

Home-School Basics

One of the great advantages of home education is its extreme flexibility. Each family is free to choose from among many excellent options the educational philosophies, methods, materials, and schedules that best suit its needs. A rudimentary understanding of these and other issues basic to home education will empower parents to make choices that will lead to their success.

Consideration can be given to preferences in teaching and learning styles; students' developmental levels, strengths, and weaknesses; the teacher's knowledge, ex-

perience, and confidence; the family's resources of time and money; and the number of children.

Checklists for common elements of successful Christian home schooling (p. 40) and for the process of starting a school year (p. 46) may guide both novice and veteran home schoolers in planning or evaluation.

There truly is not just one right way to home school or one best curriculum for everyone. Whatever your individual situation, there are multiple solutions that can make home schooling a blessing to your family.

Setting Goals for Excellence

Taking time to think and pray about what you want to accomplish will give direction to your efforts and allow your children to achieve the excellence of education and character that is potentially theirs as Christian home schoolers under your care and tutelage.

How To Set and Reach Goals

Pray, study Scriptures, and discuss with your family what God wants for each person in each area of life.

Write out and post general long-range goals, making them more specific as individual strengths or callings appear.

Make a flexible plan for reaching these goals (e.g., high school courses by age 17 or 18; college degree, trade proficiency, and/or professional certification in 20s.) (*Back Issue: Jan./Feb. '00*)

Break down goals into objectives to be reached each year, quarter, month, or week, leaving details to be planned close to the time for implementation.

Prioritize goals and make your schedule reflect your priorities.

Read Scriptures and pray together about specific objectives. Design projects or assignments to correct deficiencies.

Set an example by working toward your own goals and welcoming evaluation.

Carefully teach skills, allowing time for supervised and then independent practice. Hold children responsible for diligence during allotted work times.

Frequently evaluate progress and update goals.

Goal Areas

Spiritual and Moral. Our children's salvation is our first priority. Then follows: knowing God and His will through daily study of His Word as a family and individuals; responding in love and obedience to Him; prayer; Christian fellowship; and ministry to others. Establish scriptural standards of behavior through example, teaching, discipline, and training. (*Back Issue: Jan./Feb. '98*)

Academics. Basic skills (reading, writing, math, logic) must be mastered so children can acquire and communicate knowledge in other subjects. Meet and exceed legal requirements, using the efficiency of home education to achieve excellence.

Social. Social skills include understanding others, communication, cooperation, managing conflict, leadership, and lovingly meeting the needs of others. There are many opportunities to practice social skills in the context of normal family life within the home, church, and community. (*Back Issue: Summer '00*)

Practical. Life skills that should be acquired include the ability and willingness to work cheerfully and efficiently without supervision, following instructions and discharging responsibilities. Many practical skills can be learned over the years. (*Upcoming Issue: July/Aug. '01*)

Physical. Good stewardship of our bodies includes establishing habits of nutrition, hygiene, and exercise that maintain health and fitness. (*Back Issue: July/Aug. '99*) (*Back Issue: May/June '97*)

This Special Section

This Special Section addresses a broad range of issues basic to Christian home education. Although topics are not covered exhaustively, principles are included that do cover the scope of considerations in each area.

This Special Section has been compiled by the editors, Cindy Short and Sue Welch. Material was excerpted, condensed, edited, and updated from the 20 years of *The Teaching Home's* publication. We thank the thousands of home schoolers who have contributed articles.

Back Issues. Throughout this section you will find references to back issues that cover topics in more depth. (See p. 31 to order.)

Reprints. "Questions and Answers" (p. 37) and the charts on pages 40 and 46 may be reprinted for personal use or used in your home-school publication or website, provided they are used unedited, in their entirety, and the copyright notice and information is included. (Include a link to our site if used online.)

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Online. This complete Special Section can be read online at www.TeachingHome.com in the Getting Started section. We invite you to send your friends, support group members, or newsletter readers to this site or link it to your website.

20 Elements of Success in Christian Home Education

Periodically evaluating how your family includes and balances these basic elements will keep you on track for success.

1. Bible Knowledge

Develop your children's Bible knowledge and Bible study skills by ordering grade-level Bible curriculum from a Christian publisher, choosing an ungraded family Bible study guide, or reading through the Bible together, stopping to explore meanings and applications. Memorize Bible passages together by drilling verse cards, reading or reciting aloud, or writing and rewriting them.

2. Scriptural Perspective

Curriculum materials from Christian publishers avoid atheistic slants and portray a biblical view. When you use other materials (e.g., library books and encyclopedias), guide your children's understanding in light of Scripture. You can do Bible studies based on school topics as well.

3. World View

Knowledge of Bible doctrine and principles provides a vantage point for an accurate, discerning, yet compassionate world view.

4. Character Training

Qualities such as diligence, responsibility, and consideration can be studied in the Bible and other literature, charted to show personal progress, made the theme of a unit study, or developed through chores and projects.

5. Spiritual Growth

Christian home schoolers seek to promote their children's spiritual growth, including personal acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and loving dedication to Him.

6. Useful Habits

Regular habits that minimize stress, save time, and provide other benefits include grooming and health habits, courteous behavior and speech, concentration on studies, and initiative and thoroughness in chores.

7. Family Teamwork

Each member of the family can make a contribution to the success of the whole. Toddlers can pick up toys, young children can do simple chores, older ones can take on larger responsibilities, teenagers and some preteens can help with teaching, and parents can encourage, support, and help each other.

8. Organization

Organization of time and space contributes to an effective home-school environment. Schedules and lesson plans, however flexible, give direction to daily activities. An orderly household with a planned time and place for everything facilitates education and allows more enrichment activities.

9. Atmosphere

A positive atmosphere of mutual love and respect makes teaching and learning more effective. Parents' understanding attitudes foster parent-child interaction.

10. Involvement

Children learn best from parents who are closely involved with them in work, play, conversation, study, and all of life.

11. Example

It is important for parents to model dedication to God, good character traits, disciplined habits, and enthusiasm for learning. Parents also need to supervise and limit children's exposure to poor examples in TV programs, books, or the behavior of friends.

12. Experiences

Varied experiences, such as shopping, errands, home repairs, nursing home visits, trips to local museums and work places, and out-of-town excursions build the background knowledge for academic learning.

13. Understanding

Parents who are sensitive to their child can recognize and accommodate his readiness to learn new concepts, his abilities or difficulties in various areas, his personal interests, and his tendencies to learn best by either sight, sound, touch, or movement.

14. Motivation

Parents can use a child's curiosity, needs, and interests to motivate learning. They can stimulate new interests through reading, conversation, questions, and family activities. The ultimate motivation for both parent and child is to serve our Lord and others.

15. Discipline

The goal of raising self-disciplined children can be reached only after they learn to willingly accept parental discipline. Parents must consistently require children to behave according to established standards. Affirma-

tion should follow obedience and cooperation; negative consequences are appropriate when a child disobeys or rebels.

16. Thinking Skills

Parents need to ensure children are developing the skills of thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving. Children also need to learn how to study and learn on their own. Besides curriculum materials that contribute to these aims, parents can design questions and projects to stimulate such growth.

17. Mastery

In developing the foundational skills of reading, language, and math, children need to thoroughly master some concepts before others. (This does not apply as much to subjects such as history, literature, and science in which topics can be studied in any order.) Children must review frequently in all subjects to be sure learning is retained. True mastery is demonstrated by generalizing from facts and applying principles.

18. Connected Knowledge

It is valuable to make connections between facts. A master time line or categorized fact file can help you find and call attention to historical events, geographical locations, scientific developments or facts, literature, and art that relate to your present study. These relationships between facts, concepts, and previously acquired knowledge help children to understand and remember what they are taught.

19. Resources

Educational resources that can be used repeatedly include reference books (encyclopedia, dictionaries, thesauruses, Bible concordances, atlases, nature guides, etc.) and higher-level textbooks. Also collect aids such as time lines, maps, globes, pictures, charts, videos, and tapes; manipulatives for math or other subjects; educational games and software; and various tools.

20. Life Skills

Life skills include budgeting; cooking; shopping; driving; repairs; maintaining a house, yard, and car; banking; voting; and finding information by phone, letter, or Internet. (Supervise Internet use closely.)

Children receive training and practice in these skills as they work with parents. When able, children may take responsibility for entire areas, thus rehearsing for adult life.

Educational Approaches and Methods

Some of the major educational approaches or teaching methods used by home schoolers are described below. You may choose one or combine several.

Classical Approach

In a modern modification (proposed by Dorothy Sayers) of the medieval scholastic curriculum, all subjects are taught concurrently, but are divided into phases corresponding to the classical *Trivium*.

During the *Grammar* phase, a child is taught to carefully observe and memorize details. These facts provide the data for logical thought in the next phase.

For example, in science he learns the names and classifications of plants, animals, minerals, etc., and collects specimens. In geography and history he learns the locations of nations, states, cities, and natural features and the order of events.

In the *Dialectic* phase, the child is taught the rules of logic and how to reason, explores the hows and whys of nature and history, learns the proofs of geometry, becomes a discriminating reader, and learns to think carefully when he speaks or writes.

In the *Rhetoric* phase, expression and presentation of the knowledge obtained and evaluated in the first two phases is developed. (*Back Issue: Sept./Oct. '97*)

Traditional Textbook Approach

The traditional approach to education involves teacher-directed study.

Textbooks developed by Christian publishers present a distinctly Christian world view, cover subjects thoroughly, and usually include study questions, enrichment activities, and projects. These excellent books are rich in colorful illustrations, photographs, diagrams, charts, and maps. Supplemental teaching materials are available such as workbooks, tests, answer keys, charts, and maps.

Many home-school parents read the text aloud with students, presenting background material (often available in teacher's editions), discussing questions, and giving explanations as needed.

This kind of teacher-student interaction builds the student's confidence and trust in the teacher and maximizes understanding. It is also rewarding for the teacher, giving him direct involvement with the subject content and with the student.

Home-school families may consider using the same text for two or more children

at once. Except for mathematical or grammatical concepts, most subject matter does not need to be presented in any order.

Examples: A Beka Book, Bob Jones University Press, Christian Liberty Academy, Rod & Staff Publishers.

Worktexts

Worktexts, a combination of a workbook and a textbook, contain instruction, questions, projects, and exercises in a consumable workbook.

Worktexts are available from Christian publishers that incorporate a Christian world view. These curriculum materials have similar, although usually less extensive, content to traditional textbooks. They may require less time to complete.

Typically there are five subject areas with 10 booklets each per grade. Answer keys are available as well as other supplemental materials.

Diagnostic tests show where a child should start in each subject, which is useful for children coming out of a school setting.

(Inexpensive math worktexts that include answer keys are also available in educational supply stores.)

Examples: Alpha Omega, Christian Light Education, School of Tomorrow.

Unit Studies

The idea of unit studies is that knowledge is learned and remembered better if presented in a connected way. Unit studies also provide interest and motivation.

Several subjects are centered around a common theme or project in each unit. For example, a theme such as *attentiveness* or *light* may be chosen and related material for study selected from history, science, literature, and Bible.

Reading, language, and arithmetic assignments can be related to the unit, but basic skills are taught separately.

Unit study curriculum varies in the amount of teacher preparation required. Usually many library books are used, while some also use Christian textbooks for reference and information. Parents can also plan their own short- or long-term units.

Unit studies can be used by families with children in different age groups, adapting material to various levels and learning styles while maintaining a unifying theme.

To ensure that each subject is covered thoroughly, the parent can check off covered topics on a chart or in a textbook.

Examples: KONOS, Education PLUS.

The Principle Approach

Curriculum using the Principle Approach is available or may be developed by parents. Use a Bible concordance or a topical Bible to research a subject's biblical origin and purpose. Record your findings in a notebook and add facts, outlines, definitions, essays, etc., as you study the subject from other sources.

As details of the subject are gathered, note how God has used it to enlighten and liberate men and help them learn more about His Word and creation.

Example: Foundation for American Christian Education.

Extensive Reading

In this method, basic reading, writing, and math skills are taught separately. Other subjects are studied by reading well-chosen books that cover all areas of knowledge in a clear and interesting way.

For young children, the parent reads aloud, and the child narrates back what he has heard. A discussion of principles revealed in the reading follows.

Programmed Courses

Programmed courses arrange information in a sequence of very small units which are easily mastered. The student makes a response after each and receives immediate feedback about his answer.

In the past, such courses were available in books or in teaching machines. Now programmed learning is available in computer programs. Such courses allow for structured independent study.

Example: Switched-On Schoolhouse.

Unschooling

The unschooling approach is child-centered, rather than teacher-directed. Advocates believe that children can be trusted to direct their own learning, and they do not require any study that the child does not choose. However, parents do provide a rich environment of books, experiences, and resources for learning and respond to their children's questions and interests.

Parents who accept God's commands to teach and train their children and for children to hear and obey their parents' instruction (Deut. 6, Prov. 7:1-3) would need to adapt this method by supporting children's interests in the context of other instruction which the parents' greater wisdom determines is necessary.

(Back Issues: Oct./Nov. '93, Mar./Apr. '98.)

Teaching Several Children at Once

The family home school is similar to a one-room schoolhouse with students at different grade levels.

There are many possible variations and combinations of multilevel teaching techniques that can work for any home-school family. Parents can choose the methods that best fit the needs of their children and the lifestyle of their family.

Two or more students might work independently on different grade levels.

Students on the same grade level might have different needs due to their individual strengths and weaknesses.

Students of different ages might be taught the same material at the same time, each on their own level.

Subjects like reading, math, and grammar that depend on mastery of some skills before others must be taught separately.

For example, you may want to teach a higher-level course such as algebra to your 13- and 15-year-olds together while younger children work at differing elementary levels for math.

Subjects like geography, history, science, and Bible, which do not depend on prerequisite skills for understanding, can be taught to the whole family together.

You may teach all of your children, ages 5 to 18, a course in botany, high schoolers using a detailed textbook while younger children read or hear about parallel topics from texts or library books on their own levels. Discussions and projects can include the whole family.

You might want to teach all subjects to all your children at once through a series of unit studies that integrate literature, history, science, and other subjects centered around one theme (such as *light* or *diligence*) at a time.

When one student must receive individual attention, the others must be prepared in advance to use their time constructively, working independently or perhaps playing an educational game or watching an enriching video.

Older children can take turns supervising young ones while Mother tutors the new reader, or Big Sister or Brother might do some of the tutoring.

The rich variety of teaching options and resources available to home educators ensures that you can find or design a plan that will satisfy and delight your entire family as you participate together in the joy of learning.

(Back Issue: March/April '97)

Combining Methods & Materials

The different teaching approaches used by home educators (see p. 41) overlap in philosophy, methods, and content. Parents can select elements of several approaches, adapting and blending them to serve their family's changing needs.

Informal Learning. You can give preschool children a good start on an excellent education in many informal ways.

These include real-life experiences such as working with parents, creating useful or decorative items, gardening, walking or driving in various environments, visiting different places and people, and conversing with parents and others.

Listen to children's ideas and questions, and give appropriate explanations of what they see and experience.

Add to this a regular program of reading aloud to your children. Choose good books in all areas of knowledge.

Children vary immensely in their development. Some may be ready at age 2 to 4 for a few minutes of phonics or numbers drill in the form of playing with flash cards and manipulatives every day.

Actual reading and math skills will develop quickly when your child is ready for them. A wide background of experience and general knowledge will enable your child to understand what he reads and to grasp arithmetic concepts easily, providing motivation to perfect these skills.

It is wise to take advantage of a young child's ability and desire to memorize. Through oral reading you can expose him to detailed information such as the names and characteristics of animals and plants as recommended in the classical approach for the *Grammar* phase.

This is also the time to establish habits, routines, and character through example, teaching, and discipline.

Special Needs. Special needs children with mental or physical limitations can benefit from basically the same program as described above.

Extra activities may need to be designed to correct or compensate for problems. These activities are ideally carried out or participated in by the parents as much as possible. Examples are speech therapy, vision training exercises, or muscle coordination "patterning."

When your child finds a concept difficult to grasp or a fact hard to remember, patiently repeat it until he knows it, however long it takes. Look for ways to restate, illustrate, and apply new information.

Many times, through trial and error, parents stumble onto an idea that works for them. Their love and commitment to their child is his most valuable asset and cannot be replaced by professional expertise. *(Back Issue: July/Aug. '94)*

Active Study. By the time children are about 7 to 12, they should be actively involved in some form of planned curriculum, whether formal or informal, for academic study.

Learning Styles. By this time individual learning styles and rates should be noticeable to observant parents. For example, your child may learn best by seeing, hearing, doing, or touching and may need more or less review than another child.

Natural strengths in learning styles may be fully utilized and weaknesses corrected by the choice of methods inherent in specific approaches or curricula.

You may want to use your child's favorite learning style to encourage him in his least favorite subjects. You can also expand his skills in his less-preferred learning style by incorporating its methods into the study of his favorite subject.

For example: Your child loves workbooks and drill, math and geography, but dislikes creative activities and science. Use workbooks and drill for teaching science and include some creative projects related to math and geography.

Mixing Methods. Whichever curriculum or approach you choose, you can incorporate other methods into it.

For example, you may use a unit study curriculum supplemented with traditional science and history texts as reference books and library books for reading.

You might use worktexts for math and language and have your children keep "principle approach" notebooks for science, history, and literature.

You may emphasize the appropriate stage of the classical trivium for each child in his individual assignments.

You can rearrange the order of the units in your curriculum to conform to your children's current interests or stimulate interest in upcoming units with a story or trip.

Reading aloud and discussing subject texts and/or a variety of informative or enriching literature can complete or supplement any curriculum.

There are other possible combinations of methods and materials. You are the best qualified to choose a mix that will be right for you and your children.

(Back Issue: Feb./March '98)

Teaching Academic Basics

Certain guiding principles and practices contribute to success in teaching basic academics.

How To Teach Reading

The value and importance of reading makes teaching our children to read a top priority. As we assume responsibility for this area of our children's education, we need information about how to proceed effectively to ensure their success.

The best way to make sure our children will be good readers is to start very early motivating and preparing them to read. This is accomplished as we read to them every day and as we gently but steadily expose them to the concept that letters represent specific sounds.

The more months or years we engage in these simple but vital activities, the easier it will be for our children to read when we begin actual reading instruction.

The phonetic nature of our alphabet makes phonics the obvious choice of teaching methods.

After our children have learned the sounds associated with each letter and each special grouping of letters (e.g., *th*, *tion*), they learn how these sounds (called phonemes) blend together to form syllables and words. They can then read (or decode) words they have never seen before. With plenty of practice and a little guidance, they become fluent readers.

Even children with learning problems can learn to read. Your love and personal attention combined with extra patience and practice can help your child overcome dyslexia, which simply means "trouble with words." (Special resources are available to help you in this area.)

When reading is taught through a logical, step-by-step presentation of phonics, comprehension grows and develops naturally. Understanding is enhanced by oral reading and discussion in the early stages.

After reading fluency has been reached by your child, reading for meaning in school subject areas as well as for enjoyment in free time helps your child add to his comprehension skills. (*Back Issues: Nov./Dec. '95; Sept./Oct. '98*)

How To Teach Writing

Becoming proficient in the four forms of writing prepares a student to communicate well in both formal and informal settings throughout his life. These skills give him new ways to share his life with others.

1. Descriptive Writing. A student must first learn to write complete, accurately punctuated sentences, then spend time writing brief paragraphs that describe people, places, things, and actions.

Description is the first of four basic kinds of writing. A child can develop his writing content and style while mastering mechanical skills such as capitalizing proper names and using commas through descriptive writing.

2. Narrative Writing. As your child's skill increases with description, have him add stories about events in his life to letters or journals.

3. Informative Writing or exposition. Students learn to give helpful information about things they know how to do and things they learn. This can include research papers, science projects, recipes.

4. Persuasive Writing. Finally, help your older children to write gracious, thoughtful pieces from a biblical perspective, explaining the reasons for their positions on controversial issues. Help them write in a way that honors and pleases the Lord God. (*Back Issues: Feb./Mar. '93; Nov./Dec. '98*)

How To Teach Math

In order to teach math effectively and efficiently, we must balance the different components of instruction:

1. Present Math Concepts. When possible, present concepts in the context of everyday life, using real objects and situations to show the need for math and how it works.

2. Practice Math Mechanics. Have your child memorize math facts by reading, writing, and repeating them regularly as soon as he is able; do not wait for his comprehension to be complete.

Practice the mechanics of math operations and procedures intensively until automatic and thoroughly mastered.

Each procedure (e.g., addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of whole numbers, fractions, and decimals) should be drilled until it is completely perfected before another skill is built upon it.

All math skills must be maintained by daily review (one problem of each type).

3. Apply Math Skills. Apply skills in real-life situations or story problems. This step brings your teaching full circle back to where you started—the need for math in everyday life.

Because application is a primary goal of math instruction, it is important to spend

Educational Media

Traditional Media

These are the traditional print media.

Textbooks. Christian texts for all grade levels in all subject areas are available. Workbooks, teachers' manuals, and supplementary materials also are available.

Worktexts. Combination text/workbooks can be purchased with or without supplementary materials.

Books. Use quality books from libraries or from other sources to supplement or motivate. Interlibrary loan allows you to borrow books from other libraries.

Unit Studies. Prepared unit study materials give suggestions for activities, assignments, and resources targeted to each grade level and learning style and relating several subject areas to one theme.

Newspapers and Periodicals. Current papers and magazines can be useful.

Electronic Media

The development of courses that use forms of electronic media has expanded the options available to home educators.

Audio Tapes. Audio tapes can contain instruction, discussions, drills, songs, etc.

Video Courses. Instructors are videotaped giving lectures complete with diagrams and other visual media. Class discussions are often taped as well. Videos can be stopped, rewound, and watched again until the content is grasped.

Computer Courses. Curriculum on CD-ROM includes a series of lessons with questions and automatic grading. Multimedia is interesting to students.

Satellite Broadcast. An assortment of classes or workshops on a variety of topics are available as a 24-hour a day, flexible, in-home satellite program.

Online Classes. Internet-based classes might present read-only material from a lecture or text or include audio and video tapes of a classroom setting. Opportunity to communicate with an instructor via e-mail or chat room may be added. Real-time discussion groups with teachers and/or other students using print only or added audio (conference call) or video (video-conferencing) may also be available. Work is submitted to an instructor.

Internet Research. Information on any subject can be found on the Internet.

Correspondence Courses

Complete programs are available that incorporate traditional and/or electronic media and include consultations, record-keeping, and/or accreditation.

Home-School Support

Moral support, encouragement, ideas, and practical assistance help home schoolers get started and keep going. Following are areas where we might give and receive support.

God. Others may let you down or fail to fulfill your needs, but not God. Go to Him first and cast your care on Him.

Yourself. Maintain your own spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional disciplines. You cannot get enough support from others to make up for a disregard of the laws of cause and effect that God has ordained.

Your Family. Home schoolers recognize the value of the family unit. Let it support you. Your mate is your built-in support. Of course, you are his support system too. Enlist the help and support of your children. Other relatives or grandparents may offer support as well.

Your Local Church. The fellowship and teaching of your local church provides support in your spiritual life. An ideal support group might also be formed within your church. It is a great blessing to have a pastor who encourages you in your home-school efforts.

Support Groups may be as small as two families or extremely large and have many functions and activities. Area or district groups or networks enable local groups to communicate and cooperate together on larger events that smaller groups could not provide. Involvement with your local Christian home-school group can provide encouragement, fellowship, educational opportunities, field trips, academic training and information, solutions to your problems, and answers for your questions.

State Organizations are vital in watching for unfavorable legislation or initiating favorable legislation. They act as the guardians of your right to home school and should be supported and participated in. They also provide a communication link for the state and thus can direct families to a group in their area as well as inform families of current state laws and how they are being interpreted.

The Teaching Home offers support from the many home schoolers who contribute to each issue.

Mentoring. Veteran home educators should consider what they have to offer beginners. New home schoolers can look for veteran home educators to mentor them through a regular time together or an occasional phone call. A support group may be able to help you find a mentor.

ample time and effort making sure your student can use his skills in practical ways. (*Back Issues: Jan./Feb. '96; Jan./Feb. '99.*)

Teaching Higher Math

There are several options available for teaching your child higher math, whether or not you have learned it yourself.

1. Learn It Yourself First. As a mature and motivated adult, you may find it quite possible and enjoyable to learn algebra, geometry, etc., in a fraction of the time it takes in high school.

2. Team Learning. You and your student can help each other learn as a team.

3. Independent Learning. Your student can study independently, using texts that present concepts clearly. Answer keys that show all the steps to complete each problem are helpful.

4. Correspondence Courses. Correspondence courses add accountability and feedback to independent study.

5. Coach. For immediate help when needed, your student can call on you, a friend, a tutor, or even another student who can explain whatever he is stuck on.

6. Learn by Teaching. Have your student teach you what he is learning.

7. Textbooks and Workbooks. In addition to a good, solid textbook, consider using one or more workbooks or texts from another source for reference.

Evaluate Curriculum from a Christian World View

Christian parents who understand the great influence of all education on their children will evaluate curriculum from a biblical Christian world view.

The facts, truths, and principles revealed in God's Word should form the basis for each course of study.

The practical uses and applications of acquired knowledge are also unique for Christians.

Emphasize concepts like these:

Math. Mathematics reveals the consistency and beauty of God's truth. It is used in measurements of fair trade, in scientific studies, and for producing all that is necessary or helpful to mankind.

Language. Accurate reading, writing, speaking, and understanding of language is essential for communication. Through language we hear and proclaim God's Word, we teach and learn from others, we do business with each other, and we maintain godly relationships.

Literature. God's standards for all we take in and hold in our minds include truth, beauty, and purity.

8. Video or Computer Programs. Math video courses that show a teacher presenting concepts to a class can help an inexperienced teaching parent. Computer programs may also be valuable.

How To Teach Literature

The teaching of literature begins when you start reading to your child. This oral reading as a family, accompanied by discussion, is the simplest and most natural way to teach the different types of literature and literary elements or techniques (e.g., metaphor, characterization).

You can use a literature textbook or a checklist of your own as a guide to make sure you are teaching your children all they should know about literature. Keep lists and reviews of books you have read and those you wish to read.

From the time of your children's first exposure to books, you will want to use wisdom and discretion in your selection of reading materials and teach your children to do the same for themselves.

If we set standards of quality and excellence in literature early, we will help our children to consistently choose what is best, most helpful, and most uplifting throughout their lives. In this way they will truly reap the rewards of reading. (*Back Issue: Sept./Oct. '95; Upcoming Issue: Sept./Oct. '01*)

Science. God created everything in six days about six thousand years ago, and there was a catastrophic worldwide flood in Noah's time. These facts guide our understanding of what we see in nature. Our use of science must also respect the sanctity of human life and reflect good stewardship of God's gifts as well as compassion toward His creatures. (*Back Issues: Mar./Apr. '94; July/Aug. '97; May/June '99*)

History. The Bible gives us the framework for all of history, from the very beginning until the prophesied end of the world. God expects us to learn practical and spiritual lessons from the study of past events as well as see His hand in the affairs of man. (*Back Issues: Aug./Sept. '93; Jan./Feb. '97; Upcoming: May/June '01*)

Geography and Social Studies. The Bible tells us we are all sinners who came from Adam through Noah, that God loves us all, and that we as Christians are His ambassadors of the gospel to the whole world. Our knowledge and understanding of peoples is based on these facts and is useful for that purpose. (*Back Issues: May/June '94; Nov./Dec. '97*)

Organization and Planning

Organization and planning help the home-school family to keep order and to maintain priorities in both education and family living.

Organization is a paradox of limitation and freedom. It consists of imposing limits on our behavior, our time, our belongings, and our lives. Yet it is an essential tool for achieving freedom, peace, and plenty.

Human nature tends to throw off constraints to do what we feel like moment by moment. In order to conquer our disorderly ways, we must recognize the spiritual roots of our problem and look to God and His Word for forgiveness and solutions.

Personal victory in the area of organization will bring benefits to our families:

Health that comes from well-planned meals, time for exercise and rest, and a clean, safe environment.

Possessions that are in good repair and easy to find when needed.

A home that is a haven from the world for our families, friends, and guests.

Time to do the best and most important things in life.

A calm, peaceful environment for efficient work and study.

Relaxation that is well-earned and guilt-free each evening after the day's work and each Sunday after the week.

Children that are well-trained, happy, helpful, and a joy to be around.

Organize Your Home

Create daily, weekly, and yearly schedules with time for chores, quiet time, school, play, work, regular activities, holidays, vacations, and other events (having a baby or visits from relatives).

Get up before your children to prepare for your day and have a regular quiet time in God's Word and prayer.

Use a "To Do" list rather than little slips of paper that tend to disappear.

Keep a family calendar near the phone. Set rules for accepting invitations and scheduling appointments.

Plan weekly with your spouse.

Allow for interruptions; they are sometimes the best learning times.

Sort toys, supplies, and other small items into baskets, boxes, bins, or drawers.

Simplify housework; get rid of clutter.

Discard or store things you do not use.

Deep clean one room each month.

Plan menus and shop once a week.

Start dinner early.

Have a daily cleanup routine.

Make a place for everything and put items in their place.

Set aside special labeled shelves and bins for schoolbooks and supplies.

Organize Your Teaching

Do not answer the phone during study.

Limit outside activities, other than Sunday, to one day a week.

Consider using Saturday for science, art, or other projects.

Use a lesson plan book to record your plans. You might simply note how many pages of a book are to be covered each week or list the dates during which certain units are to be covered. Or detail activities, assignments, or projects along with the time you wish to spend on them.

Make an outline of books, chapters, and projects for each course at the beginning of each year; then make more detailed plans monthly and weekly so you can incorporate unforeseen circumstances and new ideas or adjust the pace.

Collect library books or other materials you will need in advance.

Give older children their own plan book so they can carry on with assignments while you work with younger students. This helps them build self-discipline and time management.

Spend a few minutes the night before or in the morning looking over the plans for the day and gathering materials for the day's lessons.

Make a list of acceptable activities children can do when they are waiting for your help—puzzles, coloring, etc.

Have a routine for handling papers—do they need to be tossed, filed for documentation, or saved for a yearbook?

Choose and use a record keeping system that meets your needs and/or state requirements (e.g., a checked-off plan book, journal, or grade book).

Organize Your School Schedule

There are many possible ways you can schedule the time you will spend on studies and the time you will take off each year:

Three to five weeks on; one off.

Eight weeks on; two off.

Nine weeks on; four off.

Two-month summer break; one-month winter break; ten other days off.

Six-week summer and winter breaks.

Four-day school week.

(Schedule appointments and cleaning projects for off days or weeks.)

(Back Issues: July/Aug. '95; July/Aug. '98)

Child Training

A child who has been properly trained and disciplined will respect his parents and respond to their teaching.

Training Objectives

1. Scripture. Knowledge of God's Word is basic for training.

2. Obedience. Require instant, willing obedience to those in authority.

3. Limits. A child must accept the limits his parents place on him to benefit from their care, protection, and training. As he matures, his freedoms increase.

4. Rules. This includes remembering and obeying rules without supervision, building the habits of right behavior, and developing self-control.

5. Moral Principles. Help children see and understand beyond the rules to the moral principles upon which they are based. This helps children internalize these values and make them their own.

6. Motives. Understanding our true motives (e.g., anger shows a personal right not yielded to God) is what leads us to a conviction of our sin and ultimately to repentance and salvation.

7. Salvation is the most important aim of Christian training. God's Spirit within produces true godly character.

8. Dedication to God. The believing child increasingly devotes himself to pleasing God and so receives his parents' instruction for the Lord's sake as well as out of love for his parents.

9. Initiative. Inner motivation leads to taking initiative to meet needs and please others, seeking wisdom and knowledge from God's Word, parents, and every source of truth.

10. Christlikeness. This final goal prepares our children to train their own children, minister in the church, and be effective ambassadors for Christ.

Training Process

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (II Timothy 3:16).

Teaching is preventive instruction and establishment of godly standards through Scripture and example.

Reproof includes verbal warnings and reminders from Scripture.

Correction involves administering effective consequences for misdeeds.

Training in righteousness involves instilling correct behaviors and attitudes and the application of godly principles—not just stopping the disobedience.

(Back Issue: Nov./Dec. '99)

Checklist for Starting a School Year

by Cindy Short and Sue Welch, editors

Prayer. Pray for wisdom, guidance, and strength (Prov. 3:5-6). Make a daily quiet time with God top priority.

Communication. Maintain good communication with your spouse at each step in the process. One parent may do most of the research, planning, or teaching, but the other should be informed and involved in decision-making, especially setting goals.

Goals. Write out, or review, your long-range goals and philosophy (fundamental convictions) for your children's education and training. Include Bible verses and plan for both academic subjects and nonacademic areas such as character and life skills.

Make changes or additions as you gain insight and experience.

Inventory. Take inventory of each child's knowledge, skills, and character. You may use standardized tests, publishers' diagnostics, or homemade oral or written tests in addition to your everyday observations.

Objectives. Set objectives for each child that will move him toward your long-range goals. (Several children can share similar objectives in subjects like history or science. They would usually be at different levels in math and have different needs in character development.)

You may find a publisher's scope and sequence or a list of concepts usually taught at each level helpful for ideas or a guide in choosing materials to fit your objectives.

Discuss these objectives with each child privately, and explain how they fit into the big picture of his future.

Methods. Consider various teaching methods, curriculum, and other available resources. Basic differences involve the degree of structure or flexibility you wish to use at each stage of your child's development.

If possible, visit a curriculum fair.

Budget. Rework your budget, allocating funds for educational materials. You may be able to spend less on "school" clothes or transportation and emphasize learning tools, books, and games for gifts. Less expensive foods that require more

preparation cut costs and also provide life skills education.

Reference Library. Add to your family's library of reference books, quality literature, and educational audio-visual and software aids that will help meet your objectives.

Libraries. Learn how to use your local library system and how to reserve books or order them through interlibrary loans. Explore the reference section. Also browse through your church library.

Materials. Choose and list the methods and materials that you will use to meet your objectives for each child this year. Then, ideally, order or collect materials early!

Textbooks or workbooks can be supplemented with unit studies, games, projects, etc., to cover all objectives.

You may select only parts of some books if the other material will be (or was) covered at another time.

Decide which of your children could be taught some material together for most efficient use of time and effort.

For example, you could read a Christian history text at an intermediate-level to all your children, assigning age-appropriate projects such as oral discussion or a play for young children, extra reading or research for older children.

Legal Arrangements. To comply with your state laws as fully as possible, contact your state organization and consider joining Home School Legal Defense Association.

Household Organization. Do a thorough cleaning of your house. Get rid of unused items and store little-used ones out of the way. Designate a place for everything, including space for books and school supplies.

Family Schedule. Reorganize your family's schedule and chore assignments to fit your educational activities. Train children to do household tasks and establish regular meal and bed times.

Discipline. Deal consistently with behavior or attitude problems.

Commitment. Be prepared to handle opposition or lack of immediate success through prayer, adjustment, and perseverance.

Head Start. Establish nonacademic (e.g., Bible, life skills) portions of your program several weeks before other studies begin.

Teacher Review. Study basics of math, phonics, and spelling to prepare for presenting them to your children. Look through an English handbook that you will use for reference. You can learn or review other material with your children as they study it.

Calendar. Plan your year's calendar, marking school days, test days, vacations, and special events.

Preparation. Familiarize yourself with your curriculum, noting unit divisions, and collect any needed supplementary materials.

Planning. Decide and list which topics, units, or subjects you will cover during which weeks or months to make an overall year's plan.

For example, you could plan a certain number of pages per day in math and language, a chapter every two weeks in history and science, or a history chapter each week in the first semester and a science chapter each week in the second. Units can also be shifted to coincide with related events or seasons.

School Schedule. Use your plan to develop your daily and weekly schedule of studies.

Record Keeping. Decide how you will record planned and actual activities.

Supplies. Gather record-keeping and filing supplies, general school supplies, and special project supplies.

First Week. Plan your first week or unit, referring to your overall plan.

Celebrations. Plan special celebrations for the first day of school and for the completion of the first week or unit of study as well as for the mastery of significant skills.

Explanations. Carefully explain your expectations and procedures to your children.

Beginning. Get started and keep going. Make adjustments as needed. Enjoy this privilege of investing your life moment-by-moment in the lives of your children!