

Exploring Different Learning Styles

Classical – Follows ancient methods, focusing on three stages of learning (trivium): grammar, logic, and rhetoric. “Rigorous.”

Charlotte Mason – Educating the whole child, not just their mind. Three main parts: atmosphere, discipline, and life. Living books, nature studies, moral character.

Eclectic – Flexible, no set style, lets families choose what works best for each student. Cherry-picked curriculum. One of the least standardized approaches; more relaxed in application.

Traditional – Classroom style at home. Often used by new homeschoolers. Includes textbooks and lesson plans. “School at home.”

Montessori – Child-led. Students learn at their own pace and explore topics that interest them and parents facilitate. Much use of hands-on, process-oriented activities. Popular for younger children.

Unit Studies – Project/theme-based that incorporates many subjects. Multiple ages/grade levels can learn together. Can include literature-based unit studies.

Waldorf – Holistic approach to nurturing student’s intellectual, artistic, and practical skills (mind/body/spirit). Gentle approach, especially for younger children.

Unschooling – Child-directed learning by their interests. No formal structure. “Lifeschooling.”

Deschooling – Not a method, but temporarily useful in transitioning from school to home education, especially for students who have experienced bullying or trauma in school. This is downtime - a “buffer” period to decompress and adjust when transitioning from public or private school to homeschooling. Rest, take stock of your financial and time capabilities. Take time to study your children. Once rested, start thinking about your educational goals for your children and write them down. Plan a family meeting to ask them questions about what they did or didn’t like about school, what they’d like to learn about, what their struggles have been, and what their goals are (if they’re old enough to consider goals).

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Questions for parents to ask themselves when deciding on a method:

- Why am I considering educating at home?
- What are my goals/vision for my children?
- What gifts/strengths/challenges have I observed in my children?
- What style of homeschooling most closely aligns with our family dynamic/schedule/focus?

Some helpful websites on this topic:

<https://hummingbirdhomeschool.com/homeschool-blog/homeschooling-types>

<https://study.com/resources/guide-to-homeschooling-methods>

Various Homeschooling Methods and their Pros and Cons

Note regarding state standards: The issue of standards is complex, important to some parents and not to others; required by some states/charter schools and not by others. Parents need to weigh this issue along with all other information. Be sure to research the requirements in your particular state.

Classical: An ancient educational philosophy focusing on the trivium (“where three roads meet”). It covers K-12 history, science, literature, English grammar, and writing. You may need separate phonics/reading, handwriting, spelling, and math courses. It can be secular or faith-based. It provides structured learning in 3 stages: grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric:

1. Grammar: For young children, covering foundational knowledge with inputting/memorization of facts.
2. Dialectic: The logic stage for students ready to begin analyzing learned facts to gain understanding.
3. Rhetoric: For students ready to present that knowledge in verbal or written form, including how to write persuasively. A heavy emphasis on classical literature.

Pros: Very rigorous, using classical source material, targeting verbal presentation and writing skills. It uses the Great Books of the Western literary canon. Students may learn Greek, Latin, or Hebrew. It can be relatively inexpensive if you are using library materials and self-creating the lesson plans.

Cons: It is very rigorous, which may not work well for some students. It is lecture-heavy with much memorization and involves little experiential learning. It can require a heavy time investment for parents and many hours of work per day for the student.

Examples: Memoria Press, Veritas Press, My Father’s World, Classical Conversations (co-op).

Resources: *The Well-Trained Mind* by Susan Wise Bauer and Jesse Wise is a helpful guide.

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Charlotte Mason: This popular method is based on the educational philosophy of 19th-century British educator Charlotte Mason. Her book *Home Education* was used to help mothers and governesses teach their children. This method focuses on the child's natural love of learning, emphasizing quality literature ("living books" vs textbooks and "twaddle"), nature studies, and developing good habits in short, focused lessons within a joyful, nurturing environment. It is student-centered, gentle learning. It can be K-12 for many subjects but will need more structure for high school requirements or college prep. Charlotte Mason was a Christian woman, so her philosophy is faith-based, but it could be adjusted for a more secular approach.

Pros: Uses rich literature, narration, and dictation to develop reading comprehension and writing skills, journaling, and recording observations. It emphasizes experiential learning, reflection, and narration of students' impressions. Parents can teach multiple ages together for science, history, geography, and literature. It encourages exploration, wondering, and entrepreneurship.

Cons: There is less direction from parents, so it may not work for students who require more structure. The heavy focus on reading may not work well for all children. It may require much time to create/prepare materials if you're not using a pre-packaged curriculum.

Examples: *Simply Charlotte Mason*, Ambleside Online, A Modern Charlotte Mason, Wildwood.

Resources: *A Charlotte Mason Companion* by Karen Andreola and *For the Children's Sake: Foundations of Education for Home and School* by Susan Schaeffer Macaulay are good resources.

*The Good & The Beautiful is influenced somewhat by Charlotte Mason and somewhat by the classical method and their emphases on beauty, high moral character, and basic Bible principles, but this curriculum is schedule-driven and follows a grade-based approach.

*Sonlight and BookShark are influenced by Charlotte Mason and its emphasis on quality literature, narration, and history through stories; but they use a more scheduled approach and have less emphasis on nature study, copywork, and dictation.

Eclectic/Relaxed Homeschooling: Parents will cherry-pick their curriculum, mixing and matching any of the other methods or individual subject courses to fit the student's needs and the family's lifestyle. Instead of following a grade-based, complete curriculum, parents can tailor curriculum by subject to meet each child's strengths and weaknesses in different areas. This can be faith-based or secular, according to the parent's design.

Pros: It can place students according to their skill levels rather than their age or grade; it can tailor to students' learning preferences and challenges if they're not at "grade level" in every subject.

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It offers much flexibility and adaptability in methods used and curriculum choices. Parents can use whatever it takes to meet the student's educational needs. It works very well for different learning types within a family.

Cons: It may feel overwhelming for parents with limited homeschooling experience. Tailoring the curriculum this way may not meet state standards in all subjects.

Examples: Math-U-See, Spelling You See, Analytical Grammar, WriteShop, Apologia Science, Story of the World, Mystery of History, Learning Language Arts through Literature, Essentials in Writing, Institute for Excellence in Writing, Handwriting Without Tears

Resources: *Educating the Whole-Hearted Child* by Clay and Sally Clarkson; *The Successful Homeschool Family Handbook*, et al by Dr. Raymond & Dorothy Moore; *You Can Teach Your Child Successfully*, et al by Ruth Beechick.

Traditional: This is a classroom style replicated at home. It's popular with new homeschooling families because it provides more structure and guidance. It covers K-12 for all subjects and can be faith-based or secular.

Pros: It can offer complete programs with all subjects by grade level. It provides pre-written material, including lesson plans, schedules, and scripts. It's closely aligned to most states' standards. Some programs offer recorded lessons or live online courses, transcripts, and automated grading. It gives parents time to adjust to their new journey until they feel more confident. It works well for families who plan to return their children to a physical school within a year or two.

Cons: Most were designed for classroom use and school schedules, so they include a good deal of "busy work," have less flexible scheduling, and offer far less experiential learning. There is a heavy reliance on institutional textbooks. Completing all the work may take 6-8 hours each day, which will be more costly.

Examples: ABeka, BJU, Horizons, Alpha-Omega, ACE, Christian Liberty, Rod & Staff, Christian Light, Saxon Math, Explode the Code, Calvert

Montessori: This method was developed by 20th-century Italian educator, Maria Montessori, to make the child the focus of education rather than the instructor or the content. Students learn at their own pace and explore topics that interest them as they desire. The parent facilitates by providing a variety of activities from which the child chooses and uses at different "stations."

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It strongly emphasizes the use of manipulatives and process-oriented activities. Older students help design and carry out activities, guiding them into ultimately taking control of their own education. This method is very popular with young children. It is not faith-based.

Pros: This is a dynamic and flexible approach. It helps parents know their children and develop suitable activities for them. It encourages thinking skills and personal development and works with many learning preferences. This method fosters independent learning for students and heavy parental engagement.

Cons: The lack of a defined curriculum will require more time investment for parents. It could be expensive to purchase manipulatives and develop the many different activities. There is no focus on state standards, so following grade levels will be more challenging as students progress toward high school.

Examples: NAMC Montessori Curriculum, Montessori for Everyone, Shiller Learning, Global Montessori Network.

Resources: *The Montessori Method* and *The Absorbent Mind*, among others by Maria Montessori.

Unit Studies: Theme- or project-based learning. Parents can teach multiple subjects to students of different ages, grades, and skills while focusing on a single topic or piece of literature. Unit studies can cover K-12 literature, writing, history, science, geography, art, music, physical education, and life skills. They can be faith-based or secular.

Pros: Using unit students allows varying ages to learn together, promoting whole-family learning. It encourages delight-directed and experiential learning to explore students' interests. It encourages quality literature and allows for an age-appropriate reading list for each student while studying the same topic. Units can be as short as 1-2 weeks or as long as 3 weeks or more. It's customizable and offers much flexibility. Families can use little or no formal curriculum, so it can be very low cost.

Cons: Reading/phonics, spelling, grammar, and math would still need to be taught separately according to each student's individual skills. It could require a greater time investment for parents, searching for books and planning activities.

Examples: KONOS, Diana Waring, Gather 'Round, Harbor & Sprout, Five In a Row, Total Language Plus, Prairie Primer, How Wee Learn, and My Father's World.

Resources: "The Ultimate Guide to Planning a Homeschool Unit Study" post on the Waldock Way website (<https://www.thewaldockway.com/how-to-plan-a-unit-study/>).

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Waldorf Approach/Steiner Education: This method was created by 19th-century Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner, based on a holistic approach to students' intellectual, social, and spiritual needs. It emphasizes the whole child: body, mind, and spirit. It seeks to match the specific stages of child development in 3 phases: early, middle, and late. It features storytelling with fairy tales, fables, myths, and legends. It focuses on artistic activities, movement, storytelling, imaginative play, nature, and field trips. It is faith-based.

Pros: The emphasis is on experiential learning, music, and art. It promotes the development of critical thinking skills and independence in the middle and late phases. It encourages independent learning. It offers good flexibility in choosing the materials you use and creating your schedule.

Cons: Technology is not introduced until the late phase. There will be a heavy financial investment in arts and crafts supplies, finding a musical instrument suitable for each student, and securing instruction to learn those instruments. There is little focus on reading, writing, or math in the early phase. It requires a substantial investment of time and planning for parents.

Examples: Waldorf Homeschool Curriculum, Lavender's Blue, Oak Meadow

Unschooling/Lifeschooling: With this method, learning is directed by the student's interests and happens organically without formal instruction or structured programs. It is driven by the child's curiosity and rejects a defined curriculum, instructor-led learning, and strict schedules. It emphasizes children's freedom to make their own educational choices. The child leads the process and the parent is a facilitator, providing learning tools and opportunities. It can be faith-based or secular by the parent's design.

Pros: It is dynamic, flexible, and enjoyable for children because it follows their interests. It fosters independence and self-direction. It can be very inexpensive if you use free resources online or from a library and plan your own field trips and activities. It offers flexibility in schedule and direction and may require little investment of time in preparation if students are self-directed.

Cons: Students may choose to avoid difficult or unpleasant topics that they need to learn to function as adults unless parents stay fully engaged and invest the time to provide some direction. Depending on the child's choices, it can be costly and may require a large investment of parent's time to provide the activities. There is no focus on state requirements. It would not work well for a student who needs more structure.

Resources: *The Unschooling Handbook: How to Use the Whole World as Your Child's Classroom* by Mary Griffith; *Free to Learn* by Peter Gray; *Home Grown* by Ben Hewitt; Danielle Papageorgiou <https://lifeschoolingconference.com/>.

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References and Resources

While this handout provides you with explanation for a variety of homeschool learning styles, you may benefit from the practical application of understanding how to implement your educational choice. We offer you several more resources to explore in your journey.

You may also benefit from our Homeschooling 101 ebook, which can be downloaded at this link: [Homeschooling 101](#)

Demme Learning Show episodes:

[What's Your Homeschool Philosophy?](#)

[Let's Talk about the Fear of Doing It \(Homeschooling\) Wrong](#)

[Top 15 Homeschool Tips I Wish Someone Had Told Me Earlier](#)

Demme Learning offers a variety of resources. We hold weekly live episodes to support homeschooling instructors. You can find those at <https://demmelearning.com/blog>.

Join us on your favorite podcast app for an episode of *The Demme Learning Show*: www.demmelearning.com/show.

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