

**How to Choose the Right
Curriculum and Approach for
Each Child's Learning Style**



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(with excerpts from [102 Top Picks for Homeschool Curriculum](#) by Cathy Duffy)

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(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/DouglasCountyHomeschool/>)

Our children have different:

- ways of **learning**
- temperaments
- interests
- **abilities**

Instead of being curriculum-driven and letting that grade-level package of curriculum dictate the content, methods, and schedule that you should follow, choose to be **GOAL ORIENTED** .

When you are **GOAL-ORIENTED**, you:

- determine what your children need to **learn**
- decide what methods to use
- set up your own **schedule**
- find curriculum that has the content and methods that fits your own family's agenda

8 BASIC APPROACHES TO LEARNING:

1. TRADITIONAL TEXTBOOKS:

- uses distinct **textbooks** and workbooks for each subject area (math, spelling, reading, history, science, literature, vocabulary, etc.)
- almost always written for **classroom** use, although the publisher *may* have taken homeschoolers into consideration, especially with religious curriculum
- school at home functions much like a regular school day
- Children will be studying what many other students at their grade level are studying
- Some subjects are to be taught directly from the **teacher's** manuals
- *This would include most of your charter school programs as well as local schools like Umpqua Valley Christian School and St. Paul Lutheran School, to name some examples.*

PROS:

- give parents a sense of **security**
- helps establish routines and teaching methods
- less frightening because it is so similar to what most parents experienced in their own education
- easier for **record keeping**, scheduling, and accountability
- can allow children to work more independently at times

TRADITIONAL TEXTBOOKS - CONS:

- sometimes takes longer to work through because of unnecessary review and practice designed for a classroom situation
- not as **flexible**
- can diminish learning exploration because of assigned workbook pages that need to be done
- often **boring** and unappealing, making it difficult to motivate students to complete assignments

Examples:

- A Beka Book (www.abeka.com) (*Christian; affiliated with Pensacola Christian College*)
- BJU Press (www.bjupress.com) (*Christian; affiliated with Bob Jones University*)
- Alpha Omega/LIFEPAC/Switched-On Schoolhouse/Monarch (www.AOP.com) (*Christian; non-denominational Protestant*)
- Rod and Staff (www.MilestoneBooks.com) (*Christian; Mennonite affiliation*)
- Modern Curriculum Press (www.pearsonhomeschool.com/) (*Secular*)
- Scott Foresman (www.pearsonschool.com/) (*Secular*)
- Macmillan/McGraw Hill (www.mheducation.com/prek-12) (*Secular*)
- Houghton Mifflin (www.hmhco.com/at-home) (*Secular*)

2. CHARLOTTE MASON EDUCATION:

- **Living Books:** Children read “living books” on a **daily** basis. If they cannot read fluently yet, living books are read to them.
- **Narration:** To help them digest what they have just read, children should **retell** what they have read or heard in their own words, after just one reading.
- **Copywork:** Handwriting is taught by giving children a small section – for the very young ones even just one word – from a favorite **book** or **poem** to copy. Only a few minutes should be spent on copywork each day.
- **Dictation:** The child is given a short piece of text – again from a living book – to study carefully. After she has studied it, the text is **dictated** to her, one fragment at a time. The parent watches as the child writes the passage down, in order to catch any mistakes immediately and help the child correct them.
- **Art Appreciation:** Art is taught by looking at the works of the great masters and listening to the music of great composers. After the child has looked at the work for a certain amount of time, or has listened to the music, she is asked to **narrate** about what she has observed.
- **Nature Studies:** Children should spend a lot of time outdoors and study nature in its natural setting outside, not from textbooks. To achieve this end, the parent should accompany the child on daily **walks**. The child should take her Nature Notebook with her, a book in which she can draw or write about the things she finds on her daily walks.
- **Habit Training:** Good habits, like **attention**, truthfulness, neatness, and kindness should be practiced and reinforced. Children should focus on one particular habit over a certain period of time, e.g. four or six weeks.

2. CHARLOTTE MASON EDUCATION, cont.:

- **Short Lessons:** Lessons are short and take place during the mornings only. During the afternoons, the children are free to **play**.
- *Local preschools like this would include The Barn School and Hummingbird Schoolhouse (especially schools using the Waldorf method).*

PROS:

- Short, interesting lessons will keep both the homeschooling parent and his or her children happy.
- Living Books are never (or rarely) **boring**.
- Emphasis on **experience** rather than dry texts; the hands-on method usually leads to better retention of what is learned.
- The Charlotte Mason Method allows for a lot of **creativity**.
- This methodology could be heaven for young artists, aspiring writers, and linguists.

CONS:

- Costs: Good books can be quite **expensive**.
- Daily walks in the sunshine are nice, but might be a lot less fun in heavy rain or cold, stormy weather.
- Some people may feel overwhelmed at the whole idea of using a curriculum consisting of “living books” and are uncertain as to whether or not their choices of books would be the right ones.

Examples:

- Heart of Dakota (www.heartofdakota.com) (preschool – 12th grades; *Protestant worldview*)
- Sonlight (www.sonlight.com) (preschool – 12th grades; *Protestant worldview, though fairly treats Catholic and Orthodox positions*)(*BookShark is the secular version – www.bookshark.com*)
- www.SimplyCharlotteMason.com (*Secular*)
- www.AmblesideOnline.org (lesson plans/book lists for all grade levels) (*Secular*)
- Mater Amabilis (www.materamabilis.org) (lesson plans for all levels – *Catholic*)

3. CLASSICAL EDUCATION:

- Modern Classical Education divides learning into three stages known as the **Trivium**: Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric.
- During the Grammar Stage or Knowledge Level, which lasts from birth to the age of twelve, the child should learn mainly **facts** and focus on lots of memorization.
- During the Logic Stage or Understanding Level, from ages thirteen to fifteen, children should be taught the skill of **reasoning**. They learn to ask critical questions, analyze, evaluate, and investigate, and so on.
- During the Rhetoric Stage or Wisdom Level, from ages sixteen to eighteen, the classical student learns to apply her **logic** skills. She learns to express her previously gained knowledge and understanding in speech and writing.
- Classical Education usually includes studying Greek and/or Latin, as well as reading classic works like Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in their original language. Generally, Christian homeschoolers tend to be the ones who use this approach, although there are some Christians who are opposed to the classical movement.

3. CLASSICAL EDUCATION, cont.:

This would include the local private Christian school Geneva Academy (5 days per week), and Classical Conversations homeschooling community that meets in Roseburg once a week. For a secular classical homeschooling option, that would be ACE (Academy for Character Education) in Cottage Grove that meets once a week.

PROS:

- Classical Education could be a great choice for home educators who want to give their children a solid, classical base.
- This methodology is said to produce very literate, logical **thinkers**.
- The Trivium follows the natural stages of child development quite nicely.
- This method of education may be the perfect fit for children who love learning **languages**.

CONS:

- The emphasis on **memorization** during the Grammar Stage might be too rigid and limiting for your child (especially when he or she is highly gifted or has great difficulty memorizing).
- Because of its focus on languages and history, Classical Education tends to be a bit weak on **science** (but you can add in stronger science if you want).
- If your child doesn't like languages, this method is probably not the best for her, due to the Greek and/or Latin requirements.
- The highly disciplined approach and intellectual rigor may be too restrictive for your child
- Facts, concepts and subject matter are introduced to students in a **random** manner and often at an age when they may not be ready for them. Should we really teach a first grader the basic concepts of atoms, for example?

Examples:

- English From the Roots Up (www.literacyunlimited.com) (*Secular*)
- Teaching Writing Structure and Style Seminar (www.excellenceinwriting.com) (*Secular*)
- WriteShop (www.writeshop.com) (*Christian – Protestant*)
- Spell to Write and Read (www.bhibooks.net) (*Christian – minimal content so useable with all beliefs/secular*)
- BiblioPlan (www.biblioplan.net) (*Christian – Protestant*)
- A Child's History of the World (www.homeschool.calverteducation.com) (*secular but Christian-friendly*)
- Teaching the Classics (www.centerforlit.com) (*Secular but Christian-friendly*)
- Old Western Culture (www.romanroadsmedia.com) (*Christian*)
- The Story of the World (www.peacehillpress.com) (*Secular, but Christian-friendly*)
- Berean Builders Science (www.bereanbuilders.com) (*Christian*)
- Connecting With History (<http://rchistory.com/>) (*Christian – Catholic*)
- Tapestry of Grace (www.tapestryofgrace.com) (*Christian – Reformed Protestant but is respectful to Catholic/Orthodox views*)
- The Critical Thinking Co. (www.criticalthinking.com) (*Secular*)
- The Fallacy Detective (www.ChristianLogic.com) (*Christian*)

4. UNIT STUDY (OR “DELIGHT-DIRECTED”) APPROACH:

- **Hands-on** or literature-based (or both)
- Combines most, if not all, academic subjects like math, grammar, history, art, music, literature, writing, and science into the study of one single **topic**.
- Your child will study the chosen subject from all angles. He'll read about it, watch movies about it, create his own art related to the subject, and go on a field trip. Math can be implemented in the Unit as well, by making charts and graphs, taking measurements, letting your child calculate the costs of the materials you have to buy; the possibilities are endless.
- Since you won't be using textbooks – or maybe you will, but just not the ordinary way – your child may want to make a **notebook**, lapbook, website, or portfolio of the things she has learned.

PROS:

- One subject can be studied by children of several ages - and the adults – alike, each at their own level.
- Unit studies are great for building **research** skills.
- Retention of what has been learned is usually very good, because of the well-rounded approach to learning.
- Most children love doing unit studies.
- Unit studies can be a wonderful **creative** outlet for your children, especially if they are artistically talented.
- Unit studies can be done successfully at low cost; many are **free** on the internet to be printed out.

CONS:

- Unit studies often require a lot of **planning** ahead and research by the home educating parent.
- Covering all academic subjects can be challenging, and parents may feel they need to add a curriculum for math or language arts.
- Doesn't work as well with families who have **rigid** schedules.
- Much more hands-on time between parent and child may be required.

Examples:

- KONOS or KONOS In-A-Box (www.konos.com) (*Christian – Protestant*)
- Five In a Row (www.fiveinarow.com) (*Secular unless you use the Bible supplement*)
- My Father's World (www.mfwbooks.com) (*grades K-8th – combines unit study/Charlotte Mason/classical approaches with a Protestant biblical emphasis*)
- Tapestry of Grace (www.tapestryofgrace.com) (*Christian – Reformed Protestant but is respectful to Catholic/Orthodox views*)
- Further Up and Further In (www.cadroncreek.com) (*Christian – Protestant*)
- Amanda Bennett Unit Studies (www.amandabennett.com) (*Christian – Protestant*)
- Media Angels science units (www.mediaangels.com) (*Christian*)

5. UNSCHOOLING:

- In autonomous learning, also known as Unschooling or Child-Led Learning, the whole notion of education as we know it, is put aside. This doesn't mean there is no education at all – nothing could be further from the truth – but rather that education is taken out of its formal setting and integrated into **everyday** life.
- Unschoolers trust that their children's natural curiosity will make them want to learn if they aren't forced to learn things they aren't ready for yet, or that simply don't interest them.
- There's no pre-set curriculum to follow, and there's no clear distinction between school and free time. There are no school hours and no school holidays. Learning happens **all** the time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
- Unschooled children are free to choose what to learn, when to learn, and how to learn. The parents don't act as teachers but rather as coaches or even just facilitators. It is their job to make sure their children grow up in a learning-rich environment with plenty of educational materials and opportunities to spark their **curiosity**. They have to be there to answer their children's questions or – even better – help them find the answers for themselves.
- Unschoolers think outside the box. They may or may not work with a curriculum, depending on what their children let them know they want or need. They use books, and likely, lots of them, on all kinds of subjects. They also use everyday items like tools, kitchen utensils, and whatever else they may find around the house – and may do so imaginatively. After all, whoever said pots and pans should only be used for cooking? 😊

PROS:

- Because children are allowed to **explore** their own interests, lack of enthusiasm for learning is seldom a problem.
- Unschooled children are usually highly motivated, resourceful, and independent students.
- Learning is not limited to a certain environment and certain materials; the sky is the limit.
- Both parents and children greatly enjoy the **freedom** that comes with autonomous learning.
- Learning opportunities are not limited by what a certain curriculum has to offer.

CONS:

- Parents can sometimes be anxious as to whether or not their children are learning enough.
- Parents may sometimes be concerned about **gaps** in their children's education.
- In Oregon, regulations force state-wide testing, even when the child is not used to taking standardized assessments.
- Unschoolers may have to deal with **criticism** and even downright disapproval more often than more conventional home educators.
- Some children are rarely motivated to learn new things and will not receive a sound education even after many years unless **forced** to learn something.

Resources:

- The Unschooling Handbook by Mary Griffiths (www.randomhouse.com) (Secular)
- The Relaxed Home School by Mary Hood (www.archersforthelord.org) (Christian)

6. INDEPENDENT STUDY:

- The student uses resources that allow him to operate with little direct teaching or interaction regarding lessons, except for checking answers (although online/computer versions sometimes grade assignments as well).
- Uses a preset curriculum that is designed to be **self-teaching**.

PROS:

- Requires little to no teaching or one-on-one interaction from the parent
- Theoretically, a student **masters** the material before moving on from each section.
- Works best with grade 5+ students who are responsible about their use of time

CONS:

- Most **young** learners don't do well with independent study.
- The parent gives up the opportunity to adapt to meet the learning **style** of the child.
- Most learning is at lower levels of thinking (knowledge and comprehension) rather than the higher levels of synthesis and analysis.
- Most questions/answers will be **factual** (multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank vs. answers that require sentences, paragraphs, or discussion).

Examples that primarily use lower-level thinking:

- School of Tomorrow/A.C.E. ("Paces" workbooks) (*Christian*)
- Alpha Omega (LIFEPAC) curriculum (*Christian*)
- Christian Light (*Christian*)
- Switched-On Schoolhouse/Monarch online (*Christian*)

Examples that also use higher level thinking:

- Some A Beka texts (*Christian*)
- Saxon Math (Math 5/4 and up) (*Secular*)
- Math-U-See (*Christian or secular*)
- Worldly Wise vocabulary series (*Secular*)
- almost all of The Critical Thinking Co. books (*Secular*)
- Apologia Science courses (*Christian*)
- Friendly Chemistry (*Secular but Christian-friendly*)
- Old Western Culture (*Christian*)
- Math Without Borders (*Secular*)
- Beautiful Feet Books (unit study or lit/history combinations, when students write answers down vs. group discussion) (*Christian*)

7. ECLECTIC:

- Curriculum is selected from among a **variety** of philosophies and resources. For example, a family may combine a very structured grammar program and a discovery approach to science.
- Parents combine the best ideas, supplements, and resources that **work** for their family.
- Because eclectic curriculum requires more parental decision-making and responsibility, it works best for those families with some experience and/or confidence.

PROS:

- Parents' teaching styles are addressed, for the amount of **time**, energy, and money they have to spend on homeschooling.
- Children's learning, interest, and activity styles are generally met well with curriculum that fits the needs of each child.
- If one piece of a child's curriculum ends up not being a good fit, it may work well with another child in the family later on; the parent also isn't having to change the **entire** year's full curriculum but only one piece of that (e.g., a math curriculum).

CONS:

- It is time-consuming to explore a wide range of curriculum.

8. CHARTER SCHOOL

- Student enrolls as a public school student but does all or most public school learning at **home**.
- Curriculum, materials, supplies, computer are provided at no cost to the family
- Supervising teacher directs the schedule, grades, manages paperwork, and answers questions.
- A charter school is an independently run public school.

PROS:

- Education at home is **free** for the family
- Teacher guidance may be available when the student or parent needs help
- Very little **help** is needed from the parent, in theory
- Lesson planning and scheduling is done for you

CONS:

- The parent has **no** choice on which curriculum or educational philosophy is used
- Weekly or monthly meetings in your home or a school will generally be required
- Some supervising teachers are excellent; some are not. Some allow flexibility, and others don't. Some waive the "busy work" while others won't.
- You may end up helping your child wade through Common Core math and other issues with which you have no idea how to help.

8. CHARTER SCHOOL – CONS, cont.:

- Your family schedule is fairly “set in stone”, to line up with the school year and hours. Some charter schools require students to log in **6+** hours per day, 180 days a year, following the public school calendar.
- Your child is still a public school student, according to the State of Oregon.

What is my family’s philosophy about education? This week, write down your own family’s priorities for your children’s education!

Family Priorities	Priority Level (rank them for your family)
<input type="checkbox"/> college prep education	
<input type="checkbox"/> strong independent study habits	
<input type="checkbox"/> extensive reading from many genres	
<input type="checkbox"/> Scripture study and memorization	
<input type="checkbox"/> art/music appreciation and expression	
<input type="checkbox"/> familiarity with computer programs such as Microsoft Word and Excel	
<input type="checkbox"/> children who become self-directed learners who know how to teach themselves	
<input type="checkbox"/> children who love to learn, so I want learning to be as fun as possible	
<input type="checkbox"/> children who have virtuous characters and strong ethical foundations	
<input type="checkbox"/> develop habits of physical fitness that will stay with them all their lives	
<input type="checkbox"/> take challenging courses in high school so they will have opportunities to win scholarships to prestigious colleges	
<input type="checkbox"/>	

How do I think learning should happen?

- traditional school type of format
- independent learning
- group learning
- activity, movement, freedom in their schooling
- outdoor nature studies and learning
- _____
- _____

How do I want to teach or operate my school?

- It's a high priority that my children learn **structure and discipline**, so I will more likely follow a predictable schedule or routine and use tests on a regular basis.
- I put higher value on developing **creativity and delight** in learning, so I will probably keep the schedule very flexible so my child can concentrate on that project she started without stopping to complete her language workbook exercise.

- _____
- _____
- _____

Do I want to try to teach most or all of your children together, at least for some subjects? yes no

How much of the time do I want (or are able) to work directly with my children?

How much of the time do I expect my children to work independently? (*Caution: don't expect children below age 8 to do a lot of independent work.*) _____

Do I want to use real books (biographies, historical novels, books written about particular science topics, etc.) as part of my curriculum? yes no

Do I want to include field trips? yes no **If so, what type of field trips?** _____

Planning: like to make up curriculum as I go, adapting to the needs and interests of my children
 prefer things well planned out in advance by myself
 prefer things well planned out in advance by a curriculum company or other program

Schedules: I need a set schedule to get things done I would prefer more flexibility

I prefer a curriculum that is thoroughly laid out in advance by someone else and that tells me what to do when: yes no

Any additional thoughts about how I want to operate: _____

Approaches to Education

When you read a statement, below, that reflects your own ideas, move over to the boxes to the right of the statement, and circle every number in that row. I prefer:	Traditional	Charlotte Mason	Classical	Unit Study	Unschooling	Independent Study	Eclectic	Packaged Program
Predictable structure	2	1	2			2	2	2
That children have many real life experiences for learning - nature studies in the woods, building projects, etc.		2	1	2	2	2	2	
Children read historical novels and biographies rather than textbooks		2	2	2	2		2	1
A program that is thoroughly laid out for the teacher and provides a feeling of security.	2					2		2
A grammar program that emphasizes rules and memorization.	2		2			2		2
Workbooks, teacher manuals, and answer keys for most or all subjects.	2					2	1	2
Children to work independently as much as possible.	1				2	2	1	1
Mental training and mental discipline be placed as higher goals than stimulating curiosity and interest.	2		1			2	1	1
Curriculum that ensures that my children cover the same things other school children might be learning.	2					2	1	2
Informal evaluation of my children by talking over what they've read, and looking at their work instead of testing.		2	2	2	2		1	
That younger children do a significant amount of memorization, repetition, and recitation.	1		1			1	1	1
That teens get a strong background in the "Great Books" of western civilization.		1	2	1	1	1	1	
To emphasize developing a love for learning more than the ability to work in a structured, methodical way.		2		2	2		1	
That teens develop a "life of the mind" more than vocational skills.	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
Presenting children with facts and information to learn rather than allowing them to choose their own topics to investigate.	2	1	2	1		2	1	2
Highly structured resources that script what teacher and child are supposed to say and do.	1		1			1	1	1
Lots of discussion and interaction in the learning process.		2	2	2	1		2	1
Total points for each column on THIS page								

When you read a statement, below, that reflects your own ideas, move over to the boxes to the right of the statement, and circle every number in that row.	Traditional	Charlotte Mason	Classical	Unit Study	Unschooling	Independent Study	Eclectic	Packaged Program
I prefer:								
Covering subjects (e.g., history, science, religion) at the same time with the same material with as many of my children as possible.		2	2	2			2	
Making connections between different subject areas, showing how pieces of information relate to one another, and viewing that as a high priority in learning.		2	2	2	2		1	
Project-based learning.		1		2	2		1	
To teach children one-on-one as much as possible.	2	1	1		1		2	2
That children use grammar in a casual manner – e.g., some instruction, use of a grammar handbook, then working on mastery in their own writing rather than working primarily through a grammar text.		1		2	2		1	
To keep structure to a minimum so that interesting learning ideas can be pursued as they arise.		1		1	2		1	
To make field trips an essential part of schooling.	1	2	1	1	2		1	
To give children freedom to determine what they will study and when and how they will do so.				1	2		1	
An investigative approach that stimulates children to pursue information and research on their own.		1		2	2	1	1	
Flexible curriculum and schedules s I can capitalize on “teachable moments.”		1	1	2	2		1	
A mixture of structured learning and experiential/discovery learning		2		2			2	
To set my own goals and schedule rather than adopting someone else’s.		1	1	1	2		1	
To select curriculum and methods that suit my child’s learning style rather than curriculum and methods widely recognized and accepted by authorities.		1	1	2	2		1	
That computer-based learning be a significant part of the curriculum.	1					1		1
Total points for each column on THIS page								
Total points for each column on PREVIOUS page								
Total for each column: add the above two lines and enter total as the numerator (top number) of the fraction	22	31	29	34	34	24	36	22
Percentage for each column: numerator ÷ by denominator								

After you’ve gone through both pages of the chart, add up the total of the circled numbers in each **column** and write this number in the numerator (top number) of the fraction. Next, divide the numerator by the denominator for each column total (e.g., say you had 13 points out of 22 possible in the “Traditional” column. $13 \div 22 = 0.59$ (59%). You will now have percentage numbers for each column that you can easily compare. The column(s) with the highest percentages is likely to be in line with your philosophy of education.

Write down your responses to these questions:

1. How much confidence and/or experience do you have regarding homeschooling? _____

2. How much time do you have available for working directly with your children **and** for planning and preparation? _____

3. How much money can you spend per year for your family? _____

4. How do your religious beliefs impact your homeschooling? _____

LEARNING STYLES:

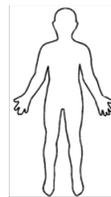
We need to tune in to our children's learning styles. People tend to prefer one of three types of sensory input:



auditory



visual



kinesthetic (feeling or experiencing with one's body)

Learning styles are a bit more complex than that. What do you do with a child who is a strong auditory learner but who can't sit still long enough to listen to a lesson being read to him?

A learning style is the way a person most easily **learns** and **processes** new information or skills. This includes personality traits, like the desire to work with other people or independently, more interested in the big picture or the details, and preferring a more or less structured environment.

The **parent's** learning style needs to be a part of the equation, too. Use the chart on the next page to check off the characteristics that describe you, and you will probably see one area stand out above the rest. If you find yourself fairly evenly spread across one or more learning styles, that's just fine.

Adult Learning/Teaching Styles

Wiggly

- has trouble organizing and following through
- would rather play and have fun than work
- tends to do things impulsively
- probably did poorly in school (often due to lack of interest or boredom)
- looks for creative and efficient solutions to tasks
- dislikes paperwork and record keeping
- prefers activity over reading books
- prefers to teach (or learn) the fine arts, physical fitness, and activity-oriented classes

Perfectionist

- likes everything neatly planned ahead of time
- likes to follow a schedule
- is not very good at coming up with creative ideas
- is comfortable with memorization and drill
- gets upset easily when children don't cooperate
- worries about meeting requirements
- often prefers to work under an umbrella program for home educators (like a charter school)
- prefers to teach (or learn) with pre-planned curricula
- is more comfortable with "cut and dry" subjects than those which require exploration with no clear answers

Competent

- likes to be in control
- thinks and acts logically
- likes to understand the reasoning and the logic behind ideas
- is selectively organized
- likes to work alone and be independent
- is impatient with those who are slow to grasp concepts and those who are disorganized
- is often uncomfortable in social situations and has trouble understanding others' feelings and emotions
- tends to avoid difficult social situations
- likes to make long-term plans
- prefers to teach (or learn) math, science, and other logic-related subjects rather than language arts and social studies

Sociable

- enjoys social interaction
- likes to belong to groups, especially for activities
- worries about what other people think
- tends to be insecure about how well he/she is doing
- is idealistic about expectations and goals
- may or may not be organized, depending upon accountability
- is more interested in general concepts than details
- prefers to teach (or learn) subjects related to language arts, social studies, and, possibly, the fine arts

Now, fill out the chart for each child in your family whom you will be homeschooling (see next page). (Make copies!)

My child: _____

Date: _____

Wiggly

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- prefers to teach (or learn) math, science, and other logic-related subjects rather than language arts and social studies

Sociable

- enjoys social interaction
- likes to belong to groups, especially for activities
- worries about what other people think
- tends to be insecure about how well he/she is doing
- is idealistic about expectations and goals
- may or may not be organized, depending upon accountability
- is more interested in general concepts than details
- prefers to teach (or learn) subjects related to language arts, social studies, and, possibly, the fine arts

My child: _____

Date: _____

Wiggly

- has trouble organizing and following through
- would rather play and have fun than work
- tends to do things impulsively
- probably did poorly in school (often due to lack of interest or boredom)
- looks for creative and efficient solutions to tasks
- dislikes paperwork and record keeping
- prefers activity over reading books
- prefers to teach (or learn) the fine arts, physical fitness, and activity-oriented classes

Perfectionist

- likes everything neatly planned ahead of time
- likes to follow a schedule
- is not very good at coming up with creative ideas
- is comfortable with memorization and drill
- gets upset easily when children don't cooperate
- worries about meeting requirements
- often prefers to work under an umbrella program for home educators (like a charter school)
- prefers to teach (or learn) with pre-planned curricula
- is more comfortable with "cut and dry" subjects than those which require exploration with no clear answers

Competent

- likes to be in control
- thinks and acts logically
- likes to understand the reasoning and the logic behind ideas
- is selectively organized
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- is impatient with those who are slow to grasp concepts and those who are disorganized
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Teaching to your child's strengths: what works best

You don't have to construct your entire **curriculum** around these learning styles. Generally, your child will have stronger subjects and weaker subjects.

Perhaps your child is good at math and weak in language arts. If you are using a math program that doesn't really use methods best for that child's **learning** style, but he is still learning just fine because math comes easily for him, then don't worry about it. Stick with what you are **using**.

But if language arts are a challenge, then you will want to use resources and methods for writing, grammar, spelling, etc. that work best with his learning style.

Here are some ideas on how to teach the four learning styles:

The Wiggly Child

- typically a kinesthetic learner (appreciates hands-on learning)
- math manipulatives like Math-U-See blocks, Cuisenaire Rods, or Base Ten Blocks or RightStart Math.
- building projects (provide occasional checkpoints so you know they are staying on task and making progress)
- making 3-D maps
- learning facts set to music (so the child can dance with the music); allow whole body movement
- mini-trampoline to jump on while practicing math facts and spelling words or while listening to a story or lesson being read
- unit studies that combine real books and activities that hold his interest
- choose 3-4 topics to study in science each year (elementary grades) and build a unit study
- select math programs that only have 15-20 problems per assignment
- use computer games to reinforce math facts and memorization (geography, etc.)
- break down large projects/reports into manageable chunks due each day
- large fitness/exercise ball to sit on as a chair (since she may fall out of a regular chair, even when sitting still)
- therapy fidget toys and putty
- improve auditory skills by listening to audio stories and dramas during a meal at the table
- short learning times separated by a quick break to "run around the house" (inside or outside) or do 10 jumping jacks or some form of simple exercise to stimulate the brain again
- best if you use a multi-sensory approach that is visual, auditory, *and* kinesthetic
- if you have something important to say, say it quickly due to the short attention span
- use board games, card games, cooking activities, etc. to enhance learning

- use “shape books” with reluctant writers (www.eduplace.com/rdg/hme/k_5/shapebook/toc.html) or lapbooks (“google” that term; it’s a completely different world in learning!)
- reduce the use of traditional texts and workbooks; try to find resources that are stimulating/interesting

The “Perfectionist” Child

- prefers learning that is clearly structured, planned, and organized
- feels more secure when things are orderly
- uncomfortable with creative activities that lack specific guidelines
- likes to follow a typical school curriculum and feel that they are accomplishing the same things as other children their age
- prefers to be part of groups
- needs approval and affirmation to let them know that they are doing what is proper
- easier to homeschool than other learners, but you might have to work at helping them develop more flexibility and creativity
- most comfortable with review, repetition, and drill
- work closely with this child when introducing new concepts; give lots of encouragement
- not likely to do as well in a Socratic discussion (classical education method) as other learners
- give plenty of advance notice, reassurance, and encouragement when planning an activity that will take the child out of his/her comfort zone
- introduce creative writing, dramas, or other self-expressive learning activities gently, a little at a time
- Unit studies are a good way of stretching this child since most of them offer a variety of activities that might be used
- may find it easy to memorize and repeat information but have a harder time transitioning to higher level thinking like making connections, analyzing, and synthesizing information
- (A Beka might work fine through 3rd or 4th grade, but by 4th or 5th grade, the child may be struggling because A Beka has not explained concepts – why math processes work the way they do.)
- two-step math word problems are very challenging
- math “brain teasers” will help push the child to deeper levels of thinking to help develop conceptual understanding, but the child may not enjoy them
- Math Mammoth or Singapore’s Primary Mathematics incorporates more work with math concepts
- won’t need as much hands-on work as the Wiggly child, so a math program with manipulatives might be helpful but not essential to learning
- prefers workbooks
- prefers consistent structure in both schedule and curriculum
- likes rules and predictability
- enjoys lectures or lessons that follow an outline
- needs time to prepare for any discussion (could give questions ahead of time to reduce anxiety)
- gentle help to develop creativity and deeper thinking skills

The Competent Child

- likes to try to figure out what makes things tick
- include problem solving activities in learning
- may prefer math and science to language arts, literature, social studies
- prefers solitary activities and independent learning
- one-on-one teaching or small groups are likely to be better than large group learning
- has lots of ideas of his own and little patience for listening to others
- discussions are okay only as long as he gets to do most of the talking
- tunes out during 15-60 minute lectures
- might love Socratic discussions if questions are meaningful and such discussions are productive
- may write better when the parent takes plenty of time to talk through possible organizational strategies or ways to tackle writing assignments rather than leaving the child on his own to figure it out
- prefers curriculum that is well-organized and purposeful rather than entertaining with lots of extra activities involved
- wants to know in advance what he is doing and why
- doesn't enjoy "busy" work that seems to have no purpose or meaning
- long-term independent projects work well, though provide a list of deadlines to monitor progress
- take the time to explain why the child needs to learn the next set of concepts or tasks
- doesn't like to do review and practice, even if he needs to practice (math facts, spelling words)
- choose curriculum with a minimal amount of busy work and review or have him skip that part of the material when it is unnecessary
- once he knows how to read well, let him select books from an "approved" list rather than reading textbooks
- use novel study guides (Total Language Plus or Progeny Press) to work on comprehension, vocabulary, literary analysis, and other reading skills while reading novels/literature books
- involve this child in some group learning situations to help him develop social skills (all children in the family could do history together, or science, or Bible/religious instruction, for example, each day)
- always wants his learning to be efficient – so don't bog him down with manipulatives and hands-on activities if they aren't helpful
- brainstorming

The Sociable Child

- enjoys working with groups of people in learning (enroll in co-ops and other group situations)
- memorizing names and dates for history is not easy
- enjoys learning about different cultures and how events affect one another
- enjoys new projects but the excitement can wear off
- to reignite interest, you may need to use a different curriculum, a new supplemental workbook, an educational game, a field trip, etc.
- like to be recognized and acknowledged for their achievements, so they try to impress people
- often dislike and avoid competitions due to not liking conflict and criticism
- thrives on group projects and interactive learning
- read-aloud sessions will appeal to this child, so using real books and unit studies instead of textbooks might be a better choice
- is sensitive to your attitude about school subjects, so choose curriculum you can be enthusiastic about
- if child's friends like or use a particular resource, your child is more likely to have a positive attitude about it just for that reason
- novelty and creativity in curriculum presentation
- generally likes public presentations such as reading her writing assignment aloud, dramatic reading of a poem or speech, performances (music recitals and plays), or sharing her artwork
- creative activities are more appealing than repetitious review and drill
- gets bored with the same learning format all the time
- hands-on resources that you would use with the Wiggly child might work well because they require social interaction
- do not purchase a workbook-based program that is designed for independent study and expect this child to spend three hours a day working in isolation through bookwork (shorter time periods are okay, but not the entire school day)
- if you must use independent workbooks, alternate sociable or interactive learning activities with the workbooks to keep this child going
- needs help learning how to persevere even when learning isn't sociable and fun
- needs help to develop the self-discipline to follow through on one's assignments even when it gets "boring"

How do I match my child's learning style to curricula?

There are **rarely** direct matches between curriculum and learning styles.

Your child might have a strong learning style: visual, auditory, or kinesthetic. They might learn best by seeing, **hearing**, or hands-on experiences.

A "Sociable Sue" who is kinesthetic/hands-on will prefer more **project**-oriented learning while an auditory "Sociable Sue" will prefer more sedentary, read-aloud activities. Using what you discover about both learning styles and learning modes gives you a lot of information to help you choose better curriculum for your children.

However, this doesn't mean that you teach each type of learner only with methods that suit his personality and temperament. For some children, it would be all fun and games, and they would learn no **self-discipline**.

Instead, you use methods that work best for each child when introducing **new** or difficult subject matter. Once they have grasped that concept, use other more challenging methods when they are less likely to be stressful or produce failure.

You can help strengthen students' weak areas such as short attention span or lack of creativity by working on these problem areas within subjects that are especially **interesting** to your child, or in subjects in which they excel.

What do you do if your child's learning style and your own teaching style are drastically **different**? What if your child really needs a unit study approach with lots of creative activity, but your style makes you shudder at the thought of trying to gather all the stuff you need plus having to choose among activities?

That's when you can compromise and use curriculum that will meet your needs. For example, KONOS In-A-Box is a unit study that includes step-by-step instructions plus all the books and materials, even craft materials, that you'll need.

Disguised Learning Disabilities

What if you have tried everything – you've paid attention to learning styles and methods, you've retaught the concepts five different ways – and your child still doesn't get it? It's possible that your child might have a learning disability. Your child might appear to be a Wiggly Willy because a learning disability interferes with reading, writing, or thinking processes no matter what curriculum you use.

If you suspect that your child has a learning disability, you should seek professional assistance.

<http://helpadd.com/> is an Oregon resource that can offer assistance and regularly works with homeschoolers.

What to do next? If you've finished reading through this information and have filled out the various forms to help you understand your teaching/learning style as a parent and your child's learning style, I encourage you do one or both of the following:

Order Cathy Duffy's book, ***102 Top Picks for Homeschool Curriculum*** (around \$23) to help you select appropriate curriculum that meets parent/child learning styles

or call Julieanne Miller at 541-530-1416 or email at julestwin@gmail.com to arrange a consultation to help you select homeschooling curriculum that will be a good fit for your family. Consultation fees are \$20 per hour and are best scheduled at a time when you can arrange for childcare for your children (except for nursing babies) to maximize the use of your consultation time.