

Tips for Teaching a Houseful

General Points

- 1) It's important to remember when teaching children that their brains, bodies, and emotions will probably develop at different rates. Example: learning to read.
- 2) Different children will develop in all three areas at different ages.
- 3) Early development in one area doesn't automatically mean development in other areas.

Baby and Toddler Phases

- 1) Important groundwork for homeschooling is laid by mothers in the baby and toddler phases.
- 2) Avoid temptations to continue outside-the-home (or even home-based) businesses (see 1 Tim. 6:6-11).

Hitting the pre-K years: you might have 2-3 children under the age of 4—three key things to work for

- 1) Regular schedule: healthy cycle of nutrition, rest, activity, and early bedtimes.
 - a) Moms should resist temptations to be busy/focused in activities outside the home. (Titus 2:3-5)
 - b) Why insist on an at-home focus? (John 15:2 says that we prune what is good in favor of what is best—most fruitful. We can tend to settle for “good” when God wants the *best* for us.)
 - c) What happens when we don't prune? Joey's violin lesson. Why do we do this to ourselves and our families? Suggest three reasons:
 - i) Inexperience
 - ii) Fear of man (Proverbs 29:25; Hebrews 13:6)
 - iii) Self-sufficiency (Isaiah 50:11; 15:8)
 - d) Quiet homes, by contrast, provide...
 - i) Maximum opportunity for character training and academic excellence.
 - (1) Correction with both teaching and grace: Preaching the gospel every time!
 - (2) Humble admission of sin on Mom's part, too!
 - ii) Opportunity for mom and children to be at their best for growth—academic, emotional, and physical—and in laying good foundations for life in all areas.
 - iii) Older children remain free to pursue studies when Mom is tending younger children herself. Practical tip: ask the youngest child who can do the job!
- 2) Face time: undistracted time for toddlers and pre-K's from mom (parent) every day!
 - a) There are many forms of face time, including
 - i) walking and talking
 - ii) cuddling and tickling
 - iii) reading aloud on a couch
 - iv) sitting at a table supervising educational games
 - v) doing kitchen chores together
 - vi) amusing baby together
 - vii) quiet talks at bedtime, prayer together, etc.
 - b) *What* you do doesn't matter, except it should involve face to face time.
 - c) You neglect face time to your peril. (Galatians 6:7)
 - d) Story of Marcia's son, David, showing his picture to the “eyes” in the back of Mom's head.
- 3) Some academic stimulation: pre-reading, pre-math, and other mentally developmental games or activities will benefit young students.
 - a) Chore/hygiene habits—chore charts, chore cards in pockets, Dad's checklist, etc.
 - b) Activities on index cards (as you get busier with older kids, this will really pay off!)

K-3s one or two in this stage, one or two toddlers, and perhaps an infant, born or on the way.

- 1) Physically/developmentally ready to read, write, and begin mathematics studies.
- 2) This looks different for different children—their ages are anywhere from 4 to 7!
- 3) These students need simple, short lessons; short = half hour for each discipline, maximum.
- 4) Try not to rush reading, math, or handwriting. Published curricula can mislead you into rushing.
- 5) Children in this age *always* need mom's time: she should try not to find substitutes for herself (as in, giving older children the responsibility to teach younger siblings to read or do math).
- 6) Lay this foundation carefully and you will never have to abandon this stage of children in your home. Older children who benefit from your time in these years generally can work steadily and independently later.

On to 4-6 Graders one or two in this stage, one or two K-3's, one or two toddlers, and perhaps an infant.

- 1) Concrete-sequential learners—Grammar stage—fluent readers.
- 2) Look for curricula rich in a variety of books: picture-based (Usborne -type) books, chapter books, and good historical fiction, as well as an abundance of map work, a strong writing program, and as many independent, hands-on activities as you can stand.
- 3) Students in this stage delight in facts! Look for a curriculum that is rich in picture books, activities, and good literature. Map work and hands-on activities are also great additions.
- 4) This stage of development involves the “breather” we all need: students who were given a good foundation, plenty of materials, and regular (but not too close) accountability will learn happily, and largely on their own.
- 5) This is a great stage for scripture memory and bible stories/trivia, and field trips.

Jr. High: typically Grades 6-9, the age of puberty.

- 6) Emotionally and physically, this is a *tough* time for both students and parents (especially if the latter are unprepared, or struggle with pride, legalism, tyrannical spirits, or busyness)!
- 7) Students in this stage delight to learn of connections between the facts they have learned previously.
- 8) These are great years to introduce content like formal logic, foreign languages, and theological studies.
- 9) Harness their newfound delight in argumentation: humble yourself and begin the change in roles from benign dictator to best friend. This takes work and humility. Marcia highly recommends several key resources for parents entering this phase:
 - a) *Age of Opportunity* by Paul Tripp
 - b) *War of Words* by Paul Tripp
 - c) *Girl Talk* by Carolyn Mahaney (for moms and daughters)
 - d) *The Enemy Within* by Chris Lundgaard
 - e) *Young Peacemaker* by Corlette Sande (if not taught earlier)
 - f) A systematic theology of your choice, like Wayne Grudem's *Bible Doctrine* as a centerpiece of your child's Bible program/devotional times.
- 10) If family ages allow (babysitting), now may be a good time to begin offering lessons that hone the oldest children's unique, God-given talents (music, art, clubs, sports, etc.).
 - a) Marcia argues that students will not be hurt by waiting until this time for such lessons.
 - b) Examples from her life and the lives of those she knows personally.
- 11) Another good technique for getting more outside activities in while still respecting family unity and principles of a quiet home is to look for activities that all family members can engage in together.
 - a) Examples: soccer, swimming, animal husbandry, gardening, etc.
 - b) Students not only learn these skills; they learn to prefer others in honor and to become “joiners” even when joining is not their preference. In other words, they learn service.

Sr. High: typically grades 9-12, but some students can start high school academics earlier.

- 1) Academically, this is the age of true analysis and synthesis. A solid, liberal arts curriculum is recommended, with emphasis on essay writing and group classes.

- 2) These are the years when students navigate the perilous bridge from adolescent to adult. “Extracurricular” classes include: driving 101, handling boy/girl relationships, and time management.
- 3) Caution: just because a student is advanced academically doesn’t mean s/he’s ready for certain emotional, spiritual, or physical hurdles. A wise parent helps all areas develop equally and doesn’t rush any one to the detriment of others.
- 4) As with earlier decisions, don’t allow peer pressure or the child’s arguments to drive your decisions about character or spiritual development.
 - The stakes are ever higher: s/he will be driving, interested in the opposite sex, and increasingly independent in studies.
 - Make sure you leave time for talking and fellowship—perhaps while rocking the baby or cooking a meal... again, face time re-enters the picture as a strong need for both parents and teens.

To recap in Scriptural terms, then, our tips for homeschooling a houseful:

- 5) Be busy at home, keeping to your home as much as your husband advises you to, so that you can fulfill the mandates of God’s ideal occupation for women. Titus 2:3-5 (ESV) “Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior... and are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.”
- 6) John 15:2 provides real wisdom for moms as they consider which activities to undertake and which to forgo. John 15:1-2 (ESV) “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.” With your husband, seek to choose the best over the good.
- 7) Seek to follow the leading of your husband and the Lord in making decisions about what you will teach your children and what activities you and they will engage in, inside and outside the home. Ephesians 5:24 (ESV) “Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.”
- 8) It is wisdom to allow 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 to be your guide: “...and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may live properly before outsiders...” (ESV)
- 9) When you feel shaky about your decisions to limit the amount of outside involvement of your children in classes or other activities, or choose training in godliness over training in pursuits valued highly in the world, resist condemnation or fear of man with scriptures like these:

Galatians 6:7 (ESV)

“Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”

Hebrews 13:6 (ESV) “So we can confidently say,

“The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

Proverbs 29:25 (ESV) “The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.”

Psalms 34:14 (ESV) “Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.”

2 Peter 3:11 (ESV) “Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness...”

1 Tim. 6:6-11 (ESV)

“Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment... But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ...It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

“But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.”

