teacher preparation time and supervision.

Video programs are also available that are actual classrooms on video. The child follows along with the video as if he or she were attending an actual classroom, and uses the accompanying textbooks or workbooks.

Traditional curricula are also available on computer. Many satellite schools as well as universities now offer computer courses on CD or through the internet. Most of the textbook and worktext programs used in private Christian schools are available to homeschoolers. They each share a distinct doctrinal perspective, and usually contain strong elements of essentialism.

Some questions to ask yourself before trying the traditional, textbook approach are listed below: Yes answers indicate this approach may work for you and your child.

1. Did my child perform well in a school classroom?
2. Does my child like to complete assignments and to have defined goals?
3. Is my child academically oriented?
4. Will my child complete assigned tasks with a minimum of prodding from me?
5. Am I the kind of person who will follow through with the lesson plans and pace of the course of instruction?



Some additional questions to ask before using the workbook approach with your child:

1. Does my child read well and have good reading comprehension skills?
2. Can my child work well independently?
3. Can my child learn without a lot of variety to the teaching materials?

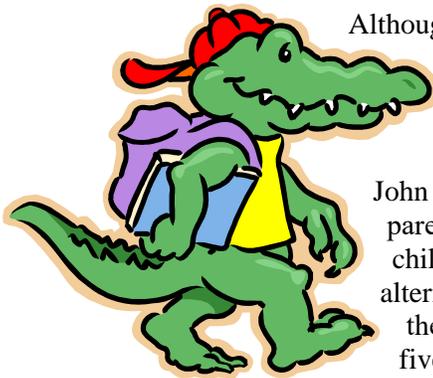
Strengths of the Textbook/Work text Approach

- Everything is laid out for ease of use
- Follows a standardized scope and sequence
- Has definite milestones of accomplishment
- Testing and assigning grades is easy to do

Weaknesses of the Textbook/Work text Approach:

- Is geared to the “generic” child. Does not take into account individual learning styles, strengths and weaknesses, or interests
- Assumes that there is a body of information that comprises an education and that this information can be broken down into daily increments
- Treats children’s minds like containers to be filled with information
- Focuses on transmitting information through artificial learning experiences
- Is teacher-directed and chalkboard oriented
- Different aged students study different materials
- Expensive when teaching multiple children
- Discourages original, independent thinking
- Has a high “burn out” rate

NON-TEXTBOOK APPROACHES



Although there are a number of excellent textbook and work text programs available, many home educators object to the fact that textbooks are teacher-directed, chalkboard-oriented, and seldom take into account different teaching approaches or the different ways children receive and process information.

John Gatto says, “Real books educate. School books school.” With textbooks, parents may feel they are “bringing the classroom home” instead of educating their children in a way that is uniquely home-based. These parents have found alternative teaching approaches that allow them to tailor their home schooling to their family’s particular needs. On the following pages we briefly explain the five most common non-textbook teaching approaches:

THE CLASSICAL APPROACH is derived from successful courses of study throughout history and recently revived through the writings of Dorothy Sayers.

THE PRINCIPLE APPROACH is based on the premise that our nation is a unique and vital link in the westward chain of Christianity.

THE LIVING BOOKS AND LIFE EXPERIENCES APPROACH of Charlotte Mason treats children as persons, not as containers to be filled with information.

THE UNIT STUDY APPROACH integrates several subject areas around a common theme.

THE UNSCHOOLING APPROACH assumes that children are natural learners and gives them resources to do so.

THE CLASSICAL APPROACH

The Classical Approach to education has produced great minds throughout history and has strong elements of perennialism. The modern proponent of the Classical Approach was British writer and medieval scholar Dorothy Sayers. As the Nazis rose to power in the 1930s, Sayers warned that schools were teaching children everything except how to think. Because young adults could no longer think for themselves, Sayers felt tyrants could easily influence them. To remedy this, Sayers proposed reinstating the classical form of education used in the Middle Ages.

In the Classical Approach, children under age 18 are taught tools of learning collectively known as The Trivium. The Trivium has three parts, each part corresponding to a childhood developmental stage.

The first stage of the Trivium, the Grammar Stage, covers early elementary ages and focuses on reading, writing, and spelling; the study of Latin; and developing observation, listening and memorization skills. The goal of this stage is to develop a general framework of knowledge and to acquire basic language arts and math skills.

At approximately middle school age, children begin to demonstrate independent or abstract thought (usually by becoming argumentative or opinionated). This signals the beginning of the Dialectic Stage in which the child's tendency to argue is molded and shaped by teaching logical discussion, debate, and how to draw correct conclusions and support them with facts. The goal of this stage is to equip the child with language and thinking skills capable of detecting fallacies in an argument. Latin study is continued, with the possible addition of Greek and Hebrew. The student reads essays, arguments and criticisms instead of literature as in the Grammar Stage. History study leans toward interpreting events. Higher math and theology begin.

The final phase of the Trivium, the Rhetoric Stage, seeks to produce a student who can use language, both written and spoken, eloquently and persuasively. Students are usually ready for this stage by age 15.

Here are some questions to ask yourself before trying the classical approach with your child:

1. Does my family like to read good literature?
2. Are my children intellectually oriented and comfortable with a rigorous academic program?
3. Am I a learner? Am I comfortable learning alongside my children so I can teach them things I never studied?
4. Do I like to study and discuss ideas that have influenced civilization?

Strengths of the Classical Approach:

- Is tailored to stages of mental development
- Teaches thinking skills & verbal/written expression
- Creates self-learners
- Has produced great minds throughout history

Weaknesses of the Classical Approach:

- Very little prepared curriculum available
- Requires a scholarly teacher and student
- May overemphasize ancient disciplines and classics



THE UNIT STUDY APPROACH

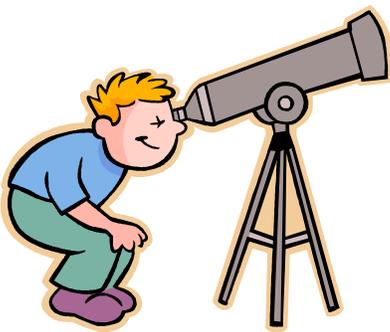
A Unit Study takes a theme or topic (a unit of study) and delves into it deeply over a period of time, integrating language arts, science, social studies, math, and fine arts as they apply. Instead of studying eight or ten separate, unrelated subjects, all subjects are blended together and studied around a common theme or project. For example, a unit study on birds could include reading and writing about birds and about famous ornithologists (language arts), studying the parts, functions, and life cycles of birds and perhaps even the aerodynamics of flight (science and math), determining the migration paths, habitats, and ecological/sociological impact of birds (social studies), sketching familiar birds (art), building bird houses or feeders ("hands on" activities) and so forth.

Several fine prepared unit study curricula are available, but it is easy to prepare your own unit studies around areas of interest. History is the logical core curriculum to build ongoing unit studies around. History provides a framework for all the other subjects because it follows a progression and covers every other subject (except possibly math), like art, music, science, literature, and so on.

Here are some questions to ask yourself before trying unit studies with your children:

1. Am I a creative person?
2. Do I like trying to make everything interesting and fun?
3. Do my children have a variety of interests and learning styles?
4. Can I live with the fact that there may be “gaps” in my children’s education?
5. Do I have the time and energy to be the driving, creative force behind the development of units?

Strengths of the Unit Study Approach:



- All ages can learn together
- Children can delve as deeply or as lightly into a subject as they like
- The family’s interests can be pursued
- Students get the whole picture
- Curiosity and independent thinking are generated
- Intense study of one topic is the more natural way to learn
- Knowledge is interrelated so is learned easily and remembered longer
- Unit studies are fairly easy to create

Weaknesses of the Unit Study Approach:

- It is easy to leave educational “gaps”
- Hard to assess the level of learning occurring
- Record keeping may be difficult
- Prepared unit study curricula are expensive
- Do-it-yourself unit studies require planning
- Too many activity-oriented unit studies may cause burn-out of teacher and student
- Subjects that are hard to integrate into the unit may be neglected

THE LIVING BOOKS APPROACH

The Living Books Approach is based on the writings of Charlotte Mason, a turn-of-the-century British educator. Miss Mason was appalled by several tendencies she noticed in modern education:

1. The tendency to treat children as containers to be filled with predigested information instead of as human beings
2. The tendency to break down knowledge into thousands of isolated bits of information to be fed into “container”
3. The tendency to engineer artificial learning experiences.

She believed in respecting children as persons, in involving them in real-life situations, and in allowing them to read really good books instead of what she called “twaddle” worthless, inferior teaching material. She considered education a failure when it produced children able to “do harder sums and read harder books” who lacked “moral and intellectual power.” Children were to be taught good habits, to be involved in a broad spectrum of real-life situations, and given ample time to play, reflect, and create.

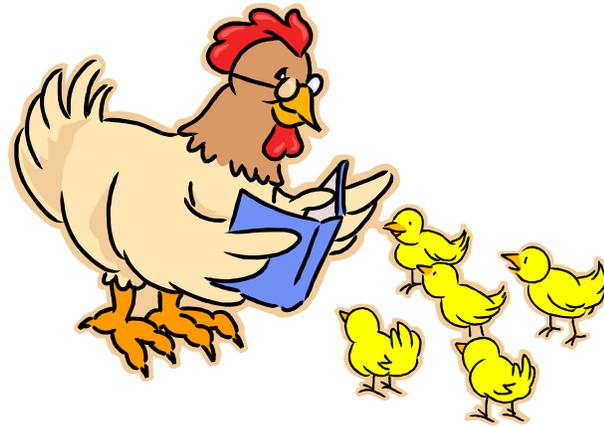
Mason's approach to academics was to teach basic reading, writing, and math skills, then expose children to the best sources of knowledge for all other subjects. This meant giving children experiences like nature walks, observing and collecting wildlife; visiting art museums; and reading real books with "living ideas." She called such books "living books" because they made the subject "come alive" unlike textbooks that tend to be dry and dull and assume the reader cannot think for him/herself.

Here are some questions to ask yourself before trying the Charlotte Mason method:

1. Does our family love to read, both alone and together through reading aloud?
2. Do we love to go to the library?
3. Am I comfortable with more of a "free-form" approach to learning?
4. Will I follow through with teaching my children good habits and character qualities?
5. Do I trust my children to learn on their own?
6. Will I follow through with exposing my children firsthand to nature and to great art?

Strengths of the Living Books Approach:

- Treats children as active participants in the learning process
- Exposes children to real objects and books instead of interactions with distilled information
- Encourages curiosity, creative thinking, and a love of learning
- Eliminates meaningless tasks, busywork
- Developmentally appropriate
- Stresses formation of good character and habits



Weaknesses of the Living Books Approach:

- Tends to be very child centered
- Very little prepared curriculum
- May neglect higher level studies because of its emphasis on art, literature, and nature study
- May become too eclectic

THE PRINCIPLE APPROACH

The Principle Approach is an effort to restore to American Christians three vital concepts:

1. The knowledge of our Christian history
2. An understanding of our role in the spread of Christianity
3. The ability to live according to the Biblical principles upon which our country was founded.

The Principle Approach is a way of living life, not just a way of educating children. Developers of the Principle Approach rediscovered seven Biblical principles upon which our country was founded and by which many of the founding fathers were educated. The seven principles are:

1. Individuality (God has created distinct differences in people, nations, etc.)
2. Self Government (Government starts in the heart of man.)
3. Christian Character
4. "Conscience is the Most Sacred of Property"
5. The Christian Form of Government
6. How the Seed of Local Self Government is Planted

7. The Christian Principle of American Political Union.

Four emphases are unique to this educational approach.

1. There is a recognition of God's Hand (Providence) in history.
2. There is the understanding that God has ordained three governmental institutions (the home, the church, and civil government) through which He unfolds His purposes and manifests Christ on this earth.
3. Each Christian is responsible for extending God's government.
4. The student assumes responsibility for learning and for applying knowledge to his own life.

The Principle Approach may be applied to the study of any subject with the use of notebooks to record “the 4 Rs” (Researching God's Word, Reasoning from the researched Biblical truths/principles, Relating the truths and principles discovered to the subject and the student's character, and Recording the individual application of the Biblical principles to the subject and the student).

Here are some questions to ask yourself before trying the Principle Approach:

1. Do I have a real concern for the application of Christian principles to my family and my nation?
2. Will my child assume responsibility for a great deal of learning on his/her own?
3. Does my child like to express him or herself through writing?
4. Am I willing to undertake extensive biblical research and teaching preparation?

Strengths of the Principle Approach:

- Students learn to think “governmentally”
- Students become self-learners
- Students learn to apply biblical principles to the whole of life
- Students create their own “textbooks”



Weaknesses of the Principle Approach:

- May present a narrow view of life and of history
- Focuses mainly on American history
- Requires a great deal of teacher preparation
- Prepared curriculum available in few subjects
- Extremely literal approach to Scripture

THE UNSCHOOLING APPROACH

On the one hand, the Unschooling Approach is defined by John Holt, a 20th century American educator who concluded that children have an innate desire to learn and a curiosity that drives them to learn what they need to know when they need to know it. Holt believed that both desire and curiosity are destroyed by the usual methods of teaching. In his book *Teach Your Own*, Holt wrote: “What children need is not new and better curricula but access to more and more of the real world; plenty of time and space to think over their experiences, and to use fantasy and play to make meaning out of them; and advice, road maps, guidebooks, to make it easier for them to get where they want to go (not where we think they ought to go), and to find out what they want to find out.”

On the other hand, unschooling refers to any less structured learning approach that allows children to pursue their own interests with parental support and guidance. A rich environment of books, learning resources, and adults who model a lifestyle of learning and are willing to interact with him surrounds the child.

Formal academics are pursued when the need arises. Christians who favor less structured schooling, but with definite goals, prefer to be called “relaxed home educators,” not unschoolers.

Some questions to ask yourself before trying the Unschooling Approach:

1. Am I comfortable with few pre-set goals and little structure?
2. Do my children have strong interests in particular areas?
3. Does my family have a lot of natural curiosity and love learning?

Strengths of the Unschooling Approach:



1. Takes little planning
2. Captures the child’s “teachable moments”
3. Children have access to the real world, plenty of time and space to figure things out on their own
4. Children are less likely to become academically frustrated or “burned out”
5. Children can delve into a subject as deeply or as shallowly as they desire
6. Provides a discipleship model of learning
7. Creates self-learners with a love of learning

Weaknesses of the Unschooling Approach:

1. May neglect some subjects
2. Hard to assess level of learning
3. Lacks the security of a clearly laid out program
4. Is extremely child-centered
5. Difficult to explain to others
6. May be overly optimistic about what children will accomplish on their own

THE MIXED APPROACH

Many homeschoolers use a blend of the different approaches. For example, they may use traditional math and science textbooks, but build unit studies around historical periods that include language arts, music, art, and philosophy, and then choose a computer program to teach typing.

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The 16 Greatest Mistakes Homeschool Moms Make

1. They fail to make a commitment. Jas 1:8 (amp), "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." Double minded means: hesitating, dubious, irresolute — is unstable and unreliable and uncertain about everything he thinks, feels, and decides. You will want to give up many times and so will your kids. If you don't make a firm decision, your kids, friends, and relatives will make one for you but you and your husband will be the ones held accountable.

2. They are not in agreement with their husband. Amos 3:3, "Can two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?" If your husband is not in agreement, ask God to speak to him. In the meantime, keep quiet. God will convict him if that is what He wants you to do. There may be a reason why you should wait that only God knows. Only when you are both in agreement, should you homeschool.

3. They neglect to discipline their children. 1 Tim. 3:4 says an overseer (that's you in this case), "must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect." See Proverbs 22:15 and 13:25 for God's word on proper discipline. The key is to be consistent in enforcing rules and keep in mind that if they don't obey you, they won't obey God!

4. They fail to count the cost. Homeschool will cost you — your personal time, money, and possibly the loss of your family's and friends' support. Many parents react instead of respond by pulling their kids out of school and getting the facts later. Luke 14:28 (NIV) says, "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?" Luke 14:31 says, "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand?" Get the facts first, count the cost, and then make a decision together with your spouse.

5. They don't take the time to set goals. Each year, take time to set goals for each child individually. Prov. 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision the people perish." Perish means to go astray or wander. A homeschool mom who does not set goals wanders around trying this and that curriculum, always doubtful that she is doing the right thing. Ask God to show you what each child needs and how to fulfill those needs. Pray. Romans 8:26 says the Holy Spirit will help us to pray when we don't know what to pray for. Trust God to give you the answer. Proverbs 16:3 (amp) says, "Roll your works upon the Lord — commit and trust them wholly to Him; He will cause your thoughts to become agreeable to His will and so shall your plans be established and succeed." Then, believe that you heard from God and resist doubt (Jas.1:6).

6. They fail to establish priorities and then stick to them. Many homeschool moms wear themselves out doing perfectly good things and then wonder why their homeschool is not going well. Keep your priorities: 1) God, 2) husband, 3) children, 4) work — homeschool in this case, 5) church/ministry, and 6) other. Don't get so busy doing "good" things that you don't do the "God" thing He has called you to do.

7. They fail to trust God to provide the material things they need. God is Jehovah Jireh — our provider. He wouldn't call you to do something and then not give you the resources to do it. Phil. 4:19 says He will supply all your needs. Many moms go to work, either full or part time, not because they have to, but because they are frustrated at home or in fear over finances. If this is you, instead of going to work outside the home, (1) look for ways to cut costs, (2) pray for your husband's boss or business to prosper, (3) investigate a home business, and (4) be patient. Caution: If you do pursue a home business, don't let it interfere with your family responsibilities. Prov. 31:16 (amp) states this very clearly, "She considers a new field before she buys or accepts it — expanding prudently (and not courting neglect of her present duties by assuming others)." The best time to start a home business is when your youngest child is reading and writing so that all your children can participate in the business and learn valuable skills as part of their homeschool.

8. They fail to keep the Sabbath principle with their family. Heb. 4:4b says, "And God rested on the seventh day from all His work." If God rested, what makes you think you can do without? The Sabbath was made for your good (Mark 2:27). The purpose is for you to get needed rest and time with your family. You should only do what is absolutely mandatory or extend mercy in a time of need (Exodus 20:10, Luke 13:15, Matt. 12:12). The Sabbath is from sunset to sunset — 24 hours (Lev. 23:32). Pick a day that you can spend together with your family and break it for no one.

9. They neglect their own spiritual growth. Read the Word. Read it to your kids if that's the only way you can get it. Pray. Pray while you're doing housework if necessary. Don't neglect the assembly of believers. Getting together with other believers not only encourages you but you have the responsibility to encourage them as well. Heb. 10: 24b-25 says, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the DAY approaching."

10. They strive for the approval of men. Many homeschool moms make the mistake of comparing their school or kids with the public or private school down the street or their homeschool friends' kids. God created each of your children for a specific purpose in his generation. Your job is to help each of your children find his specific calling, discover what he lacks to pursue it, and then equip him with what he needs to fulfill that calling. Don't be so concerned with obtaining "approval" that you miss hearing from God what He wants your children to do.

11. They have an unnecessary fear of authorities. Prov. 16:7 says, "When a man's ways are pleasing to the Lord, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him." When Cindy lived in Pennsylvania, one of the toughest states in which to homeschool, she used nontraditional curriculum which was unfamiliar to the local authorities at that time. The Lord not only gave her favor with the school officials but also even helped her deal with mandatory testing during the years her son was behind grade level. If you do what's right in God's eyes, He will protect you. Listen to what the Spirit is telling you. If the Lord is telling you to spend more time in ministry and less time on diagramming sentences, or spend more time on electronics and less time memorizing dates in World History, do it. Don't try to do everything in the curriculum according to the teacher's manual. Scope and sequences vary from school to school, year to year, and book to book. No one can learn everything there is to know. Curriculum publishers and "professional" educators make decisions on what topics a child "needs" to learn and when, based on their standards and philosophies. Your child; however, may need to learn something else or on a different time schedule. As you go through your school year, before you assign seatwork or introduce a new topic, ask yourself:

1. Is this going to help this particular child do what God has called him to do?
2. Is this the time to introduce this (readiness)?

If you answer yes to these two questions, then teach the topic and/or have them do the seatwork. If you answer no, then don't!

12. They forget to create enthusiasm for learning. Enthusiasm comes from the Greek words "en theos" meaning "in God". Learning in God should be exciting! Don't be afraid to have fun in your homeschool. Use real books and hands-on activities instead of, or to enhance, your textbooks.

13. They neglect their children's spiritual training. The great commission (Matt. 28:19-20) applies to your own children, too! Pearl S. Buck, a famous author, was homeschooled by Christian parents who were missionaries to China. While they were ministering salvation to the people of China, they neglected to minister to their own child. In the morning, Pearl studied her lessons assigned by her mother from a secular curriculum. In the afternoon, they gave her more studies under the tutelage of a local Chinese man, Mr. Kung. Pearl says in her book, *My Several Worlds*, "I became mentally bifocal, and so I learned early to understand that there is no such condition in human affairs as absolute truth. There is only truth as people see it..." (p. 41) The damage done meant she "never belonged entirely to

one side of any question." She called her parent's faith "their religion" not hers. By neglecting to continually put the truth of God's Word in front of her and allowing her to be taught by a person of another faith, Pearl's parents will eventually have to stand before the Lord and be held accountable.

Our children are body, soul and spirit and all three parts need feeding on a regular basis. One or two hours at church every week will not do it. God gave us a model for a well-rounded education as shown in Luke 2:52, "And Jesus increased in wisdom, stature, in favor with God, and in favor with man." Our goal should be for our children to increase in all four areas just as Jesus did.

14. They fail to teach their children the love and grace of God. If they don't experience the love and grace of God, they will not be able to give God's love and grace. My biggest regret regarding my homeschooling years is that I failed in this area. Yes, I was saved and serving God with all my heart, but I hadn't personally experienced the love and grace of God. Therefore, I was not able to pass this on to my children. They, like me, learned all the rules and regulations of serving God, but not the joy of God's love and His unending grace. Consequently, in spite of all that I taught them, they spent their early adult years running from God instead of to God. Thanks be to God who IS love and grace, we are all now learning to know God's love and grace.

My prayer for you is that as you personally experience God's love and grace, you will pass it on to your children. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13:1-2, "*If I speak in the tongues of men and angels, but have not love (that reasoning, intentional, spiritual devotion such as is inspired by God's love for and in us), I am only a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers—that is, the gift of interpreting the divine will and purpose; and understand all the secret truths and mysteries and possess all knowledge, and if I have sufficient faith so that I can remove mountains, but have not love (God's love in me), I am nothing—a useless nobody.*" (Amplified)

15. They fail to get help when needed. Proverbs 1:5 says, "A wise man will hear and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels." Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it. However, make sure it's the right kind of help. Don't ask your local school teacher. That would be like asking a skin doctor to perform heart surgery on you. Even though they may both be good doctors, they are experienced in two different fields. Don't ask a friend who's new at homeschooling. That would be like asking a student in law school to represent you in court instead of an experienced attorney! Consult people who have several successful years of homeschooling under their belt and who are of like faith.

16. They don't endure to the end! I think Paul was really talking about homeschool in 2 Tim. 2:2-3! He tells Timothy, "...and the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others also. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ." You are stewards of God's children and it is "...required of stewards...to be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2). It's not always going to be easy. Your kids are not always going to like it. It's a job that God has called you to do. Some days it may seem as if you are just spinning wheels. But Jas. 1:12 tells us that the patient man wins the crown. Keep on doing what God says and trust Him for the results. I like what Paul said in 1 Cor. 4:3-5, "I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time."

Even if you made some of these mistakes in the past (and who hasn't!), it's not too late to make corrections. Make a commitment with your husband, today, to avoid these 15 mistakes and then open your heart to hear from God. You will do what God has called you to do. You will finish the course and you will receive the prize! Prov. 30:31 says, "Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates of the city!"