

The Ultimate Guide to Homeschooling Styles



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Fearless Homeschool

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Introduction

When most people start consider homeschooling they assume they'll be recreating school, just at home. While some people choose to do that, there are **MANY** other styles available. And once you start looking through all of these styles it can get very overwhelming, very quickly. There's a whole new language to learn.

You can soon get bogged down in comparing the merits of classical education vs radical unschooling and using a complete curriculum vs picking and choosing resources. And how can a book be living, anyway?

So, I wrote an ebook to help you choose the styles that will integrate homeschooling successfully into your lifestyle.

In this ebook, we'll take a tour through the most popular styles of homechooling.

**Unschooling --- Classical --- Charlotte Mason --- Unit Studies ---
Steiner/Waldorf --- Montessori --- Project-based Homeschooling
--- Eclectic**

Links to further resources and curriculum examples are provided to enable you to delve deeply into the methods that attract you, and create a clear educational philosophy for your family. I hope you find the contents full of inspiration and ideas.



Kelly George

Fearless Homeschool

So, what IS a homeschooling style?

Homeschooling styles are also called homeschooling methods or approaches. Each is based on a philosophy of learning. Some styles, like Montessori, were developed for schools and have been adapted to homeschooling, while others, like unschooling, are specific to homeschooling.

Each differs in significant ways. They can be child-led or parent-led, highly structured or very unstructured. Some styles advocate spending lots of time outside. Others are very low-tech. Some require lots of specific equipment while others prefer you hand-make your own equipment.

And they can be really overwhelming because of those differences!

Some parents believe that they need to choose a style and stick to it. Some parents do stick very strictly to a style because they find it suits them and their child. However, most people find at least some parts of a style doesn't suit them at.

The lesson to take from this is that ***homeschooling styles don't have to be prescriptive.***

You can be a high-tech classical homeschooler. You can be an atheist Charlotte Mason devotee. You can be an unschooler with strict bedtimes.

Homeschooling is like a choose your own adventure novel. You have endless options to choose from, and nothing stopping you from designing your own unique homeschool.

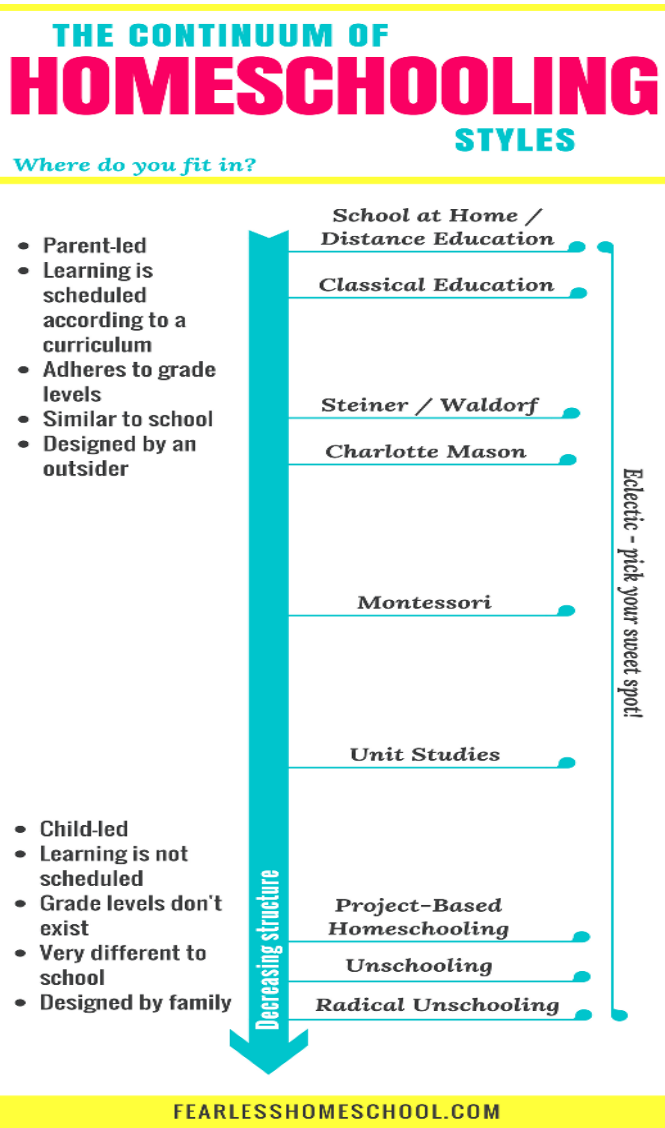
Take what you need from the following overview of styles. Customise

one style to suit you, or take a pinch of many styles and mix them all together.

As a rough guide, the following infographic ranks the styles covered within this ebook (plus distance education) on a continuum. This is based on the pure methods. You will get people using classical resources in a very unstructured way, or unschoolers who talk about their maths curriculum.

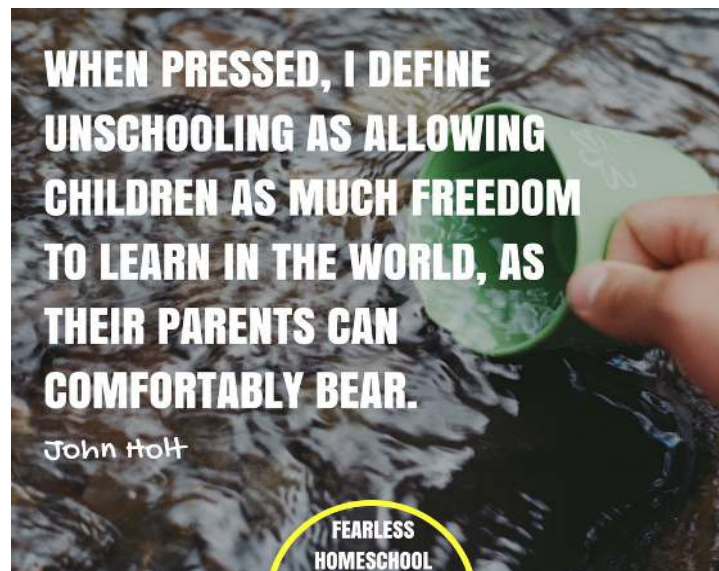
The phrase to remember?

Use what works for you.



Unschooling

The term unschooling was created by [John Holt](#), who defined unschooling as “allowing children as much freedom to learn in the world as their parents can comfortably bear”. Unschooling may also be called natural learning, child-led learning, interest-led learning, or self-directed learning.



The problem is that **unschoolers generally like to do things their own way**, so coming up with a concise, all-inclusive definition is very difficult!

The premise of unschooling is that children have a natural love of learning. Anyone who has spent time with a toddler knows that this is true! Unschoolers seek to maintain and nurture this natural love. Instead of deciding what 'should' be learnt at a certain age, unschooled children decide what they would like to learn, and when. This way, **the natural love of learning stays alive**. The parent's role is to facilitate and support this learning by providing an educationally rich environment, plenty of child-centred learning materials, and lots of time spent assisting the child in whatever ways they need. In this way, the process of learning is the focus, not the content.

Life itself is learning, indistinguishable from school. When you think about it, this is how we learn as adults if we are curious. We have interests, we work out how to learn about it, using whatever resources we're able to access, and we follow our own motivation and reasons rather than someone else's. Why not begin in childhood?

Critics say that unschooling is neglect, that children will not learn unless made to. But unschooling involves a large investment of time and effort on behalf of the parent, who assists the child in whatever ways they require - finding resources, mindful strewing, teaching skills needed (such as note taking, sounding out words, or how to use the camera), and taking them places. Ignoring and neglecting your children is NOT unschooling - that's unparenting.

Unschooling is not the lazy option.

Believing children will not learn without force and coercion is a sad result of the modern school system, where children must be made to learn things they aren't interested in or ready for, and as a predictable result display resistance and apathy. The typical unschooled child is voracious and insatiable when it comes to following their interests, and is filled with curiosity and excitement at the world around them.

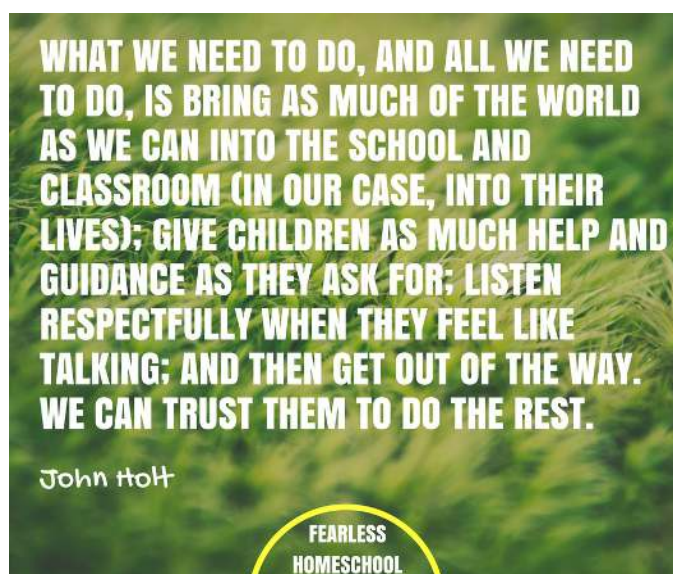


Radical unschooling

As unschooling became more mainstream, and somewhat diluted, radical unschooling arose. In radical unschooling, **unschooling extends beyond education and into all areas**. The child is in complete control of their life - they decide what they will eat and when

they'll eat it, what clothing is appropriate, and what time they will go to bed. The parent does not hold any activity as 'worthwhile' or 'not worthwhile', so there is no push to learn maths or to put a limit on video game playing. Parents have full trust in their child to do what they need to do, to live their life in the way that is best to them, and don't believe that they have the right to interfere or place rules and restrictions on that. However, there is a general agreement that parents will still facilitate their child's learning by providing resources and opportunities.

Just like unschooling, **radical unschooling is NOT neglect, unparenting, or lazy.** Instead, it is placing full trust and respect in your children, and truly partnering with them.



The Good Points

- Unschooling instils lifelong learning as a habit
- Children learn an astonishing amount, very quickly, when learning is interest-led
- Children develop their own sense of discipline, which is needed to dig deeply into topics and learn the not-so-interesting parts of them
- It can create an extremely close relationship between parents and children, as there is no coercion, rules or authoritarian/rebellious behaviour to create conflict
- It can also create strong bonds between siblings, as they work together in a non-competitive environment, with no divisions between age and ability
- Structuring your own learning and setting your own schedule are essential skills for further education, which school does not prepare

students for

The Not-So-Good Points

- There are concerns as to whether children can truly regulate things which are addictive eg. sugar, video games
 - Some children, such as those with special needs, may not learn things intuitively, and may need regular, repetitive teaching of core skills
 - Sometimes children may need the parent to step in and impose rules or restrictions. This may be as simple as, 'you MUST brush your teeth', or as complicated as, 'no, you may NOT hang out with the criminal element'
 - If a child is expected to teach themselves everything, it can be akin to them reinventing the wheel. Avoiding phonics instruction because you'd like your child to learn to read 'naturally' may simply be creating more work and frustration for them
 - It can be more difficult to obtain registration (but is still possible in Australia)
 - Unschooling is usually not suitable if you plan to send your child to school in the future, unless you plan to have an intensive period beforehand where you ensure they're at grade-level in all areas
-

More Resources

Interested in unschooling? Take a look at these resources.

[Read an unschooling day in the life](#)

[Read another unschooling day in the life - on a boat!](#)

The Unschooling Handbook: How to Use the Whole World as Your Child's Classroom - Mary Griffith.

A must-read for all new homeschoolers.

[Book](#) | [Kindle](#)

Teach Your Own: The John Holt Book of Homeschooling - John Holt

[Book](#) | [Kindle](#) | [Website](#)

How Children Learn - John Holt

[Book](#) | [Kindle](#) | [Website](#)

Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling - John Taylor Gatto

[Book](#) | [Kindle](#) | [Website](#)

The Unschooling Unmanual - Nanda Van Gestel

[Book](#)

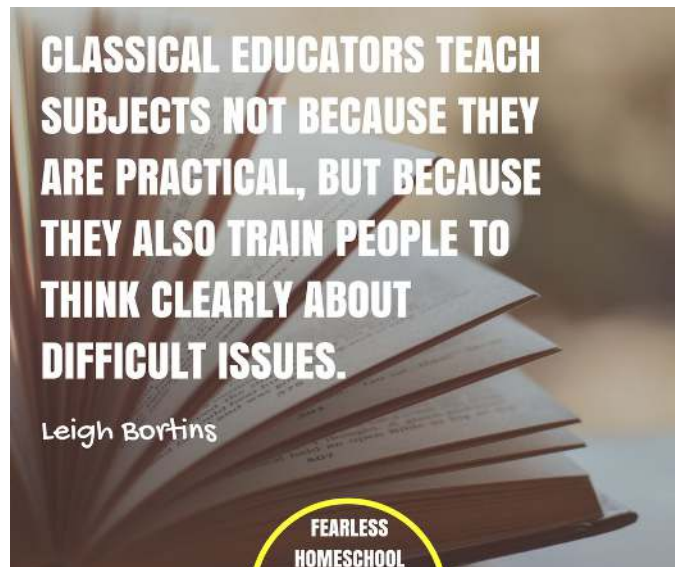
Sandra Dodd's Big Book of Unschooling

[Book](#) | [Website](#)

And take a look at my [Unschooling Pinterest board](#) to discover more fantastic resources that will help you get started with unschooling.

Classical Homeschooling

The classical education method aims to teach children how to think, rather than what to think. There is a strong focus on communication and logic skills and providing a broad and deep historical knowledge base to apply these skills to. Material is presented in a '**parts to whole**' format - therefore, phonics are taught, grammar is important, and when languages are learned declension and conjugation is a focus. There is a strong focus on paper and pencil, with the use of technology kept to a minimum in young children, and used mindfully as they get older. The 'Great Books', from Plato to Dostoyevsky, are studied, and the interconnections between all knowledge emphasised.



The History of the Classical Method

The ancient Greeks and Romans developed many of the ideas and methods of classical education, and in the Middle Ages these methods were refined, organised and applied much more systematically. This is when the term 'Trivium' (three ways) originated. The revival of classical education in the modern era is largely attributed to an essay published in 1947, [The Lost Tools of Learning by Dorothy Sayers](#), which laments

the lack of focus on teaching students how to think in modern education, and the over-specialisation of topics, and calls for a return to the classical method of the Trivium.

The Trivium

The Trivium consists of grammar, logic and rhetoric. The most popular modern interpretation of classical education provides four years of education in each stage. These are not prescriptive; if a child is early or late to a stage the stages can be adapted. It can also be **implemented with older students**.

Grammar (aka language) generally covers grades 1-4. At this age children are usually fascinated by language and words, so the focus is on mastering the skills of reading, writing and basic maths, and getting an interesting introduction to history, science and the arts. This stage aims to equip a child with the basis of knowledge that will allow them to build on over their education. It includes rote memorisation of important base facts and rules.

Logic (aka thought) usually covers grades 5-8. This is the age when children start to challenge ideas instead of accepting them, therefore critical thinking and analysis is introduced. With the strong basis laid down in the grammar stage the child is now capable of applying and connecting that knowledge in a systematic way.

Rhetoric (aka speech and expression) generally covers grades 9-12. Children are eager to express their ideas, and the rhetoric stage teaches them to do this logically, eloquently and persuasively.



The Good Points

- It provides a rigorous, comprehensive base of knowledge
- As it focuses on tools and foundations of learning, classical education equips a child very well for further independent and/or formal study
- Skills in reading, writing, logic and speaking are more important than ever with the advent of the internet and the information economy
- It encompasses virtue and morals based on historical study and appraisal
- Suits the stages of child development

The Not-So-Good Points

- It requires quite a lot of parental assistance, especially in the early stages. This is not a method for the free-flowing and easygoing types!
- Some find the emphasis on rote memorisation, narration and dictation onerous
- Children with different learning styles may find the focus on text-based materials does not suit them

Further Resources

The Well-Trained Mind | A Guide to Classical Education at Home
- Susan Wise Bauer and Jessie Wise

[Book](#) | [eBook](#) | [Website](#)

The Core | Teaching Your Child the Foundations of Classical Education - Leigh Bortins

[Book](#) | [eBook](#)

**Trivium Mastery | The Intersection of Three Roads: How to Give
your Child an Authentic Classical Home Education - Diane
Lockman**

[Book](#) | [eBook](#) | [Website](#)

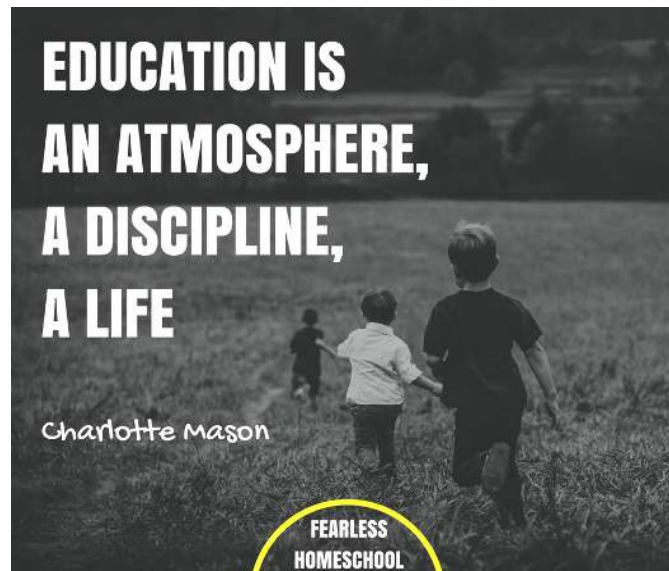
**Designing your own Classical Curriculum | A Guide to Catholic
Home Education - Laura Berquist**

[Book](#) | [eBook](#)

Also, take a look at my [Classical Homeschooling board on Pinterest](#) to discover fantastic resources that will help you set up your own classical-style homeschool.

Charlotte Mason

Charlotte Mason (1842-1923) was an English educator who believed that an education should address the whole person, not simply the mind. Although this may seem an everyday idea now, it was radical at the time. She wrote a six-volume set detailing her theories and approach, which is available to [purchase](#) or [read free online](#). The Charlotte Mason style has a strong base in Christianity, but the ideas and methods can be easily applied by all families.



A Charlotte Mason Atmosphere

The atmosphere includes the physical atmosphere, plus the atmosphere of ideas/family. Charlotte believed that children should live in an atmosphere of sincerity and truth, and bringing environments down to what an adult believes to be a child's level belittles children's abilities. She also believed that parents must model the ideals that they want their children to emulate. Yes, that means that us parents need to take note of how we act and react and aspire to act out those ideal behaviours we want to see in our children!

A Charlotte Mason Discipline

The development of good habits through character education is a large part of the Charlotte Mason method. From household chores to obedience, hygiene to being on time, **Charlotte advocated training bad habits out of, and good habits into, children.** One habit is focussed on at a time - for example, saying please and thankyou. The parent works intensively on replacing lack of manners with the appropriate manners at every opportunity. When the child is reliably saying please and thankyou, another habit is chosen and focussed on.

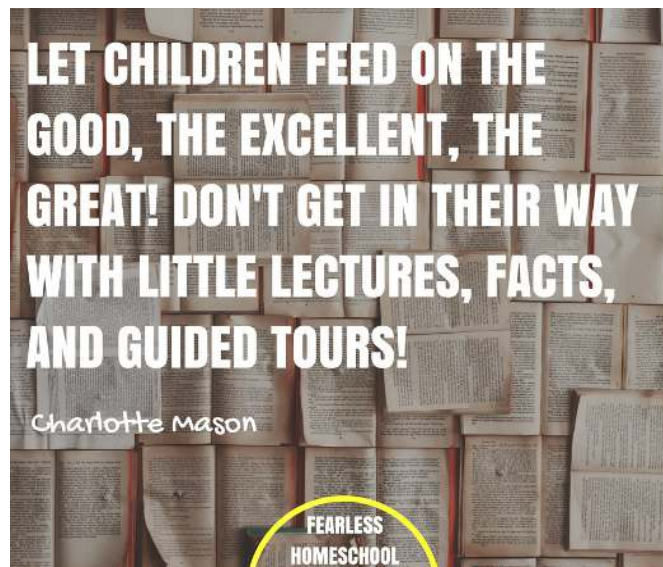


As an example of how discipline is incorporated in a Charlotte Mason education, lessons are provided in short sessions in the early years of education. If attention wanes, the lesson is switched to a different topic that requires a different focus eg. from maths to narration. In this way, the child's ability to focus attention is developed gently and naturally over time.

A Charlotte Mason Life

Charlotte emphasised the use of living resources. Living resources are quality literature written by authors who are passionate, engaging and interesting, as opposed to textbooks reciting facts. Living books and resources should spark interest, hold attention and provide quality role models. Children study the arts and music, and also spend large quantities of time outside, and keep detailed nature journals. External incentives and rewards are believed to be detrimental, as a child's curiosity and nature are enough to ensure their education. Quality of resources are emphasised over quantity, and children are exposed to a wide range of topics and areas and encouraged to delve deeply into

those that interest them most.



The Good Points

- The books and resources are typically interesting for both parent and child
- Strives to develop good character and habits
- No busy-work (I love Charlotte Mason's term, 'twaddle', for junk)
- Nurtures creativity and a love of nature
- Children are exposed to a wide range of topics and learning, with a focus on classic work that will not date

The Not-So-Good Points

- There is no set curriculum, so there is more work for the parent
- The realm of living books can be overwhelming - with so much to choose from it can be difficult to choose what will suit you
- Cost. Curriculum resources and living books can be very expensive
- As a child approaches higher levels of study (eg. physics, higher maths) there may not be a way to use the Charlotte Mason approach. However, the [classical method](#) can tie in quite well.

Further Resources

The Original Home Schooling Series - Charlotte Mason

[Book](#) | [FREE online!](#)

Habits: The Mother's Secret to Success - Charlotte Mason

[Book](#) | [eBook](#)

A Charlotte Mason Education: A Homeschooling How-to Manual

[Book](#)

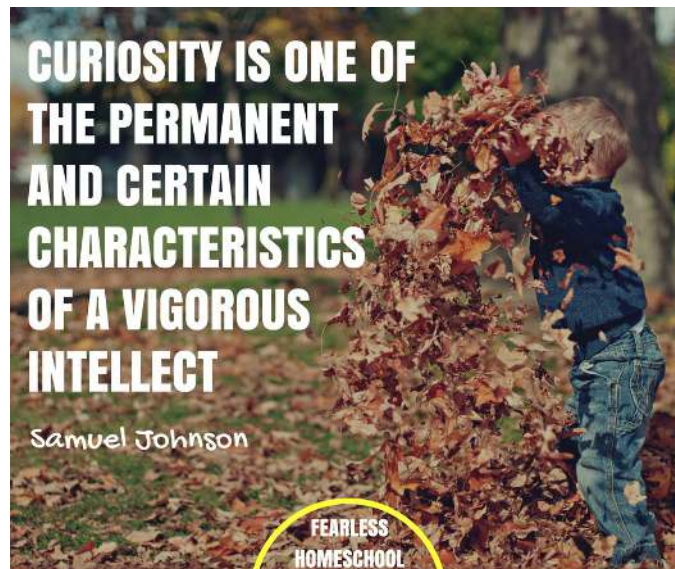
**A Twaddle-Free Education: An Introduction to Charlotte Mason's
Timeless Education Ideas - Deborah Taylor-Hough**

[Book](#) | [eBook](#)

Want plenty more ideas about Charlotte Mason homeschooling? Head over and check out my [Charlotte Mason board on Pinterest](#), for curriculum, living books and more!

Unit Studies

Unit studies involve choosing a theme, then organising work covering subject areas around that theme. A theme could be a classic novel, a topic such as France, stingrays or trucks, or a historical period. Unit studies can be as brief as a week, or last for months. You can do one topic at a time or switch between a few. They're a great way to learn in depth about a topic and have your child delve deeply into (and satisfy) their interests and curiosity.



An example of a unit study on bread

Bread. Doesn't sound very interesting to most people, right? But organising a unit study around it proves surprisingly easy! Here are some ideas for activities related to bread - there's plenty more.

- Research the history of breadmaking. Write an age-appropriate summary of it
- Make a variety of yeasted and unyeasted breads
- Capture your own sourdough culture and make sourdough bread
- Research and make breads specific to different historical periods, cultures or countries. Explore reasons why different breads have

developed in different areas

- Visit a bakery - a modern one and an artisanal one if possible.
Compare the different methods and appliances used
- Make a poster illustrating different types of bread, or a bread timeline
- Investigate the chemistry behind bread and yeasts
- Reading quality stories and poetry involving bread - Terry Pratchett's **dwarf bread** (can be used as a weapon) comes to mind, as does the **lembas bread** in Lord of the Rings or damper in many Australian history stories and poems. Read the Gingerbread Man to little ones!
- Investigate hardtack and how and when it has been used in history.
Make some!
- Write a bread recipe book
- Put on a bread feast or tasting session for friends or family

As you can see, any topic area has the potential to involve learning in multiple subject areas. Reading, writing, science, technology, history, maths, geography, botany, art and cooking are all easily covered in the study of bread. The activities are varied and interesting while being unified by a central theme.

Finding Resources

Unit studies may be one of the cheapest methods to DIY. Library resources are a great first stop. From there, internet resources can be used to investigate further. Maybe a science kit or equipment will be needed, or ingredients for cooking, or phone calls to organise a related outing or a chat to an expert (the local homeschool group may appreciate being involved in these too).



**RESEARCH IS
FORMALISED
CURIOSITY. IT IS
POKING AND PRYING
WITH A PURPOSE.**

Zora Neale Hurston

**FEARLESS
HOMESCHOOL**

Pre-made unit studies are available, but it can be hard to find the right resources as recommended (such as all the books in a book list about plants). It can be easier to organise your own, based around resources you own or have available at your local library.

The Good Points

- Unit studies encourage in-depth research and learning
- They're fun
- They're easily affordable
- They're excellent for families with multiple age groups, as the tasks can be adapted to abilities
- They integrate all subject areas, easily enabling children to see the connection between areas of knowledge
- They develop research skills due to the wide-ranging exploration needed
- Length can be adapted to suit interest

The Not-So-Good-Points

- Content is highly focussed on, and very well addressed, but specific skills aren't. These may need to be addressed separately. Many homeschoolers cover maths separately, and may add specific topics like grammar or science too.
- If using pre-made unit studies it can be difficult and time-consuming to find the specific resources recommended

Further Resources

Unit Studies Made Easy - Valerie Bendt | [eBook](#)

[Pre-made Unit Studies and lapbooks based on classic literature](#)

[More unit studies based on classic literature](#)

[A FREE unit studies planner!](#)

Want stacks of great ideas for unit studies, many of them free? Check out my [Unit Studies board on Pinterest!](#)

Steiner / Waldorf Homeschooling

The Waldorf educational philosophy is based on the teachings of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), who developed the spiritual concept of [anthroposophy](#). The first school to be developed along anthroposophical principles was at the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory, therefore schools and the education method are called Steiner or Waldorf interchangeably.



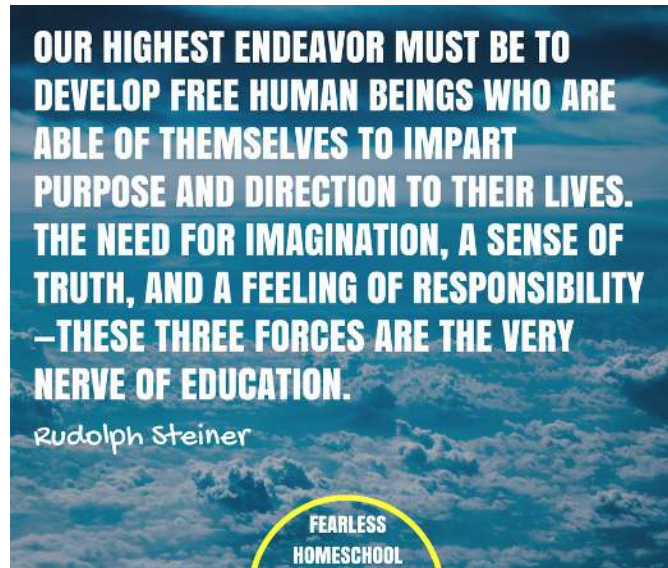
The core of Steiner/Waldorf education is learning through doing. In support of that, Waldorf homeschooling includes plenty of art, craft, handwork, dancing, drama and general creation. If you love the arts and seek to foster a beautiful, calm and rhythmical home environment then Waldorf may be for you.

A developmental approach is followed in Waldorf education-

- **Imitation** - Up to age 6/7, the basis is learning from example, imitation, and imagination. Lots of outside time, art, craft and handwork, and practical activities such as cooking are included.
- **Imagination** - 6/7-14, more formal academic work begins, but all

subjects are taught through the arts. Learning is facilitated through play, stories, nature, drama, handcrafts, music, and dance.

- **Discrimination** - 14+, a more academic approach is taken. It is believed that students are better suited now to dealing with abstract concepts and critical thought.

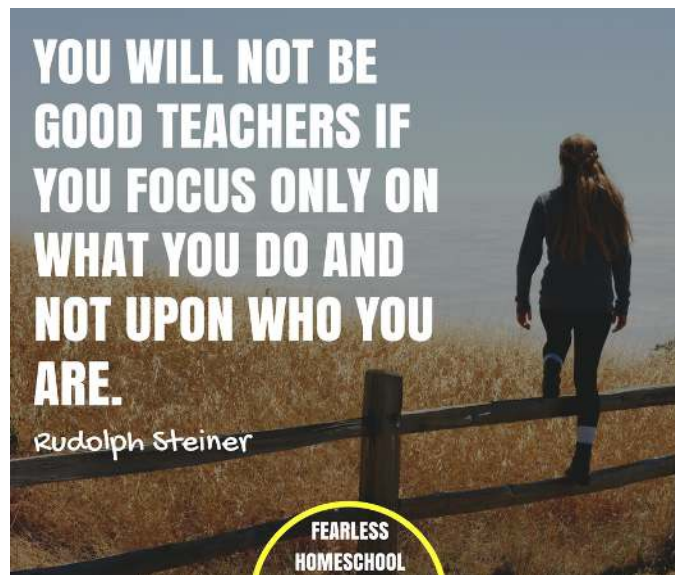


During the second stage, a main lesson (similar to a [unit study](#)) is studied each day for a few weeks, to provide children with an in-depth investigation of a topic.

The natural world is of central importance. Establishing a rhythm to the days and years is believed to help children feel secure. Celebrating festivals for the seasons, solstices and natural events helps to establish that rhythm. There is a focus on natural materials - wooden toys, beeswax crayons, and playsilks are popular. Moral and character development is supported by reading of mythology, biographies, fairy tales, thereby surrounding children in a positive, virtuous atmosphere.

Contrary to modern education, **Waldorf uses no technology until high school.** Steiner education believes a focus on a natural and social environment is best in the early years, and therefore the focus is on learning from people, the environment, and direct experience, not machines.

Formalised testing is minimal to non-existent. The parent is expected to know the child's abilities by working with them and observing their work.



The Good Points

- The Waldorf method does arts, crafts and hands-on learning really well.
- It nurtures creativity, imagination, and a respect for nature.
- It's cooperative, not competitive.
- It encourages participation in daily tasks, such as cooking and chores, from an early age
- The early focus on classical literature and mythology give children a strong academic base.
- It's ideal for parents wanting to raise multilingual children - languages are introduced early.
- Emphasis on engaging student and developing individual potential rather than a one-size-fits-all approach

The Not-So-Good Points

- It's not empirically based. Rudolf Steiner was the sole source of the ideas that Waldorf education revolves around. If you're a person who likes evidence, some of the concepts will scream 'woo!' to you (clairvoyance, gnomes, constellation of soul forces etc.). However, the beauty of homeschooling is that you can take what you like and discard the rest.
- If you're keen on an early introduction to technology, you'll need to incorporate that yourself.
- If your child doesn't fit the stages of academic development (eg. an

early reader) you'll need to change things around a bit.

- Cost. Waldorf requires quite a lot of 'stuff'. Things like playsilks, beeswax crayons and Waldorf dolls can be very expensive. You can do it on a budget, or DIY, but be prepared to be envious of other people who have seemingly unlimited funds and gorgeous environments.

Further Resources

A Waldorf curriculum is in the process of being written and submitted to ACARA-you can download the approved [scope and sequence from Steiner Education Australia](#) to assist with your application and planning. This curriculum enables the requirements of the National Curriculum to be met while retaining the Steiner philosophy and approach.

*November 2016 update - The Steiner curriculum has been approved. The HEA in Queensland are happy to accept it as a base for a homeschooling plan. Just make sure you include evidence of how you will tailor it to suit your child's specific needs.

Understanding Waldorf Education: Teaching from the Inside Out - Jack Petrash

[Book](#) | [Kindle](#)

Christopherus Curriculum for homeschoolers - many great educational resources and guides

Golden Beetle Books-Alan and Susan Whitehead*

[Website](#)

**To be perfectly honest, I found these books very difficult to read and understand. They jump around a lot, and there's quite a lot of unnecessary filler. Regardless, they're very comprehensive, and available in many libraries.*

Also, take a look at my [Steiner / Waldorf Homeschooling board on Pinterest](#) to discover fantastic resources and crafty ideas to help you set up your own Steiner homeschool.

Montessori Homeschooling

The Montessori method of education was created by Maria Montessori (1870-1952). Originally a physician, Montessori started working with young children with special needs. After experimenting with methods to help them learn she then applied the methods she developed to other children. They helped all children learn, and so the Montessori method of education was born.

Montessori believed that children learn no matter what.

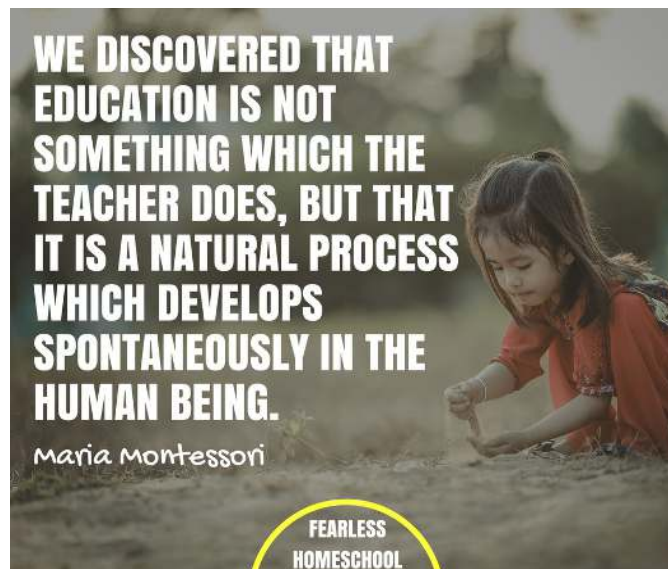
Therefore, it is better to put effort into improving their environment and modelling desired behaviour rather than teaching directly. Children prefer to follow their interests, and need to know a reason for learning (don't we all?). Working with them and their abilities enables their natural love of learning and work ethic to shine and grow.



The Montessori method is structured, but child-led. The parent is expected to have deep knowledge of the child and their abilities from observation and interaction. Using this knowledge they can support and amplify the natural development of the child using prescribed materials

and activities. Montessori developed the theory of sensitive periods – times when the child is especially receptive to and curious about particular knowledge or skill. This is a critical time to learn this skill. Language, numbers, and order are some of the sensitive periods.

Montessori homeschooling seeks to provide opportunities for the child to do it themselves. Participation in everyday activities such as chores is specifically encouraged by the provision of child-sized tools, and teaching the tasks by demonstration. I took on many ideas from Montessori when my children were toddlers. Providing them with an easy-to-access, child-suitable environment and equipment made a visible difference in how they went about their day. They started washing their own dishes, cleaning up after themselves, and did more activities independently once the materials were made easily accessible.

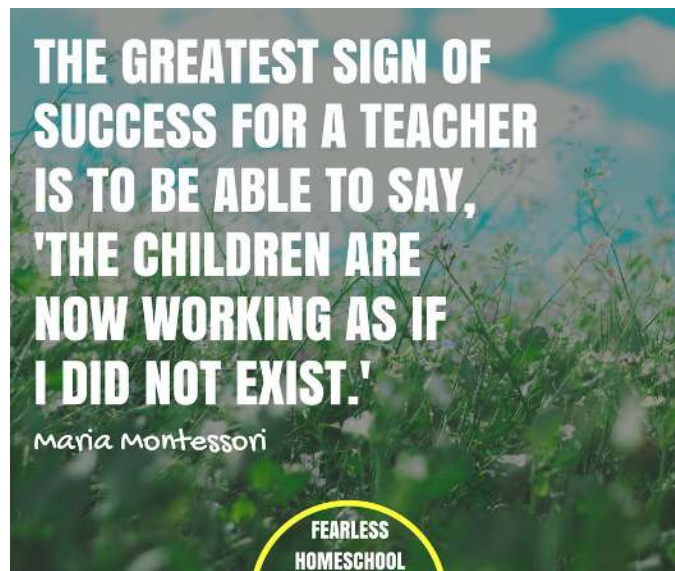


The environment is extremely important. It must be prepared so children can make discoveries and learn new skills easily, as suits their 'absorbent mind'. This includes having furniture to suit size, having specific places for equipment, pictures on walls at their eye level, and independent activities suitable for their ability. It is important to reduce clutter, both visual and auditory.

There are specific materials in a Montessori classroom. You may have seen sandpaper letters, or sandboxes for writing. Each of these is intended to be introduced at a specific developmental stage, with a prescribed script and usage. After this, the child is expected to use it independently in the prescribed way, with the parent monitoring their

use to ensure it's correct. This is where many homeschoolers trip up when implementing Montessori - we're not a particularly rigid bunch. We're more likely to give it to the child, show them how to use it, then let them do what they want with it. Montessori purists frown upon this.

Collaborative learning is also important. Montessori schools have multi-age classrooms. Parents of multiple children tend to find that collaborative learning develops spontaneously while homeschooling. Parents of only children or small families may need to start a playgroup or similar to foster collaborative learning. Montessori discourages competition and builds intrinsic rewards into the activities.



The Good Points

- It's child-led. Sensitive periods and close observation mean that education is matched to ability
- It encourages early academics without stress or pressure
- It encourages and supports independence (great for homeschoolers!).
- It's very hands-on and tactile, which makes the learning more interesting and more likely to be retained
- Montessori presents information in multiple formats, which makes it more likely to be retained. This is especially great for kids with special needs, who may need visual, auditory and tactile resources on the same skill presented repeatedly to make it stick.

The Not-so-Good Points

- It's VERY structured and quite rigid. Some argue that homeschooling cannot produce a true Montessori education. They say a home cannot reproduce the multi-age classroom dynamic, and that an untrained parent is unable to provide proper presentation and use of the materials. Whether this matters or whether it is simply a way of overcomplicating Montessori and protecting the professionalism of it is uncertain. Either way, the parent needs to do a lot of research and learning.
- Cost. Montessori requires quite a lot of 'stuff'. It's standard to have a full set of child-sized kitchenware and cleaning equipment. [A list I found](#) deemed the following materials essential: Wooden (Knobbed) Cylinders – 4 blocks, Pink Tower, Brown Stair (Broad Stair), Red Rods (Long Rods), Knobless Cylinders, Color Tablets, Geometry Cabinet, Sound Boxes/Cylinders, Rough and Smooth Boards, Smelling Bottles, Fabric Box, Mystery Bag, Geometric Solids, sorting exercises, Constructive Triangles, Binomial Cube, and Trinomial Cube. That's JUST sensorial – there's similar lists for language, maths, science, and art. **Eek!** You can do it on a budget, or DIY, but be prepared to be envious of other people who have seemingly unlimited funds and gorgeous environments.
- The materials are meant to be used in a particular way. Improvisation and mixing materials isn't encouraged
- It's more suited to younger children than teens
- Some homeschoolers find the practical activities feel false, and would rather their children engage in real day-to-day activities rather than simulated ones

Further Resources

**Montessori at Home Guide : A Short Guide to a Practical
Montessori Homeschool for Children Ages 2-6 - A. M. Sterling**

[Book](#)

**Teaching Montessori in the Home: Pre-school Years - Elizabeth
G. Hainstock**

[Book](#)

Montessori from the Start - Paula Polk Lillard & Lynn Lillard Jessen

[Book](#)

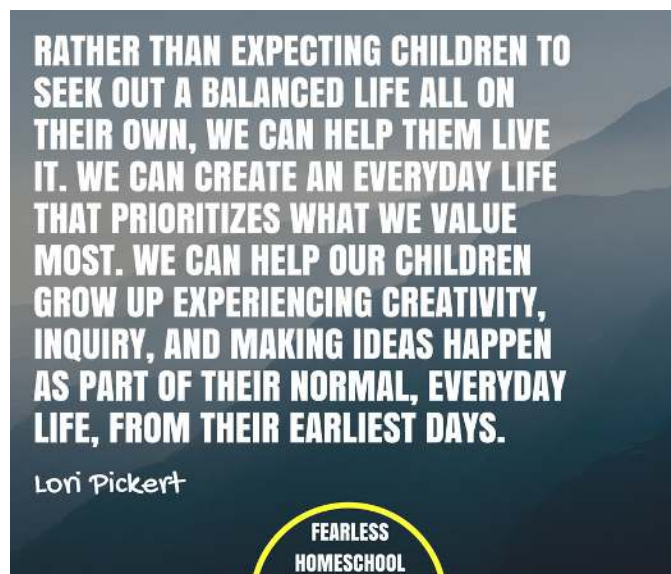
And take a look at my [Montessori Homeschooling Pinterest board](#) to discover fantastic resources that will help you set up your Montessori homeschool - many of them free!

Project-Based Homeschooling

Project-based homeschooling is based on the Reggio Emilia educational philosophy. The philosophy developed in the city of Reggio Emilia in Italy after World War 2, with the work of Loris Malaguzzi, a psychologist. Still popular in schools, it is usually limited to preschool and primary school ages.

It is less a method than an approach or philosophy. There's no prescribed curriculum, or materials, or developmental expectations. You can't train specifically to be a Reggio teacher, and anyone can use the term Reggio Emilia as there is no accrediting body.

Project-based homeschooling essentially brings Reggio Emilia into the home, and is suitable for all ages. It was popularised by Lori Pickert, former owner / director of a Reggio school, and homeschooling mum.



Project-based homeschooling is child directed and child managed. This means the child takes all the responsibility for their project and their learning. As a parent, you must resist the urge to step in and be 'helpful'! The child decides what it is they'd like to learn about. They

choose the resources. They decide on the format, length, and direction of their learning. They do the work. Similar to [unit studies](#), projects incorporate many skills across the curriculum. Learning is complex and layered, and deep. Most projects will incorporate all of the major learning areas, simply because real-life learning cannot be divided neatly into subject boxes.

So what do you, the parent, do? Much like [unschooling](#) (which PBH works really well with) you facilitate and provide support. You help the child learn research skills, take them to places they need to go (library, historical sites etc.) and ensure they have the supplies and dedicated space they need. You provide an interested ear, and any help that is requested. Finally, you help them to prioritise their work, and show them that you believe it's important and worthy.

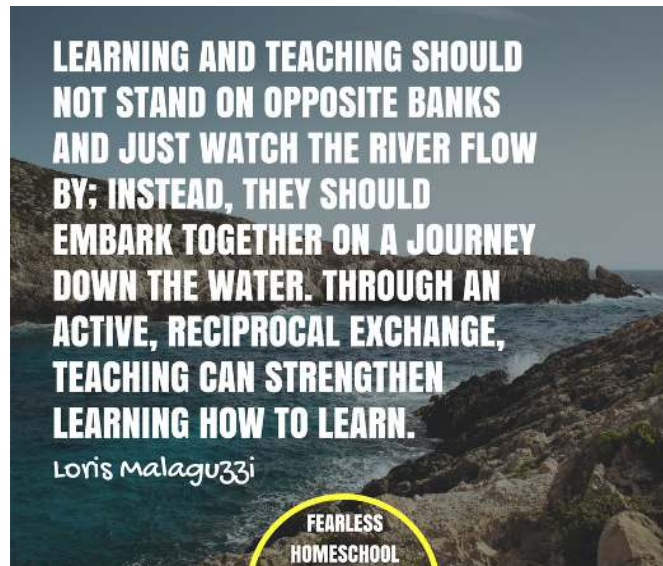


Parents keep a detailed learning journal. This is an integral part of the method. From regular observation you note behaviour and actions, and record questions and interests. The journals provide a record of steps taken, questions asked, and parental observations. They enable the parent and the child to reflect on and discuss projects that have been done, and remind children of other interests and questions that they may have forgotten otherwise. They also show the child that their work is important, and worthy of your investment of time and attention.

Environment is extremely important. Great lighting, quality materials and suitable furnishings are essential. The space should be inviting and comfortable, encouraging your child to work on their projects. Your child must be able to easily access what they need, to

feel secure in using the space, and not need to stress about making messes. Antique white tablecloths are out! Bulletin boards and galleries can help to provide reminders of their work and make it central.

Unlike virtually every other method, Project-Based Homeschooling doesn't promote itself as the one and only. If all you want to do is PBH that's great. If not, set curriculum or activities from other methods can easily be done alongside projects. The PBHers won't kick you out, or tell you you're not 'really' doing Project-Based Homeschooling.



The Good Points

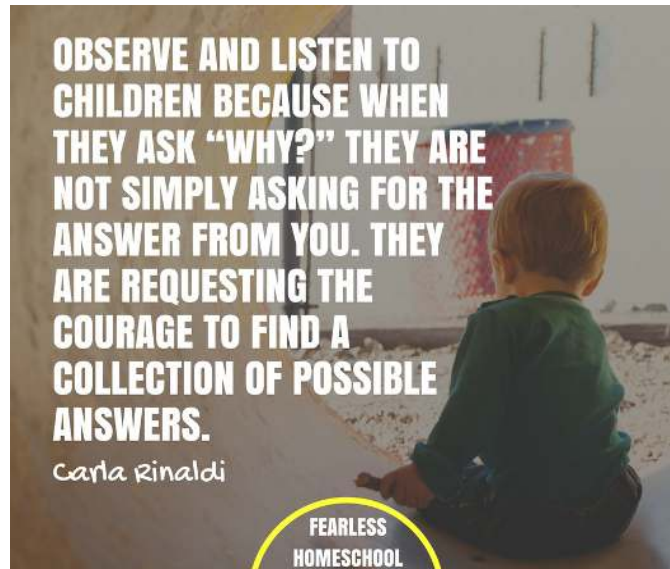
- It's very much child-led and child-centred
- Encourages deep, complex learning
- Children learn how to follow their interests in a purposeful, meaningful way
- There's no complexity or dogma, which is refreshing. Project-Based Homeschooling focuses on the child and how they learn, without making it overly complicated or requiring you to adopt a set of beliefs or values that may not match your family.

The Not-so-Good Points

- This might sound strange, but I'm having a lot of trouble finding any complaints. The only problems people seem to have about Reggio Emilia or Project Based Homeschooling is that it's impossible to plan. If your area requires you to register for homeschooling by submitting a learning plan you may need to organise more school-like resources to do done alongside PBH. But it allows for that, so there's no real

issue.

- As it is much less formal and prescribed, parents (and children) who like to know exactly what they are expected to do next may have trouble adjusting.



Further resources

Project-Based Homeschooling : Mentoring Self-Directed Learners - Lori Pickert

Book

The must-have book if you're interested in Project-Based Homeschooling

[Camp Creek Blog](#) is where Lori Pickert writes, and it's chock-a-block full of useful and inspiring information, plus a forum. You can also do a masterclass.

[Read more about homeschooling journals.](#)

Check out the [PBH kids tumblr account](#) for a sample of real projects completed by PBH kids

Bringing Reggio Emilia Home: An Innovative Approach to Early Childhood Education - Louise Boyd Cadwell

Book

The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Experience in Transformation - Edwards, Gandini and Forman

(Editors)

Book

Also, take a look at my [Project-Based Homeschooling Pinterest board](#) to discover fantastic resources that will help you set up your own Project-Based Homeschool.

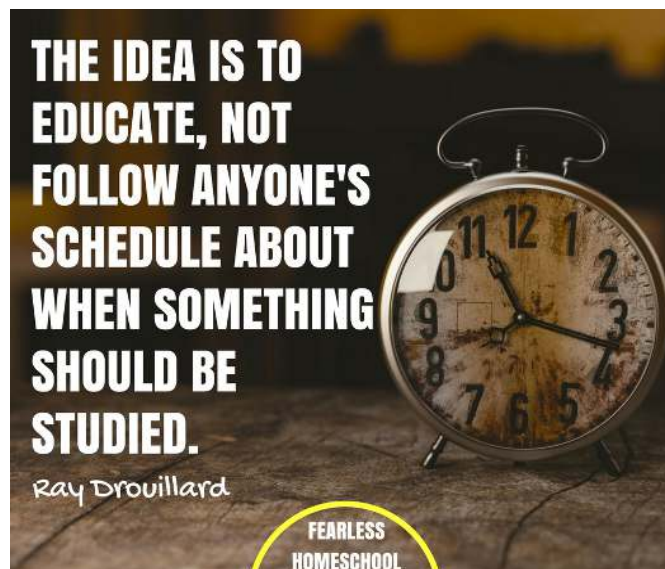
Eclectic Homeschooling

Eclectic homeschooling is the style that isn't a style! Basically, it's a catch-all style for people that develop their own way of homeschooling that doesn't really fit into any other style.

When you have educational freedom, then fitting yourself into any educational philosophy, even an alternative one, can be constricting.

Think of homeschooling like a buffet restaurant. Each style is a specific diet. Maybe classical is vegetarian, so you'll skip the meat. Unit study devotees are lactose intolerant, so won't choose anything with dairy. And Montessori can be Paleo – no dinner rolls for them!

If you're eclectic at the homeschooling buffet, you can choose it all. As an example, you can use a classical approach to maths and grammar, do Charlotte Mason nature study, have a Steiner-style morning circle time, organise a few unit studies based on interests, and incorporate project-based activities. All together, the activities and approach add up to a richly varied and comprehensive education.

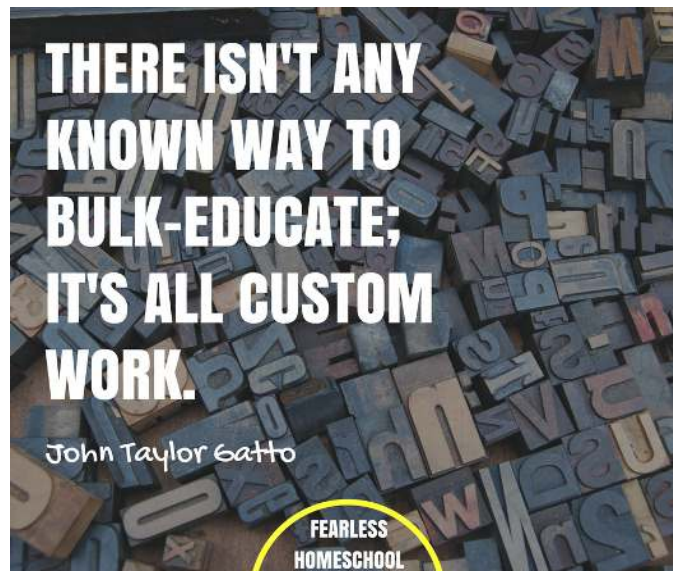


Most homeschoolers morph into eclectic homeschooling once

they relax and find their groove. No style suits everyone in everything. And not every style covers everything that you may want to learn well. The solution is to pick and choose.

Realistically, you're unique. Your children are unique. Your life circumstances, no matter how boring you think they are, are unique.

Why wouldn't your homeschool style also be uniquely tailored to you?



The Good Points

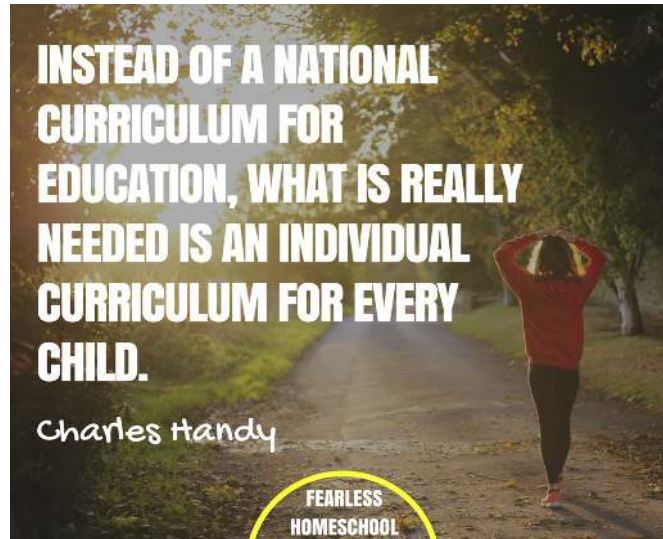
- Completely personalised learning. Each child can be given resources that are suited to their development level, interests, and ability.
- Choose the best of everything! Eclectic homeschooling allows you to choose the resources and activities that suit each particular learning area for you
- If you like to keep your options open, you'll love it
- Strictly adhering to a specific style can be stressful if it doesn't fit perfectly. Allowing yourself to pick and choose removes that stress.
- You can find resources that will be great for varied ages if you have more than one child, and spend more time doing work as a family, not separately.

The Not-So-Good Points

- You'll have to review and decide from a greater range of resources. If you find a lot of choice overwhelming, this will freak you out.
- You'll need a greater knowledge of all the different styles and approaches, in order to know the options available to you (lucky you

have this ebook, hey?!)

- It can take a while to find your groove, in terms of getting to know your child's interests and abilities intimately, and learning what works for your family.



Further resources

For this style, you really need to DIY! Read through the rest of the styles, look at what other people do, and experiment.

Think Outside the Classroom: A Practical Approach to Relaxed Homeschooling | Kelly Crawford

Book | eBook

The Relaxed Art of Eclectic Homeschooling | Amber Oliver

eBook

[Take a tour through our eclectic homeschool \(video and resource list\)](#)

I've collected some resources on my [Eclectic Homeschooling Pinterest board](#) to help you work out what to include in your unique homeschool. I hope you enjoy doing things your own way!

What's your homeschool adventure?

As you can see from the overview of all the styles, homeschooling really doesn't have to be school at home! A personalised education is within reach for every family and every child.

Now you've chosen your own homeschool adventure, or at least narrowed down your options, it's time to start experimenting.

And always remember.....

Use what works for you.

Thanks for reading, and happy homeschooling.