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Lesson Plans

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Lesson Planning and Recordkeeping

1. Set goals for each child (intellectual, physical, spiritual, social—see Luke 2:52).
2. Determine what will be covered this year.
3. Order appropriate materials to accomplish goals.
4. Decide on “school” schedule.
5. Peruse materials and determine what you will cover and what you will not. Your curriculum is a tool, not a master.
6. Divide materials by number of weeks or number of days.
7. Build in some “down time.”
8. Lay out a framework (1 math lesson per day Monday-Thursday with math game Friday; 1 LLATL lesson per week, 1 A Beka literature unit per month, etc.).
9. Write out a plan to accomplish your goals. Use pencil!
10. Measure yourself against the goals God has given you, not against your neighbor.

Other Resources

- “Lesson Planning” (Homeschool Heartbeat—five episodes)
- Sample Lesson Plans (HSLDA website)
- “Records to Keep (Or: Souvenirs of the Journey ♦ For You, the Children, and the Officials)”
- “Record Your Accomplishments” (This is from a newsletter article written when our younger girls were 13, 12, and 8 years old.)

When I began homeschooling in the 1980s, I didn't know anyone else who homeschooled. I was so afraid I'd do it wrong. Then I happened upon *A Survivor's Guide to Homeschooling* (Shackelford & White), and I realized—to my great relief—that there wasn't one “right” way to homeschool. We had the liberty to tailor our program and our schedule to the needs of our own family.

First my husband and I set goals for each of our children (Luke 2:52)—intellectual, physical, spiritual, social. I choose my curriculum with those goals in mind, making sure to cover the basics and character training above all else.

We decide on our basic school year. Some families choose to do formal school work all year long. Some work on a standard public school schedule, especially if they are in a neighborhood with lots of public school children, or if they have some children in conventional schools and others being home educated. We decided to work on an eight-weeks-on, one-week-off schedule, with two larger four-week breaks. This works well for me because, frankly, I figured I can do anything for eight weeks.

We begin in early August and have an eight-week session, then one week off, then eight weeks on, then four weeks off in

December/early January. Then we go eight-on, one-off till the end of June (five total sessions). This gives us a week in between most sessions, which is long enough to work on a project, but not long enough to get bored. At the holiday time and in the summer, we take four weeks off, which is long enough for a big project (or break!), but not long enough for them to forget everything they've learned. This still gives us 40 "school" weeks, compared to our state's required 36, so we have four extra weeks to work with if we want to take a beach day or a laundry-catch-up day.

When the curriculum comes in, I go over each item to decide what I intend to use (some books may have sections I will not use, such as the projects, vocabulary, etc. if I am using a book as a supplement). This helps me to decide how long it will take us to go through the book.

For example, I will look at *Saxon 65* and determine that if I have 40 school weeks but I want to leave Tuesdays as light days/catch-up in math and I want to be finished before camping at Sandy Cove in June, then I have approximately 156 work days to complete 140 lessons. If I do the additional tests, I cannot keep my slack Tuesdays. I decide to forego the additional tests in favor of my slack-Tuesday sanity checks/catch-up days and count each Friday's problem set as a test grade with no "looking back in the chapter." I also decide that, given the amount of built-in review and her skill level, Anna may do all the odds or all the evens on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, but she must do all the problems on Friday. She will probably finish the book early, so we will just move on to the next one then.

On the curriculum-at-glance page of my planner, I lay out my basic year plan for the core subjects. This is just to give myself an idea of how to break things down later on; get an idea from the table of contents. For example, if you have nine months of school and the literature book has nine units, you know you'll probably want to cover a unit a month.

Sample:

Math: (Anna) 1 Saxon lesson per day, off on Tues; multiplication drills
(Leah) Building Thinking Skills MWF, 2 Miquon books a year M-Th,
Notebook math on Fri

Language: (both) 1 lesson LLATL weekly, Daily Grams/GEAS T/Th

Unit studies: list of units to be covered this year; proposed length of each

I have tried time-scheduling several different ways: I have given the girls assignments (written into their lesson plan book) and had them work until each subject area is completed for the day. I have given them set amounts of time for each subject, then made any uncompleted work "homework." Our most recent attempt finds us allocating a certain amount of time for each subject and then moving on, and when they complete our requirements, they progress to the next "grade level." We may change again!

Sample Plan

We start at 9 a.m., after morning jobs, breakfast, and family devotions. Our plan looks like this:

- OT/Bible—30 minutes: (if they finish early, they move on, but at 30 minutes when the timer dings, we move on anyway)
- Math and speed drills—60 minutes: This is still a labor-intensive area for us. This includes learning wrap-ups, math games, or multiplication table work, etc. as well as lesson and timed speed drills daily (same drill for a week to compete against her own previous record)
- Daily Grams/GEAS—15 minutes: (so I can target problem areas)
- Language Arts (LLATL and/or writing assignments)—30 minutes: (mine are quicker to catch on to language than to math)
- Maps/Art—30-60 minutes: (*Mapping the World By Heart* on Mon/Thurs takes about 30 minutes, but art on Wed/Fri runs over. When we start doing art in our Tues co-op, we will probably shave some time off our home schedule.)
- Lunch: (They SHOULD have finished all of the above at this point; sometimes we eat a little late!)
- Quiet time—60 minutes: (naps, personal reading, Bible reading - on their beds)
- French—15 minutes
- Unit study (mainly history and/or science)—60 minutes: (activities for younger grades are geared to whatever

Rebekah is doing in her high school *Far Above Rubies* studies)

- Reading—30 minutes or more: (literature books, school-related reading)

With this schedule in mind, I plan accordingly in my lesson plan book. I keep Anna's and Leah's assignments in one planner that I supervise, while Rebekah has her own. I use a homeschool planner; you can just photocopy a weekly or daily assignment sheet, or use a notebook or computer, but I like the other features of the planner.

I started off by planning for the entire year at once, but I found that if I got sidetracked somehow, I got really stressed and felt the need to get caught up, even if I had slowed down because somebody didn't "get" something.

Then I tried just doing one session at a time (more on that later), which only "obligated" me for eight weeks; then I could regroup and rearrange as needed for next session. This would be great, except with my personality type (that sounds so much better than "character flaw"!) I would plan superbly for the first session, then forget/put off planning for the next session and would fly by the seat of my pants more than usual. So I decided to plan for the whole year, but give myself some catch-up time every so often so I don't get so stressed by keeping to The Schedule.

Regardless of how you do it, you will want an overview in mind for the year so you have a plan. How you implement that plan can be tackled once, at year's start, or periodically, but you need some standard to measure against as the year progresses. Note: That standard should not be your neighbor in the group. Your child is different than hers, your family is different, your teaching style is different. You measure against the goals God has given you.

Some people write the plans for the week/month/year in advance in pencil in great detail (i.e., under English: BJU English, pg.93, Prepositional Phrases, exercises 1-12), some just write the very basics, (i.e., under English: p 93, 1-12). Some people just go on to what's next in the book and log in what they did, journal style. Some people have the kids do it—whatever works.

Each day, when my girls finish their morning jobs, they can open the plan book and read down all the entries for the day; the page is marked with one of those fat black binder clips. They know the routine pretty well by now. They start their work and ask for help when needed. I am the only one authorized to check off that something is done (unless I give someone my proxy!) and all checks and writing are done in pencil. Test scores are logged in red ink/pencil in the plan book, in the same block as the exercise (as opposed to a separate grades page), so I can see the pattern from week to week. For the older girls who get grades, I keep weekly grades as needed (tests and other work), then total up weekly grades at end of the eight-weeks period.

Memory verses for Sunday school, work for Missionettes, extracurricular activities such as YMCA, skating, riding, dance, or youth development sports league, are all written in on weekly sheets.

Again, these are guidelines that have helped me, but there is no one right way to plan! You should glean from this and from others what you can and try different things until you find what works for your family.



This resource is provided by the Home School Legal Defense Association's *Early Years* website as a service to the homeschooling community.

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