

# How to Choose Curriculum

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## **Curriculum: a plan of study; course or race course (Latin)**

- There is no perfect curriculum.
- There is no “one way” to homeschool.
- “Anything works if the teacher works.” Marva Collins

## **Home Education: Parent Controlled Education**

- What do I want to teach academically?
- What values do I want to pass on?
- What habits do I want to develop?
- What do I want my children prepared for?

## **Things to consider**

- Child’s learning style
  - Visual
  - Auditory
  - Kinesthetic
- Child’s skill level
  - Remedial
  - Age appropriate
  - Accelerated
- Child’s motivational gifting
  - Talents
  - Interests
  - Hobbies
- Budget
  - \$0

- \$100
- \$500
  
- Life circumstances
  - Number of children
  - Ages
  - Family circumstances / health
  - Income
  - Type of help
    - Maid, family, library, support group, co-op, tutors
  
- Resources:
  - 100 Top Picks - Duffy
  - The Ultimate Guide to Homeschooling - Bell
  - Educating the WholeHearted Child - Clarkson
  - The Way They Learn - Tobias
  - Talkers, Watchers, & Doers – Fuller

## **Where can I buy curriculum?**

- Book fairs
- Catalogs
- Used curriculum sales
- Book stores
- Internet
- Other homeschoolers
- HEAV convention
- HEAV Resource Center and on-line store at  
<http://www.heav.org/store/index>

## **Types of curriculum**

### **1) Traditional**

- Textbooks - Traditional, single-subject school books
  - Advantages
    - Easy to follow
    - Everything provided

- Colorful
  - Teacher's manuals / instructions
  - Testing / grading simplified
  - All subjects for all grades
  - Good for upper grades
  
- Disadvantages
  - Designed for classroom use
  - Expensive
  - Time consuming
  - Difficult to manage several levels
  - High burnout rate
  - Copying from a book may be unproductive
  
- For best results
  - Use as a tool
  - Use for 1-2 subjects
  - One book for 2-3 grades for non-skill subject
  - Use for reference
  
- Samples
  - Bob Jones University
  - A Beka
  - Rod and Staff
  - *What Every First (Second, etc.) Grader Should Know*
  - Saxon math
  - Apologia science
  
- Workbooks - Consumable, paperback, fill-in-the-blanks
  - Advantages
    - Straightforward
    - Easy to manage
    - Little preparation
    - Child can work independently
    - Structured
    - Gives teacher security
    - Inexpensive
  
  - Disadvantages

- Filling-in-the-blanks: no critical thinking
- Minimal teaching & interaction
- Minimal accountability
- Parent manager instead of teacher
- Lack of creativity
- Lack of variety
- Some too much repetition / some not enough
  
- For best results
  - Use for 1-2 subjects only
  - Use to maintain skills
  - Use to simplify your life
  
- Samples
  - A.C.E. (Accelerated Christian Education)
  - Alpha Omega
  - Modern Curriculum Press
  - Virginia History
  
- 2) Correspondence Courses - *Prepackaged courses*
  - Advantage
    - Gives structure and direction
    - No planning required
    - Record keeping services; transcripts
    - May offer placement testing
    - May offer year end evaluations
    - Diploma after completion
  
  - Disadvantage
    - Very structured
    - Few choices
    - No control over when subjects are taught
    - Takes more time
    - Most costly of all
  
  - For best results
    - Use if traveling or working & no planning time
    - Use for first year of homeschooling
    - Use if student likes structure, goal setting, is self-motivated

- Use for high school students who may want to transfer back into conventional school setting

- **Samples**

- Calvert
- Keystone National High School
- ABeka Correspondence School
- Alpha Omega Academy
- American School
- Home Study International
- Seton Home Study
- Christian Liberty Press

### 3) Unit Studies - *All subjects are centered around a theme*

- **Advantages**

- Allows multi-level learning
- Structure w/o limiting creativity
- Very life related
- Very hands-on
- Can delve deeply into a subject
- Encourages curiosity and independent thinking
- Suggestions but flexible
- Interrelated knowledge is more easily retained

- **Disadvantages**

- Does not include math, reading, grammar
- Possibility of learning gaps
- Record keeping more difficult
- Many activities can lead to burnout
- Many choices required
- Much use of library
- Planning required
- Depends on presence of teacher

- **For best results**

- Stay with one company
- Good if need break from textbooks/workbooks
- Use other methods for math, reading, grammar

- Samples
  - *ATIA* (Advanced Training Institute of America)
  - *Weaver*
  - *Konos*
  - *Alta Vista*
  - *Sonlight*
  - *Far Above Rubies*
  - *Five in a Row*

4) Classical Approach - Uses the *Trivium*: grammar (memorization, 5-11), dialectic (logic, 12-15), rhetoric (speech & writing, teens) stages of learning

- Advantages
  - Tailored to stages of mental development
  - Teaching thinking skills and verbal, written expression
  - Encourages self-learning
  - Has produced great minds throughout history
- Disadvantages
  - Little prepared curriculum
  - Requires scholarly teacher and student
  - May over emphasize ancient disciplines & classics
- For best results
  - Pick and choose; cannot do everything
  - Do not try to combine with other approaches
- Samples
  - *The Well-Trained Mind, The Well Educated Mind*, S. Bauer
  - *Classical Education and the Home School*, D. Wilson
  - *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*,  
D. Wilson
  - *Teaching the Trivium*, H. Bluedorn
  - *Tapestry of Grace*, Somerville

5) Unschooling - Less structured; child pursues own interests; formal academics taught as needed

- Advantages
  - Little planning

- Uses “teachable moments”
- Access to the real world
- Less likely to burnout
- Delve into subjects deeply
- Promotes self-learning and love of learning
  
- Disadvantages
  - Unstructured
  - May neglect some subjects
  - Hard to assess learning levels
  - Lacks security
  - Can be extremely child-centered
  - Difficult to explain to others
  - May create testing problems
  
- For best results
  - Watch for “teachable moments”
  - Encourage involvement in areas of interest
  - Control entertainment that prevents learning
  - Make books, resources, opportunities for learning available
  
- Samples
  - *The Relaxed Home School*, M. Hood
  - *And What About College?*, C. Cohen
  - *Homeschooling for Excellence*, D. Colfax

## 6) High-Tech Homeschooling

- Video courses
- CD-ROM classes
- On-line classes
  - Correspondence
  - College courses
  - Co-op classes
  - Virtual classes

Caution: Virtual Schools!!

- Government controlled school-at-home programs

- Publicly funded school-at-home education
  - State controlled teacher supervision
  - State controlled curriculum
  - State controlled testing
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- No parental choice in individualized curriculum, scheduling, remediation, or evaluation.

### Become Goal Oriented, Not Curriculum Driven

- Decide what your children **need to learn**.
- Decide the **methods/learning style** to use.
- Find the right **type of curriculum** with the content you want.
- Set a workable **schedule**.

### Things to Remember

- There is no “perfect curriculum.”
- You cannot teach your children everything they need to know.
- View your children as individuals.
- If it doesn’t work—change it!
- Make it enjoyable for you and your children.