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Planning and Leading  
the Trip of a Lifetime

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Homeschooling  
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Methodologies

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This is What  
Perfectionism  
Looks Like

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How to Satisfy the  
Powers that Be

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Measuring the  
Speed of Light

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August 2019



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# Planning and Leading the Trip of a Lifetime

By Steve Askin & Catherine Hanna

“Trip of a lifetime” is an overused phrase, but our group of eight homeschooled teens know what they’re talking about when they apply it to their mind-expanding journey through Africa.

For three months this year, our teenage son and daughter plus six of their friends learned to love five African nations during a truly life-changing journey. They encountered ancient history, experienced the true meanings of democracy and dictatorship, immersed themselves in South Africa’s struggle against racism, and forged friendships that will last a lifetime.



Photo Credit: Ash Shaer

“Something I took away from the trip was that no matter the side of the world you’re on, the differences between other cultures and your own are insignificant... Everyone is unique and yet can be reassuringly familiar. I’ve never believed that any person, color, gender or race was beneath by own and yet a voice in the back of my head didn’t expect what I experienced. Those voices in the backs of our heads are cause by loud, uneducated opinions from the media and other bad influencers.”  
– Natalie Etzel-Dang, age 16.

## **Plan, Plan, Plan... Or Shamelessly Steal Plans Created by Other Homeschoolers.**

Our travels took us to five beautiful African nations in January through April 2019 – Egypt, South Africa, Swaziland, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. But planning actually began the previous September, when Steve spent a critically important three weeks on a quick trip through South Africa and Zimbabwe. This pre-visit involved a whirlwind tour of game parks, historic urban sites and other potential stops on our journey.

A single day spent on the “hop on, hop off” buses available in Cape Town, Johannesburg (and most major cities worldwide) helped eliminate some famous but uninteresting destinations and move unexpected others on the top of our travel map.

In the reputedly dangerous Johannesburg, there was no substitute for on-site reconnaissance to deciding where we could and couldn't safely stay – especially since we had already decided to save money by staying at Airbnbs instead of hotels.

But the biggest payoff from advance recon was totally unexpected. To fully experience the diversity of southern Africa, we had the ambitious goal of visiting four countries with a combined area larger than the U.S. east of the Mississippi.

Airfares to cover the region were phenomenally expensive; van rentals impossible. As we learned on tripadvisor.com “no South African Company will allow you to take the vehicle into Zimbabwe - unless you put down nearly the entire new cost of the car!”

With help from Zimbabwean friends, we found the solution few expats know about in the South African border town of Musina. Turns out that this dusty, rundown border town is home to a lively trade in imported Japanese cars and vans, mostly for export to neighboring Zimbabwe and other landlocked nations. After hiring a universally trusted driver/guide in Zimbabwe we worked with him to purchase and refurbish a 2004 Nissan Van, which served us well on a 4000-mile journey through Southern Africa.



Photo Credit: Ancel Camacho

Of course, you don't have to send an advance party to get good advice. Adventurous parents in the [Worldschoolers Facebook Group](#) were a constant source of great trip-changing advice. A fellow Worldschooler met up with us in Egypt. She and her daughters upended our plans for the good: leading us to an eco-lodge in a desert oasis we could never have found by ourselves.

## **Ok, You Ask, Where Did This Journey Take Your Group?**

### *Part 1 - A month in Egypt.*

**Cairo:** Our African journey began on a busy street in Africa's second largest city, Cairo. For you, dear reader, Cairo may conjure up images of pyramids, ancient ruins, mysterious open markets, camels roaming ancient streets, the Islamic call to prayer ringing out five times daily. Yes, you will find all that.

But Cairo is also a crowded, high-rise dominated city of 20 million people beset by the pollution that comes with overcrowding and modern industry... plus traffic that makes Los Angeles at rush hour seem an oasis of calm.



Our base in Egypt was a [spacious 9th floor apartment](#) booked on VRBO. It offered free (but slow) wireless internet, modern appliances, three bedrooms that easily accommodated our group of ten and elevators which worked much of the time. The front balcony looked out on the Great Pyramid of Giza.



All the conveniences a traveler might need were within walking distance: inexpensive restaurants, supermarkets, small shops stocked with all the travel necessities that you forgot to pack when leaving home. We learned to love Egypt's national dish; a spicy vegetarian stew known as Kosherie. But American fast food chains have invaded Egypt, so the worst of food from home is available if you must have it. All within walking distance of our VRBO, that is, once we figured out how to cross Cairo's [crazily congested streets](#) without getting run over.

Our Cairo guide, [Ash Shaer](#), helped teens avoid one of the unexpected dangers facing tourists in Egypt: pyramid fatigue. Ash kept the touring exciting by arranging pyramid adjacent camel and ATV tours... and belly dancing lesson on a Nile cruise.



Photo Credit: Ancel Camacho



Photo Credit: Sophia Hanna



Ash's Egyptologist brother, Tarek, engaged our more inquisitive teens in deep conversation about ancient Egyptian history and philosophy.



As Americans, we envision Egypt's great monuments (if we think of them at all) as dead relics from millennia past. Not so for the Egyptians, as we learned to our delight. Think of New York's Central Park on a holiday weekend crowded with local families enjoying picnics or a stroll through the grounds. That's what visiting the great pyramid at Giza feels like.



Photo Credit: Steve Askin

Even in this city of 20 million, restful retreats exist if you know where to look. One such place is [Al Sorat Farm](#), a family-owned organic farm and animal rescue center. Contact owner [Maryanne Stroud Gabbani](#), an American who has lived most of her life in Egypt, a few days in advance to arrange horseback riding, farm exploration and wonderful homecooked meals which can accommodate all dietary needs.

**Luxor:** Despite Cairo's glorious history, we were all relieved to get out of the crowded, polluted city. Luxor, world famous for the ancient tombs and royal statues carved into solid rock, proved a relaxing home away from home. One of the world's driest climates (average rainfall 1 millimeter or 4/100s of an inch) allowed these amazing structures to survive more than 3000 years.

While the teens toured on foot and via hot air balloon. Catherine and I relaxed and even got some work done at a [palatial Airbnb with pool](#) in a farming village on the bucolic West Bank of the Nile. Our friend and local expert, fellow Worldschooler Tara, wisely urged us to avoid the East Bank, a bustling city of a half million where most tourists stay.



Photo Credit:  
Skyler McKinney



Photo Credit: Steve Askin

Farming in the desert? Yes, from ancient times to the present, Nile River water and the fertile soil of the Nile Valley have met to produce a thin ribbon of agriculture winding through the desert. To understand why [watch BBC's earth video](#) on the “Amazing Fertility of the Nile.”



Every tourism book says the best way to enjoy the Nile is in a felucca, the Nile’s traditional small sailboats. We wholeheartedly agree.



**Siwa:** “Magical: was the word we all used to describe our most relaxing stop, deep in Egypt’s western desert at [Taziry Ecovillage](#). The Ecovillage is located at the desert oasis of Siwa near the Libyan border. Siwa was already a famed pilgrimage site in the time of Alexander the Great. Following local tradition, Taziri’s spacious rooms and family chalets carved into a mountain using mud bricks and other natural materials, minimizing environmental disruption. Our teens enjoyed a spring-fed, fresh water natural swimming pool at the Ecovillage. They were even more enthusiastic about a nearby crystal blue lake so salty that everyone floats. They enjoyed desert safaris in ATVs, sand surfed on the dunes and returned home to a feast prepared by the Moroccan chef, served in a torchlit courtyard, with healthy meals with options for everyone – including the vegans – and locally grown dates and bananas.



Photo Credit: Ancel Camacho

To our amazement, Siwa during our February visit offered the mildest weather we found in Egypt, with temperatures rarely above 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Despite its beauty, our group would not return to Siwa in its long hot summer: June through August temperatures peak over 100 degrees.

**What about those terrorists?** After beating around the bush with vague concerns about safety, this turned out to be the real question in the minds of friends who thought we were crazy – especially as a Jewish family – to visit Egypt or, for that matter, any Arab nation.

Our answer to the fearful was no different than the one Catherine's parents gave on their many trips to the Middle East in the 1960s and 1970s. Despite the interminable political conflicts, this remains one of the world's most hospitable regions. As we've repeatedly told family and friends, the most threatening foes in most developing nations – and the ones you must take seriously – are bad drivers, not terrorists.

Plan thoughtfully, but don't give in to stereotypes. During our February 2019 visit, we avoided the troubled Sinai Peninsula based on the then-current travel advisories from the [U.S. State Department](#) and the [British Foreign Office](#). Pay attention to warnings of increased risk, but ignore uninformed gossip. And pay closest attention to advice from the Brits: Over the decades in which one or both of us have visited more than two dozen nations in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, we've found the British advisories more reliable than those from the State Department.

## Planning Your Global Travels

**Flying on a budget.** For any complex itinerary get multiple quotes and be flexible about dates. Using online booking sites, the best price we found for our trip was a budget-breaking \$5000 per person. Then we turned to [AirTreks](#), a travel agency that specializes in global travel. AirTreks offers the best prices for many complex routes by negotiating special rates with airlines worldwide. They brought our price down to \$2300. But we didn't stop there! For our particular itinerary, [American Express Travel](#) was able to bring the price down for one of our travelers to an amazing \$1650. And we saved even more by paying for part of the trip with American Express Rewards points. Don't have an American Express card? Some of their major competitors offer similar travel services.

**Avoiding the high cost of hotels.** This one's simple. Make Airbnb and VRBO your first choice when seeking a place to stay. In Egypt, we never paid more than \$125 per night for spacious apartments and villas that comfortably housed our group of 10. Top-rated Airbnb hosts provided advice on local activities superior to most hotel concierges. Many offered local touring advice superior to most hotel concierges. Some offer add-on meal or touring services at a very reasonable price. Where possible, we stayed with "Superhosts," experienced Airbnb operators who have the highest ratings for both the homes they provide and the support they offer guests

Even among well-rated homestays, choose with care. Even an Airbnb with lots of five-star reviews (the top level) might have downsides for your family. We avoided some top-rated places because of complaints about noise, lack of air conditioning or inconvenient locations. Look for homestays with helpful hosts who've been praised by guests for offering timely support in unexpected emergencies. In Cairo, airport guards threatened one of our teens with arrest for an imagined offense – probably because the airport police wanted a bribe. Our host got on the phone with the offending officials – politely



threatened to complain to Egypt's tourism agency - and persuaded them to back off. In several locations, helpful hosts showed up within minutes to deal with power outages, hot water failures, even a ceiling cave-in. Everywhere they helped us find the best inexpensive restaurants and the most interesting places to visit.

Do remember that the Airbnb option is more work for you. Do stop at hotels when you need a break from cooking your own meals or making your own beds. From Cairo to Cape Town we also discovered that frequent flyer and guest reward points go far. In Egypt, we stayed briefly at the four-star Hilton King's Ranch Alexandria, where room rates range to \$300, yet 10,000 Hilton rewards points covered a room which would "cost" 50-60,000 points in the U.S.

**Spending Money.** Choosing the *right credit card and debit card* will be one of your most consequential financial decisions. Some cards charge up to a 3% commission on foreign transactions, others add no surcharge. Some debit cards add an additional charge, which can amount to several dollars, when you use a foreign ATM. Others charge nothing. For us, debit cards from our credit union and a Costco Visa card freed us from transaction fees. Check the cards in your wallet before you travel.

The role of cash also varies from country to country. We found one of the world's weirdest cash economies in financially troubled Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe had *no* local currency when we visited in April. The U.S. dollar was king. South African Rand, British Pounds, Euros, Botswana Pula We carried stacks of U.S. \$1 and \$5 bills to pay for small purchases.

In South Africa, our stop before Zimbabwe, access to foreign currency is tightly controlled - so we stocked up on U.S. cash before leaving California. For countries like Zimbabwe, where the cash economy changes faster than the weather and may even vary from one city to another one, find a local information source like this one for [tourists visiting Victoria Falls](#).

**Communicating.** For parents like us, who work remotely while traveling the world, communication is critically important. For most international destinations, [Google Fi](#) phone service is the best phone option, offering connectivity to the major local networks in almost all the world's countries, providing phone service and hot spotting without swapping sim cards. Unfortunately, Zimbabwe where we spent almost a month is one of the few countries not on the Google Fi network. In urban Zimbabwe and tourist destinations like Victoria Falls we could find an internet café or tourist-oriented restaurant with good (by local standards) internet connectivity. And almost everywhere we went we paid our Airbnb hosts a modest fee to up their wireless internet to the highest speed locally available.

**Join us next month for part 2 - Trip of a Lifetime.**



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A MESSAGE FROM SEAHOMESCHOOLERS

Image by REBECA CRUZ GALVAN



# Homeschooling While Working

By **LM Preston**

There are many circumstances that may change in a parenting journey, leading to homeschooling.

There are those that start homeschooling due to a desire to give their children a unique learning experience, or they decide to take the plunge into the new world of homeschooling their kids due to challenges in traditional schools. As a career focused parent, many families believe the consideration of homeschooling seems off the table of possibilities in order to maintain the home and lifestyle desired, but it can be done. Trying to balance working and teaching your child takes a total change of mindset about a career, school, and your family dynamics.

## MINDSET CHANGE

You can survive making the transition to both working and homeschooling, no matter which direction you are approaching it from. If you are a stay at home parent that didn't have to work, but now has to, you can survive this. Those working parents that can't find the right fit for their child in school – you can do it. This change first begins with your attitude and the mindset that you and only you can 'Own Your Flexibility,' in homeschooling and working.

## RESHAPING YOUR EXPECTATIONS

We have many expectations of what homeschooling is supposed to emulate. Sometimes, we forget that it doesn't 'have' to be like traditional school or any other homeschool. It is a gift of learning in your own way, to shape to the needs of your family and your child. The one and only expectation one should have is that homeschooling is meant to be flexible. Usually, it isn't, because we stand in our own way. Making homeschooling and working a reality means to embrace the freedom to shape school any way you need, and around whatever hours you need, to redefine the way you accomplish schooling.



The first way to approach homeschooling and working a job or running a business, is to be honest about your situation. There is only enough time in the day. Therefore, you need to use your time wisely. Pinpoint how much time you have during the day to hyper focus on either instruction or work review for your child. Don't consider what you want to do with them for the day, only jot down how long you have to work with them during



the day. Total up that time within the full day for seven days out of the week. When you homeschool and work, you need to be flexible with your homeschooling time and fit it around work time. That opens up evenings, nights and weekends to doing school. Kids are usually more fluid in their ability to work within a schedule. You may also find that they actually like it when their day is changed around.

## CHANGE UP STYLES AND SCHEDULES

Most people are creatures of habit. Changing children from learning during the morning and afternoon time seems odd to the point where it isn't even considered as an option by many people. Schooling on the weekends is also off limits for many families, except when kids are in traditional school, homework is usually done on the weekends. The benefit of homeschooling and working is that the parent has the ability to be extremely flexible with the schedule and school can occur on whatever days and times work best for the family.

Learning styles are also important to take into consideration, but it is alright to mix it up. All styles can and should be used to teach within the parameters of the needs of your children and your household. If your child's primary learning style is auditory, they can still benefit and learn by being presented with the information visually or in written form. Feel free to present learning in all methods, depending on what the family schedule needs. But lead with the child's preferred learning style whenever possible.

In scheduling, there are quite a few popular scheduling methods. You have the freedom to change yours as needed. Own your freedom by using a traditional five day schedule during the time the kids are cooped up in the house for the winter. Then after the holidays, when they are bursting at the seams to have a break, do unschooling for a few months. Then end your school year with a Need-to-Want-to schedule. Use the various combinations of scheduling and styles of homeschooling to your benefit based on the time constraints and goals of the family.

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## DELEGATE OR DITCH IT

The major area of flexibility to utilize while homeschooling and working is the ability to delegate a task or forget about it. In instances where you need to do yard work, house work, go to work at a job or your business, start thinking about delegating a task. If it's a task you have to hire out, ask yourself how much money you would lose by paying someone to do something you could do. For instance, if you are considering working full-time, but have to pay for child care, compare the cost of child-care per hour against what you make per hour. If that isn't a good tradeoff, maybe just working part-time around your spouse's work schedule would be a better delegation of childcare. As another example, if it would take you two hours to do the yard work, and a yard service would cost less than you make in two hours, then pay for the service.

While going over your schedule, you will find that there are things you just can't do or don't want to do for the level of time required. In those cases, getting the kids involved to help tackle the task can work. Put them in charge of loading or unloading the dishwasher, have them do their own laundry, or at least teach them how to fold it and put it away. Dusting is another great chore children can do, as is feeding the pets. They can even help make shopping lists and prepare dinner. Enlisting the children to help teaches them necessary skills and it gets you the help you need for free.

Consider those things that you can't delegate, but don't have the time to do yourself and take a family vote to ditch them. If cleaning the dishes every day takes an hour that you just don't have, make the investment and buy paper plates and only wash the dishes once every couple of days. If making the beds is a fight, don't do it. If mopping daily or weekly doesn't fit into the schedule, keep a cloth handy for spill cleanups and ditch the mopping. Find what works for your family, and do that.



## OWN YOUR FLEXIBILITY

When you are working and homeschooling, you survive by owning the flexibility to change all the pieces of the puzzle around to fit what your family needs. This is the most powerful gift of homeschooling, the ability to change it to be whatever you need it to become for your family. There are no rules, no time constraints, it's about customization of education and your ability to do what works for your family.



*LM Preston is an author, engineer, former college professor, and working mother who's been married for over twenty-five years. She homeschooled 3 of her 4 children from elementary school and beyond while she and her husband worked outside their home. Three of her kids graduated with degrees by the age of 17 years old.*

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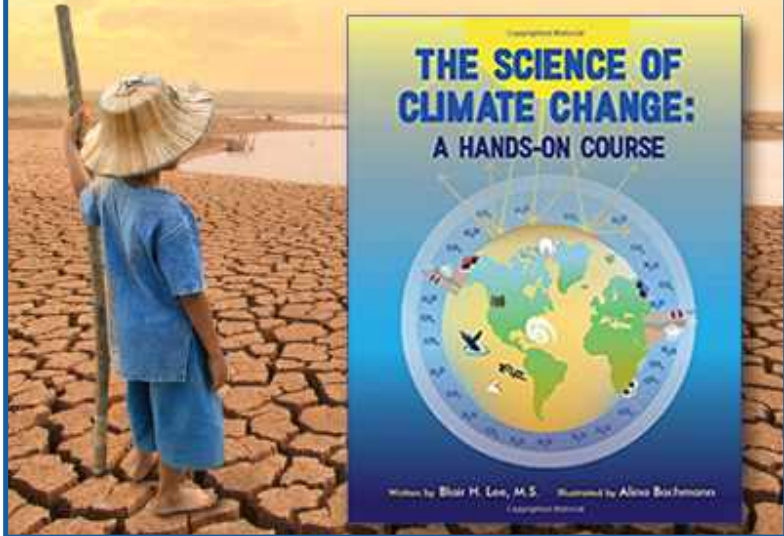


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# HOMESCHOOLING METHODOLOGIES

**Blair Lee  
MS**



When you look at your child you see a unique individual who has never walked the face of this earth before. Each unique child is born into a family that is also unique. Homeschooled educations reflect this uniqueness. A homeschooled education is handcrafted to meet the strengths, challenges, and passions of an individual and their family.

Handcrafting something as important as your child's education can feel overwhelming and stressful. It can help to get guidance and input by looking at common homeschooling methodologies to find the one, or the pieces of several, that is/are the best fit for your child and your family. The longer you homeschool, the more likely you are to use a blend of several methodologies. You might even find that you transition between different methodologies, depending on the age and stage of your child, their interest level, and the subject area.

These methods are arranged from more structured to less structured.

## **School-at-Home Methodology**

This method is what it sounds like. Kids are homeschooled, and parents work to make the materials used, coursework completed, and evaluations align with how and when these would be done in school.



**Pros:** If your child ever goes back to traditional school, they will be at grade level, making the transition easier.

It is easy to select materials and programs.

I have seen this method work very well for parents whose children are being homeschooled because of athletics or because they are a professional actor/actress and when kids are being homeschooled because of medical issues.

If you have a child who has a lot of public-school friends, they might want their education to look like their friend's does.

**Cons:** Parents will sometimes use this method for the high school years, under the mistaken impression this will help their children get into college. That is a real shame. Colleges do not look at homeschooled kids as if they are just like the students from the local high school. They consider your child to have received an alternative education. If homeschooling high school, embrace this. High school students benefit from innovative high-level learning, something that often does not happen at the local high school.

Light science, virtual labs (colleges will not accept these as lab classes), often no art, and light history and civics in favor of language arts and math.

There are many innovative learning strategies that are difficult to employ with multiple students. The structure of this method accounts for these. Since you are not homeschooling 30 students these restrictions hamper the possibilities of what an education can look like.

## Classical Methodology

*For the purpose of this discussion thread and to make sure we are all on the same page, the description for this methodology is as it is defined in *The Well-Trained Mind*.*

Many academic homeschoolers start homeschooling using this method. When reading *The Well-Trained Mind*, it is easy to see how the classical method, if implemented as Wise-Bauer recommends, will result in a solid education. Most who start out using this method become more relaxed.

This approach is based on a method that was developed in the Middle Ages. It recognizes 5 tools of learning, reason, record, research, relate and rhetoric, called the *trivium*. These tools are incorporated into 3 learning stages: grammar, logic, and rhetoric, which follow the same basic age range as the 3 levels in traditional school.



There is a four-year rotation that is done at each of the three levels, with consistent building in the complexity of what is taught.

Strict users of the classical method teach their children Latin, Logic, and Greek and Western Literature. They also focus on the Socratic Method. In addition, disciplines are approached with the understanding that all disciplines relate to each other.

**Pros:** The plan for using this is well laid out and easy to begin implementing.

It has been used for centuries with a high rate of success regarding the educations of people being taught with this method.

There are quite a few curricular programs and materials developed for this method.

The approach of rotating subjects every four years builds a very solid foundation for knowledge of each subject.

There is a lot of sound educational pedagogy wrapped into the explanation of this type of education.

**Cons:** There is a Christian, non-secular, worldview in many of the materials written for those who use this approach.

Parents often like this approach better than children. It does not account for variability for children's learning styles and abilities.

As it is often implemented, creativity is not a focus. For creative kids, this can be very problematic.

There are only so many hours in a day, and strict adherence to this method can leave little time for more "modern" subjects like computer programming.

It claims to be learning-focused, but most people using it would tell you this is a teaching-focused method.

Takes a very rote approach to early writing. That is a pro for some kids, but a con for most.

## The Charlotte Mason Method

This is a literature-rich method. Charlotte Mason believed in using what she called “living books” to teach children. She defined living books as those that sparked the imagination of the reader through the subject matter. Mason believed that, “Education is an **atmosphere**, a **discipline**, a **life**.” Indicating



that she thought the purpose of an education was to create lifelong learners. She believed that the **atmosphere** children grow up in is important to their education. She felt that it was critically important that children have the **discipline** of good habits, in particular habits of character. And that children be taught using **living** thoughts and ideas not through rote memorization. In later grades, students begin incorporating text books into their learning with a continued focus on living books and classic literature.

The specific steps the Charlotte Mason Method use are:

**Narration** - starting with children repeating back a story that has been narrated to them when they are young, and leading to children writing out these narrations as they get older.

**Dictation** - where students transcribe a piece of literature in handwriting practice. Mason believed that both dictation and copy work were important ways that students could learn the structure of good writing and language through being exposed via dictation and narration to high quality literature.

**Nature Study** - including daily walks and keeping a nature notebook, is recommended by Mason as a way of studying living science. Where children observe things seen on nature walks and write about and discuss what they have observed.

Mason believed in exposing children to **music and art** as well as living books. She does recommend reading living books about famous artists and musicians.

## **Journaling**

**Short lessons** especially in the younger years, reaching one hour per subject for high school aged students.

and as mentioned above, **Living Books**.

## **Pros**

For students who love reading, this is a wonderful method. And even for those who don't, this method exposes readers to high quality books, some of which have changed the way people thought about things.

If you follow Mason's philosophy, there is a focus on respecting and treating children with dignity, no matter their age.

There is an emphasis on ownership of information, and true understanding, instead of rote memorization and testing.

Homeschoolers who stick with this method tend to end up with children who are very

strong writers. Art and music, even when included in the method, is not a primary focus of any other method.

## **Cons**

The resources developed for this method tend to be strong in the language arts and humanities and weak in other subject areas.

The science done as recommended by Mason is weak. Nature walks, journaling, and reading about science are important additions to science, but if that is all you do, it is not a complete science class.

There have been substantial advances in understanding how science is best learned since Mason's day (1842 – 1923) not accounted for in this method.

Important and more modern subjects like computer science are often left out of studies when using this method.

Many kids will HATE dictation. If this happens, those kids do not learn spelling or grammar as hoped.

There are few materials for secular homeschoolers. Mason was a devout Christian and this is reflected in her advice on the materials that should be used with children.

**The emphasis on old books and lack of contemporary books can be very off-putting for some children.**

## **Eclectic Homeschooling**

I debated about where to put eclectic on this list, and decided here. Eclectic can range the gamut, but for most homeschoolers, it sits between the more structured methods and the less structured. I sometimes call eclectic homeschooling, “The Cherry-Picking Methodology.” Almost every homeschooler is an eclectic homeschooler, even those who identify as using a particular method. That is because all children benefit from some customization of their education and learning environment. I call this customization handcrafting an education. And I do consider that my son received a handcrafted education. A handcrafted education is one that is designed to meet the unique strengths, passions, and challenges of the learner and their family.



There are no general guidelines or “rules” with the eclectic method.

**Pros:** You can tailor this to fit your specific situation.

When the focus is on how a child best learns, it profoundly benefits the child's relationship with the acquisition of knowledge. Handcrafting a child's education is the most likely way to create a lifelong learner who loves the act of learning.

This method is the most likely to lead to innovative learning and teaching.

**Cons:** It can be hard to figure out the best way to address and individual's unique strengths, passions, and challenges. That is why we need a big active forum like SEA.

Choosing curriculum is much harder, because there are no guidelines for what to use, how to use it, or when to use it.

The more students you have, the harder it is to craft something unique for each student.

## Project-Based Learning and Unit Studies

At its most basic, **project-based learning** is a student-centered approach where there is a meaningful application of academic and vocational skills and knowledge to a question, problem, or challenge. Using this dynamic approach students gain deeper knowledge and facility with skills at the same time they more effectively learn how they, as unique individuals, learn. Even when the primary focus of the project is within a discipline, science for example, the project will be multi-disciplinary as students apply math and language arts, for example, throughout the project. The **unit studies** approach is also built around a theme or topic. This approach is also dynamic and takes a multi-disciplinary approach. Project-based learning (PBL) and unit studies (US) are closely related methodologies. Both are multi-disciplinary, and both incorporate hands-on activities in an engaging way that leads to a meaningful growth in skills in a way that other methods do not. There are significant differences, however.



PBL is a journey-focused, child-centered approach that can easily be used with students of different skill levels. US is end-focused, instructor-driven, and does not lend itself as easily to working with students of a range of abilities. US is a good example of project-based education. A simple summation is that PBL focuses on skill building and the acquisition of knowledge at the same time it promotes an understanding for students of how they best learn. US only focuses on skill building and the acquisition of knowledge.

## **Pros**

PBL and US have a high level of engagement that make learning fun and meaningful.

PBL and US promotes ownership of knowledge in a way that other methodologies generally do not.

PBL and US can easily be designed to include vocational skills in a way that feels meaningful and educational.

PBL and US rely more on learning through doing and less on the rote memorization of facts. Something that is important in a world where anyone with a smartphone can look up facts.

With some frontloading and thoughtful planning, PBL can easily be incorporated into any other methodology.

US is fairly easy to plan.

If PBL feels daunting, US can be a gateway, helping you become more comfortable building learning around projects.

The journey-focused academically-rich nature of PBL can profoundly change the learner's relationship with learning.

## **Cons**

PBL requires significant planning.

If you must meet state standards or requirements, US do not always include these or take them into account.

Not everyone is comfortable with an open-ended approach like PBL.

Like all learner-centered approaches, with PBL, there is a careful (and artful) balance between the student-led and the need for some instructor oversight that requires thoughtful finesse. This is easier to do at some times and with some students than others.

You need to be careful to ensure that coursework is catalogued in such a way that student transcripts meet the required guidelines for college admission.

## Worldschooling (and Roadschooing)

Some homeschoolers distinguish between worldschooling and roadschooling. When a distinction is made, roadschooling refers to homeschooling while traveling for an extended period of time in your home country. Worldschooing refers to homeschooling while traveling and in some cases living outside of your home country. If someone from the UK were homeschooling while traveling for an extended period of time in the US, however, they would be considered to be worldschooing. For the purists there might be some differences, but since everyone's home country is part of the world, and the focus of both is experiential learning through travel, they are basically the same methodology, I will refer to them both as worldschooing.



Worldschooling uses travel and exposure to the world and country for experiential learning. Most parents who choose to incorporate significant travel as a part of their child's education believe it is important to have a broad worldview often with a global perspective. Worldschooing is different from vacationing, because the travel is usually for an extended period of time, and the focus is on learning not just relaxing. How long that time is, depends on the worldschooier. There are no set guidelines.

Worldschooling requires the incorporation of another learning methodology. When worldschooing is done without the inclusion of formal academics, it is a type of unschooling. It is important to recognize this, because many people who worldschoo do use formal academics. What you decide to do, often depends on the length of stay. If choosing to include some formal academics, preplanning is a good idea.

**Pros:** In an increasingly globalized world, there is no better way to broaden your children's worldview, even if you stay in your home country.

History!

It can be enlightening and life-changing to incorporate worldschooing into learning.

It is easily incorporated into every learning methodology.

**Cons:** It can be expensive. And for most families it is not feasible to be on the road for extended periods of time.

Kids can get homesick for family, friends, and pets.

Different time zones can be a problem if using live online classes.



If you and the kids do not like the choices made for coursework, it can be a hassle to be figuring it out while on the road.

Some students do not learn as well using e-books. and you will want to use e-books where ever possible.

Hands-on classes, like lab sciences, are generally much harder to do. You can get around this by choosing a subject, like geology, which lends itself to field research.

## The Montessori Philosophy

Montessori is a child-centered philosophy where teachers serve as mentors to students. There is a focus on academics that is designed to seem natural and not forced. Creativity, curiosity, and hands-on engagement while learning is encouraged. Children are allowed the freedom to learn at a pace that is their own. This benefits a student's relationship with the acquisition of knowledge and promotes lifelong learning. In a classroom setting, students work in mixed age groups. This sets up a dynamic that benefits the self-esteem of all ages. The mentorship within student groups also builds leadership and conflict resolution skills.



**Pros:** This is often a great option for gifted and special needs children.

This honors students as individuals by allowing students to work at their own pace and focus on the available activities they are most interested in.

This is a method that naturally promotes leadership skills, at the same time kids learn conflict resolution as they work at cooperative play.

This method promotes ownership of knowledge.

Creativity is encouraged.

**Cons:** This is generally a weak method for learning math, science, and writing.

This does not tend to be a good method for students who are not self-motivated.

A high level of collaborative work is not a good fit for some students.

Some students benefit from more direct instruction.

Instructors choose what activities are available.

## Waldorf-Inspired

You might be surprised to see this method discussed here, because it is not secular, but neither is Charlotte Mason. When discussing either of these for the secular community, we are really discussing a secular-inspired version of them.



The goal of the Waldorf method is to engage the head (thinking), the heart (feeling), and the hands (doing) in an effort to bring meaning and purpose to the learner's life. Waldorf advocates believe the Waldorf method is not a pedagogical system. Instead, it is an art, focused on the art of awakening an individual to their true self as a human being. Like a lot of people who are passionate about their faith, the Austrian philosopher and social reformer Rudolf Steiner who developed this method believed that faith needs to be a component to make this happen. It most certainly does not. Of course, a "spiritual awakening" requires you to be of faith, but connecting with your true self does not.

Like the Classical Methodology, Waldorf is divided into three developmental stages.

**Early Childhood (Hands):** From birth to age 7, young children are encouraged to engage in creative play, physical development, and student-directed hands-on learning. Traditional academics are de-emphasized during this stage.

**Middle Childhood (Heart):** Ages 7 – 14, focuses on helping children get in touch with their moral compass. Instructors begin introducing academics including storytelling, visual and dramatic arts, music, physical well-being, and nature study.

**Adolescence (Head):** Ages 14-21, there is a much greater focus on academics and critical thinking. Students are scaffolded during this period to promote increasing autonomy over their studies.

**Pros:** There is a meaningful focus on emotional intelligence that is missing from other methods.

The weaving of the arts throughout all subjects will appeal to some children.

This is the only method that includes movement, bodily kinesthetics, as an integral part of learning.

It has an emphasis on nature, natural materials, and humans' relationship with the environment.

**Cons:** Math and science are woven into and taught through art, movement, and music.

There is no way to adequately learn either of these subjects that way.

There is very little curriculum using the Waldorf method that is secular, which greatly limits your choices.

Some children like academics early, including worksheets. It is important to pay attention to the child to make sure this method is a good fit.

It increases the likelihood that early identification of processing disorders, like dyslexia and dyscalculia, will be missed when academics are delayed.

This method eschews the use of technology, only allowing very limited access to technology even in high school.

## Unschooling, Self-Directed Learning, and Consensual Education

Unschooling, self-directed learning, and consensual education all give autonomy to students by putting the emphasis for their own learning on them. The most problematic method to define in the homeschool community is unschooling. Largely because unschoolers, themselves, often cannot agree on the definition. That is most likely because many people, including some unschooling advocates and experts, lump unschooling, self-directed learning, and consensual education under the umbrella term of unschooling. As you will see they all have slight differences.



**Unschooling:** Pam Laricchia, the author of *Free to Learn, Five Ideas for a Joyful Unschooling Life*, defines unschooling this way, “Unschooling is, at its most basic, about learning without a curriculum and without a teacher-centered environment. Its about creating a different kind of learning environment for your children. An environment based on the understanding that humans learn best when they are interested and engaged, and when they are personally involved and motivated.”

**Self-Directed Learning:** The Alliance for Self-Directed Education defines self-directed learning/education this way, “Self-directed education is education that derives from the self-chosen activities and life experiences of the person becoming educated, whether or not those activities were chosen deliberately for the purpose of education.” With this method, curriculum and teacher involvement is okay as long as the focus continues to honor the student.

**Consensual Education:** Longtime consensual education advocate, Samantha Matalone Cook, defines it this way, “Consensual Education emphasizes the

collaboration between educator and student, honoring the needs and interests of every member of the family, and using every available resource to gain knowledge and skills with intention, enthusiasm, and the consent of all involved.” The main difference between this and unschooling is that the needs of the parents, and educators, are equally important. Parents take less of a supporting role and more of an active participating role. With the consent of learners, consensual education can look much more structured than either self-directed learning or unschooling.

For the rest of this analysis, I am going to use the umbrella term unschooling when referring to all three of these.

You might be surprised how many unschoolers an academic-focused group like SEA Homeschoolers has in it. As many unschoolers will tell you, unschooling and academics, are not mutually exclusive. SEA is a good and safe space for unschoolers who feel that way. At a conference last year, I actually had a radical unschooling advocate who runs a large group, tell me she wished members of her group who use curriculum would join SEA to discuss it.

My personal opinion about this is that, as homeschoolers, each of us is on a personal journey through learning with our kids. As far as SEA Homeschoolers is concerned, the identifiers you use for that, are up to you to choose.

**Pros:** The child's needs and interests are central and foundational.

For some independent, self-motivated, and directed kids this method allows them to chart their path in a way none of the others do.

It can make kids feel and take responsibility for their own learning.

For some families, it can provoke meaningful explorations of subjects in ways the educators never thought of and break their dependence of having outside input into how something should be studied. This high level of autonomy has great appeal for some families, parents, and students.

This method does the best job of addressing the theory that play is the superior method for learning.

It emphasizes the relationship between parent (educator) and child (student) to build a partnership in learning.

**Cons:** The rancor and insistence, from some people and communities of unschoolers, that there is only one way to unschool is uncomfortable for some and can make people attracted to this method feel alienated from it.

Kids can fall through the cracks with this method and miss important learning milestones in core areas like reading, writing, and basic math. When this happens, it can be very challenging to ever gain ownership over these.

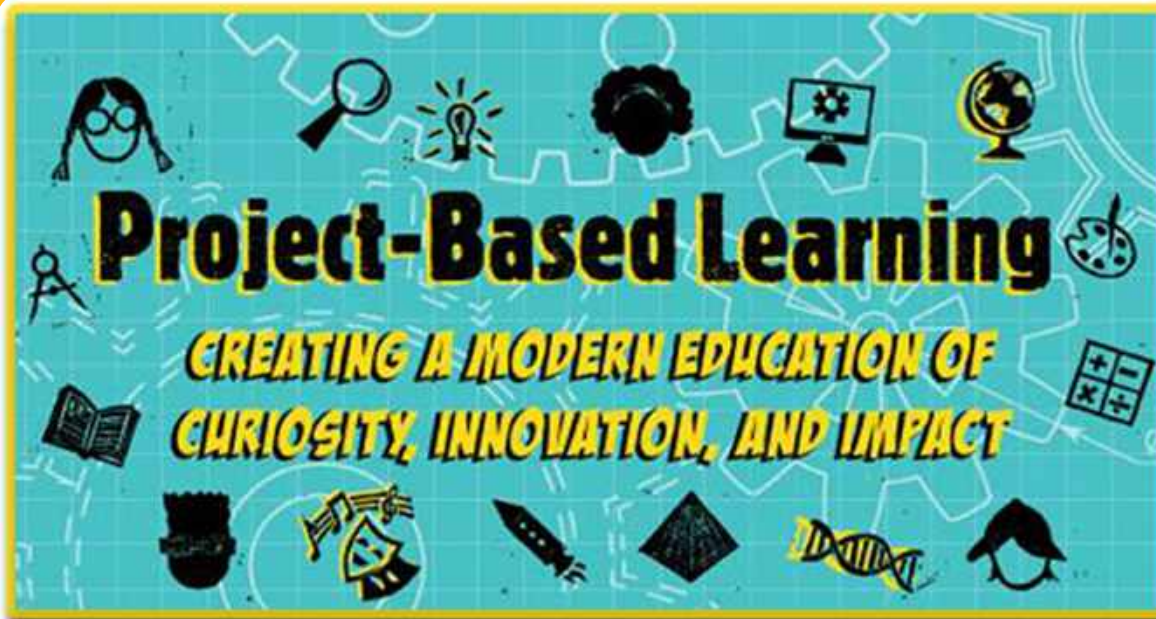
Some unschoolers have a negative attitude about education that extends to the act of learning as a whole. This can disenfranchise young people from wanting to see this themselves as learners, creating issues for them as they grow up and want to find jobs.

Unschooling can be much more work than many expect.

It can be a problem getting into a four-year institution as a freshman. Most young people do not have the insight into what they need for their college transcript. Kids who are unschooling might not realize what classes they need to take. For this reason, many unschooling parents have their kids do concurrent enrollment in high school.

Identification of processing disorders, like dyslexia and dyscalculia, might be missed.

**This article is based on a series of posts from the Homeschooling 101 series in the [Secular Eclectic Academic Homeschoolers Main Facebook Group](#).**



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# THE ADVENTURE OF LEARNING

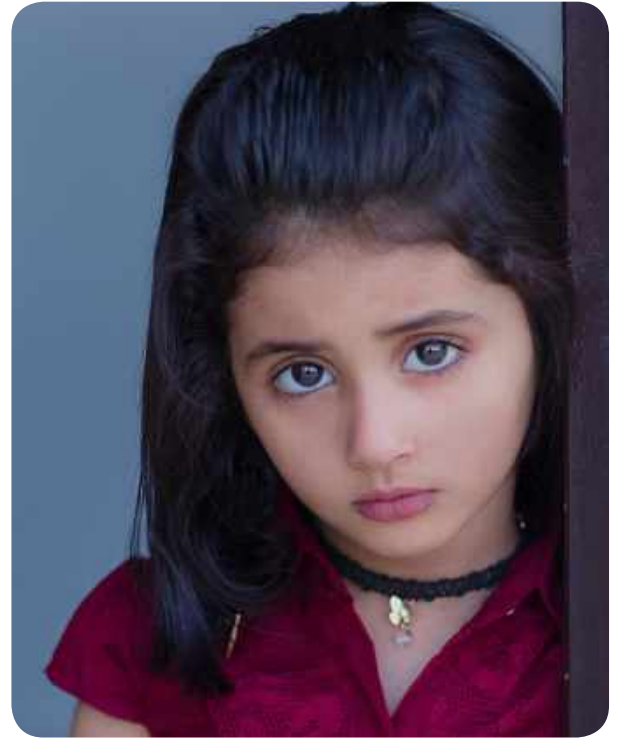
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# This is What Perfectionism Looks Like

By Heather Boorman



According to an online dictionary, a perfectionist is defined as “a person who refuses to accept any standard short of perfection.” I think this is typically what we picture. A person who is so driven for perfection, and nothing but perfection, that they stop at nothing to get it and destroy everything else in frustration. And while this can, indeed, be what

perfectionism looks like, I usually see it in much more subtle ways. Typically, people are wise enough to say, “well, I’m not really a perfectionist. I don’t expect perfection. I know that’s unrealistic.” And yet, these same people are frequently perfectionists. So, what does it look like?

Perfectionism looks like the preschooler quitting an art project because it is difficult or isn’t turning out the way he wanted it to.

It is spending 2 hours scouring the internet for just-the-right song to put to a slideshow.

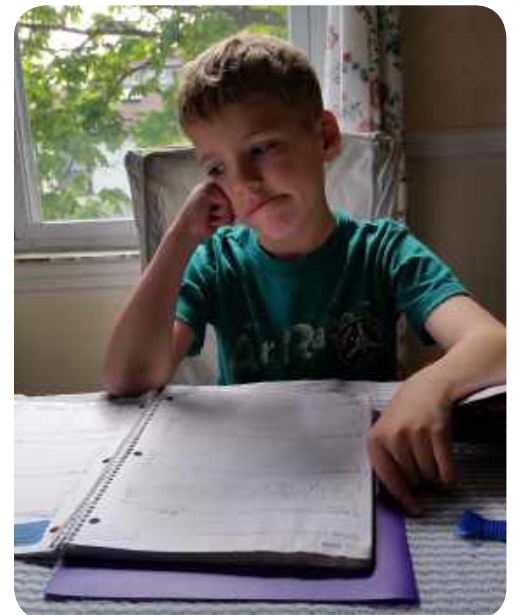
It is retaking a test because you got a B.

Perfectionism is sitting quietly in a group, meeting, or class because your thoughts might come out wrong.

It is doing the extra credit assignment when you already have an A or B.

It is revising, and editing, and rewriting with meticulous detail.

It is a preschooler refusing to put on his own socks because it is difficult and he doesn’t do it well.



Perfectionism is pretending you aren't interested in an activity because you don't think you'll do it well.

Perfectionism is a child defiantly refusing to do something.

It is procrastinating until the deadline is right upon you.

It is beating yourself up over any mistake.

It is not cleaning because you know once you start you'll be grabbing the toothbrush and scrubbing out every single corner and you just don't have the time for that.



Perfectionism is wanting to do your best and feeling like your identity and worth depends on how well you do.

### **That's really the core of perfectionism, feeling as though your worth and lovability are conditional on performance or achievement.**

For example, perfectionism is strong in my youngest one. He's impulsive and psychomotorly intense and 5 years old, so he crashes into mistake after mistake most days. When there are significant ones, and he is reprimanded, he immediately crumbles and usually his negative, perfectionistic beliefs come spilling out of his mouth. I give him a few moments alone, and then I scoop him up and pull him into my lap. I don't expect eye contact, but I do ask if he's ready to listen.



When he's ready, I ask, "Did you make a mistake?" He says yes. "Were there consequences to your mistake?" He says yes. "Did I get angry and frustrated with your behavior?" He says yes. "Did I stop loving you?" He now knows this is coming and, with a mischievous little grin on his face says, "yes." I attack him with friendly kisses and giggles. "Does that mean you're a horrible person because you made a mistake?" That same

eye-twinkling grin and "yes." He's now attacked with tickles and giggles. We gently reinforce the lesson learned and he moves on his way. Giving voice to those pesky underlying, unhelpful messages makes them weaker and allows them to be rewritten.





- Give voice to the perfectionism. Refute that voice.
- See the perfectionism under the behaviors.
- Remember that everyone makes mistakes.
- Remember that mistakes are actually helpful things because they teach us something. In fact, I've learned far more from my mistakes than I ever have from my successes.
- Encourage and model being kind to yourself.
- Encourage failure and trying difficult tasks. Model doing things that are uncomfortable and difficult.
- Read up on self-compassion and implement it regularly.
- Remember that every human that walks this planet is unique and worthy of love. Remind your child often just how valuable they are, and especially remind them at the times when they act the most unlovable.
- Perfectionism can be sly and sneaky and tough to conquer, but it can be conquered and softened. Just don't expect to do it perfectly.



*Heather Boorman lives an intensely joy-filled and full life as a homeschooling mom to 3 fringy kids and the executive director and therapist with Boorman Counseling. She passionately advocates for differently wired kids and adults through her work as a national speaker, writer & podcaster at [The Fringy Bit](#). Heather's also the author of [The Gifted Kids Workbook](#), which provides mindfulness based activities to help kids reduce stress, balance emotions, and build confidence.*



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# How to Satisfy the Powers that Be

By Farrar Williams



In homeschooling circles, a lot is made about following your own plan and your students' leads. We're in this to be different, everyone tells you. Stop paying attention to what the schools are doing. Do your own thing!

I firmly believe all that. However, I know that, for a whole bunch of reasons, sometimes you can't do whatever you like. Sometimes you have to satisfy the powers that be.

Some states require that homeschoolers provide a portfolio of their work or take standardized tests. In other states, homeschoolers may have to jump through various hoops when they join charter schools to access money. Sometimes homeschool parents have to provide proof of what they're doing to a partner who is unsure about homeschooling. Other times, students are preparing to re-enter school and need to prove that they're ready for a certain level of work.

Regardless of why you need to prove yourself, sometimes you just do. Below are some tips for satisfying those pesky outside requirements.

## **Think Positive and Don't Let It Change You**

First of all, approach requirements with a can do attitude. While you shouldn't have to justify yourself or your kids, and while it isn't fair, don't dwell on it negatively. Assume that what you're doing is basically going to be fine. After all, you're probably doing a great job homeschooling! You almost certainly don't need to change anything fundamental. Homeschool how you want to homeschool and make the requirements fit into your education vision, not the other way around.

## **Be Creative and Use What You've Got**

You don't want to make any big changes just to satisfy requirements. That means be creative in how you think about what you're already doing. That day at the creek splashing around was nature studies. That afternoon sledding was P.E. The thank you notes the kids wrote after their birthday party was English class.

## **Document Creatively, Too**

Worksheets aren't the only way to document that your kids are learning. Take photos of what they're doing and call that documentation. If you have to show that you did P.E., you don't need a worksheet about the rules of basketball. Snap photos when the kids actually play ball instead. That can apply to work you do in any subject. If you usually do math on a whiteboard, take a photo of it every couple of weeks. If you have to cover health, take a photo of the dentist chatting with your student. Save programs from the performances you attend for proof that you covered fine arts. Toss in the scavenger hunt from the museum. Make lists of books read or places visited. Your lists can absolutely serve as documentation.



## **It's Okay to Just Do a Few Worksheets**

I don't think you have to change what you're doing radically, but if there are areas where you've run out of creative juices to prove that you did something but you don't have other written work, it's okay to get a few worksheets just for the purpose of proving to others that you checked off some boxes.

## **Don't Let Kids Take Tests Without Prep**

We all know that schools spend way too much time on test prep and teaching to make or break standardized tests. You don't want your homeschool to become like that. On the other hand, it's no fair to a student to pull out a two day standardized test and say, "Surprise!" If you have to test, spend at least a couple of days to a week on test prep before you administer the test. You can spread it out and make it a game if you need to. However, it's important to give kids a small leg up. Even a few hours of prep will raise scores.

## A Few Big Projects Can Be Good for Your Homeschool

One of the wonderful things about homeschooling can be not having to worry about producing “pretty” work just for the sake of showing off. However, preparing a big, final project can actually be a positive thing to take on every once in awhile. As long as they have ownership, big projects can make kids feel proud of their work. As a bonus, a big science fair project or a first big research paper is exactly the sort of proof that the powers that be often want to see. Don't feel like you need to do these sorts of things for every subject all the time. However, picking a couple of carefully chosen projects every year can be a positive thing for both showing off and for your kids' learning process.



## Organization is Key

If you have to prove yourselves for some reason, then having a way to organize your kids' work and your documentation is important. If you keep a blog, that can be a good way to keep track of what you're doing. However, there are many other ways. At our house, we have finished work boxes and portfolios. Other people have apps like One Note that help them track what's going on. It doesn't really matter how you do it. What's important is that you have a method that's easy for you and will give you the documentation you need when it's time to put things together.



*Farrar Williams is a longtime educator with experience teaching in the classroom and at home. She's the author of [Twins](#), [Tough Times](#), and [Triumphs: Homeschooling the Middle Grades](#) and currently an educational consultant and teaching online courses at [Simplify Homeschool](#).*

# HOMESCHOOL PROJECTS!

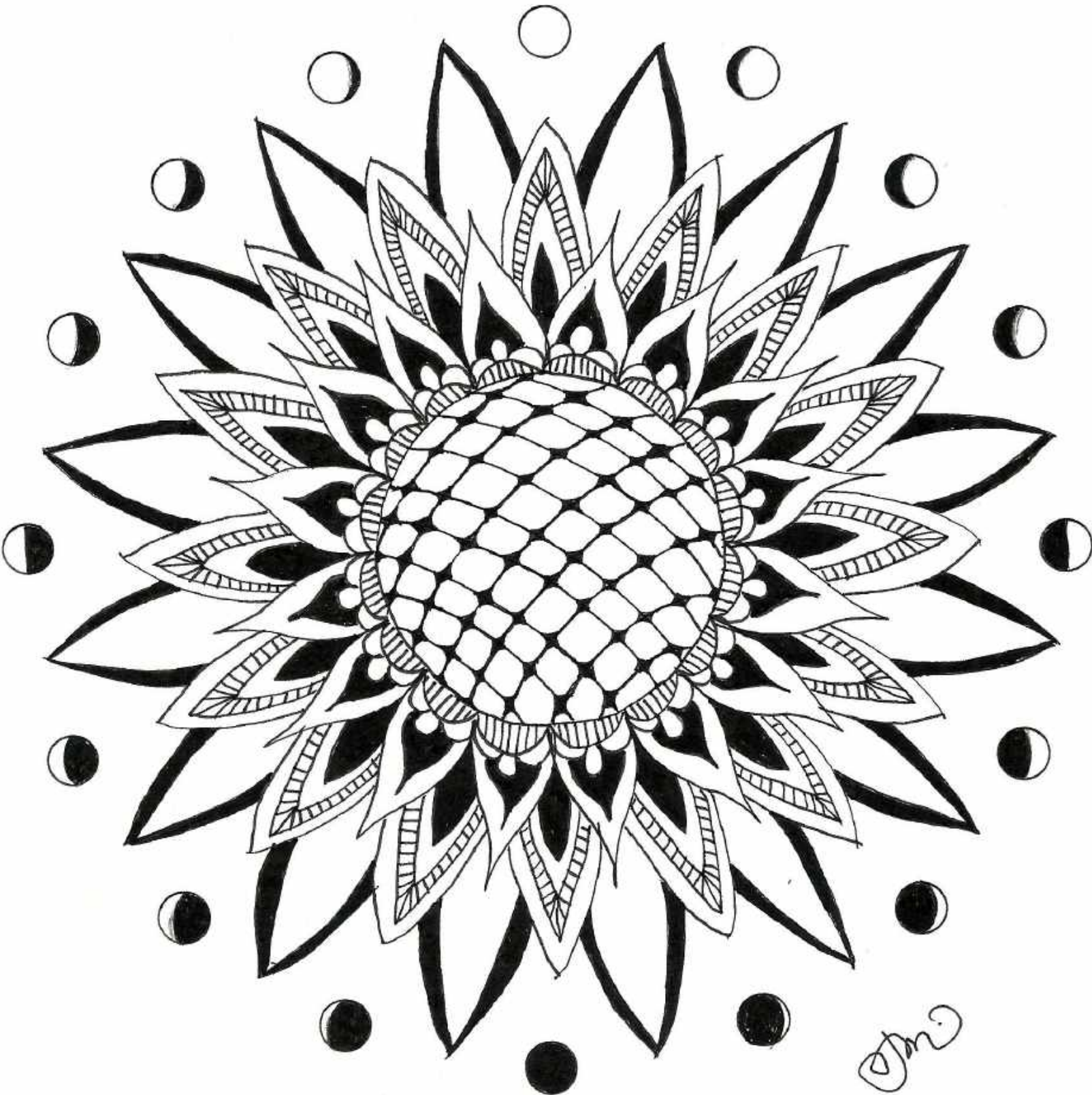
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# Summer Sunflower

A Printable Coloring Page by Judith Claudi-Magnussen



# Measuring the Speed of Light

*Tools Needed: flour, water and a microwave*

Waves travel. That's what they do. It's their nature. Look at ocean waves from the beach, and you'll see this is true. They're always traveling. Much faster than ocean waves are sound waves, which race through the air at about 767 miles per hour. That's fast, but it still takes several seconds for a distant thunder to reach your ears. Much faster than sound waves are light waves. The flash of a distant lightning bolt reaches your eyes almost, though not quite, instantaneously. Light is super fast. A beam of light can travel around the Earth 7 times in a single second. That's fast!

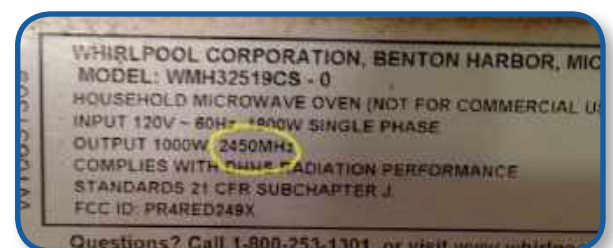
Might it be possible to measure the speed of light? In your kitchen? The answer is yes! How so?  
All waves follow this formula,

$$\text{Wave Speed} = \text{Wave Frequency} \times \text{Wavelength}$$

which says that the wave speed is equal to the wave's frequency times its wavelength. To learn more, review this video:

[Why Wave Speed Remains Constant](#)

Your kitchen microwave emits light at a particular frequency commonly known as a microwave frequency. Look inside the door and that frequency should be provided, typically at 2450 MHz, which is the same as 2,450,000,000 Hz.

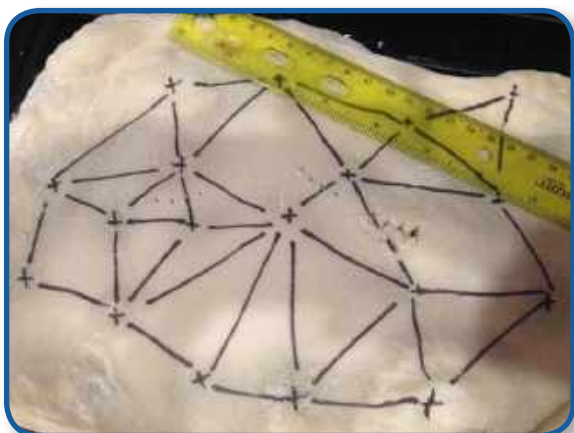






To measure the speed of light, therefore, you only need to measure the light's wavelength. You can do this by “cooking” some bread dough (a soft mix of flour and water only) laid out on a microwave safe surface. Disable any rotation during the cooking process. This will make some parts of the dough cook faster than others.

Cook only until half of the dough surface is cooked and half remains uncooked. You'll find a pattern of islands. Mark off what looks like the center of each island. Estimating is fine. Then here comes the hard part: Measure the average distance between each point and its nearest neighbors. That is, you want to find the average distance between all the points, which is the approximate wavelength of the microwave light.



Measure in units of millimeters, and then convert that to meters. Multiply that by the frequency of the microwaves and you have the speed of light in units of meters per second! You'll find it's fast. Very fast! But compare your number to the known speed of light, which is about 300,000,000 meters per second. Certainly, you will find experimental error, such as how you measure the cooked islands. How might you control for such errors? How close did you come to the known speed of light?

For more fun and meaningful activities, check out our “Beyond the Lab” manual available as a free download at our homeschool support site: [www.LearnScience.Academy](http://www.LearnScience.Academy). And be sure to check out our Conceptual Academy chemistry podcast series at The Big Picture Podcast, available through Apple Podcasts. Show notes at [ConceptualScience.com](http://ConceptualScience.com).

Good science to you!

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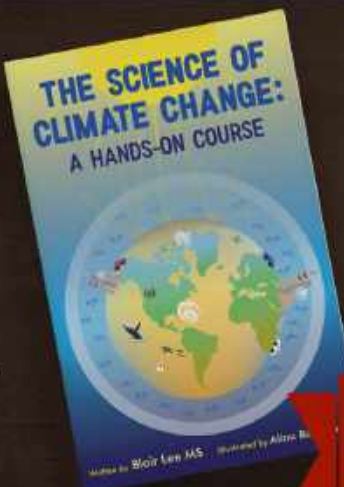
*Conceptual Academy is a video-centric learning platform used by colleges and high schools for introductory science, now available for homeschools, grades 7 – 12. Thank you for visiting our dedicated homeschool support site at [www.LearnScience.Academy](http://www.LearnScience.Academy).*

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# Salsa

It's tomato season, and one of the yummiest things you can do with tomatoes is to make salsa.

## Ingredients

- 8 tomatoes
- 8 tomatillos
- 3-4 limes
- 3 minced garlic cloves
- ½ bunch cilantro
- 2-3 jalapenos (optional)
- 1 onion (optional)
- Salt to taste



## Instructions

1. Chop tomatoes, tomatillos, onion, and cilantro. Chop and seed jalapenos.
2. Put all in blender or food processor. Halve limes and squeeze juice on produce.
3. Process lightly. This may need to be done in batches.
4. Salt to taste. Enjoy and eat.

# SUBSCRIBE

We are a community-focused group. It is the goal of SEA Homeschoolers to build a strong, healthy, and vibrant network for secular homeschooling families, educators, and business people.

I want to personally thank you for being an important part of the SEA Homeschoolers community.

Blair Lee, founder of [Secular, Eclectic, Academic Homeschoolers](#)

If you have any submissions, ideas, questions, or comments, please email us at [editor@seahomeschoolers.com](mailto:editor@seahomeschoolers.com) or visit us on Facebook at [Editor at SEA](#).

