

HOW TO HOMESCHOOL

*Receive the children in reverence.
Educate them with love.
Send them forth in freedom.*

Rudolf Steiner

DECIDING TO HOMESCHOOL

The goal of the Waldorf preschool and kindergarten is to nurture a sense of wonder and curiosity in the young child, while encouraging reverence for the goodness of life. In the loving and creative atmosphere of the kindergarten, young children acquire the confidence and discipline they will need for the challenging academic work of grade school.

Daily Activity

There is nothing as important for your child's healthy growth and development as the work you do to maintain consistent rhythms in their lives. Many parents do this instinctively when caring for a young child, always holding their child in the same way, singing the same songs, using the same verbal cues when feeding, changing diapers in the same way, and establishing bedtime routines. But our lives call for larger participation in the rhythms of the world. And it is easy when your child gets older to begin to live a more hurried and scattered life, taking your child along when you go out to do your errands, losing consistent naptimes and mealtimes once the baby is off a bottle, and it can be hard to stop and notice the effect this lifestyle is having on your child.

Noticing the change of seasons with your child is important. Do you eat strawberries all year round, simply purchasing a bag at the grocery store and keeping them in your freezer, or do you take your child strawberry picking during their brief but sweet season in May? Do you take your children outside with you when you rake leaves in the fall, or do you do your yard work while they nap? Try to involve your child as much as possible in seasonal activities.

What other rhythms do we find throughout our lives? The rising of the sun and its setting, the waxing and waning of the moon, the ebb and flow of the tides... Keeping close ties to these cycles helps your child develop a sense of well-being and certainty that the world is an understandable, safe, and predictable place.

Contrary to some child-rearing beliefs that your child develops self-esteem from making decisions at an early age, making choices and learning their consequences (often earlier than the child is actually able to understand the relationship between the two) and being indulged as being equal in power to an adult, the Waldorf philosophy states that a child develops a sense of self through a carefully-guided secure and stable childhood.

It is a lot of work to maintain consistent rhythms in your child's life! Gone are the days of

“Wash on Monday,
Iron on Tuesday,
Mend on Wednesday,

Churn on Thursday,
Clean on Friday,
Bake on Saturday,
Rest on Sunday.”

from Little House in the Big Woods

Now we live in an age ruled by automatic washing machines, dryers, and dishwashers, freezers, microwaves, and purchased prepared foods, and other “conveniences” which, with their convenience, save us a lot of time. But our children, who don’t know what hard work these machines are replacing, have no ability to look beyond them to see the time saved – to know that in buying butter is saved an hour of churning – and so they take the world and its conveniences for granted. They neither see nor revere the natural world. This is a terrible price to pay for “convenience.”

I said to myself we all lost touch
Your favorite fruit is chocolate covered cherries
And seedless watermelon oh...
Nothing from the ground is good enough

from “Chariot” by Gavin McGraw

So, without going backwards in time, how can we give our children the greatest understanding of the joys and responsibilities of life – in short, an education? Make a list of the chores and errands you do each week. Assign each to a specific day. Make your schedule and keep to it. The Waldorf School of Atlanta has the following daily activity schedule in their preschool and kindergarten classes:

Monday	Watercolor painting
Tuesday	Make vegetable soup
Wednesday	Bake bread, churn butter
Thursday	Handwork (beeswax modeling, simple sewing, finger knitting, seasonal crafts, coloring)
Friday	Housekeeping (waxing, washing, polishing, mending)

Establishing a routine such as this is the first step in being ready to homeschool your child.

Your next step is to make a plan for how each homeschooling day will progress. We do school five days a week: Monday & Tuesday, Thursday through Saturday. Wednesdays I work; Sunday is our day of rest. When making your plan, decide how many hours you’d like to do school each day. Most preschool children benefit from a 2 ½ to 3 ½ hour long school block.

PREPARING YOUR CHILD

The Importance of Sleep

I have read that the majority of temper tantrums in toddlers is not a result of the "terrible twos" but a symptom of lack of sleep. Make sure your child is getting enough sleep! This cannot be emphasized enough. A preschool child should be in bed 12 hours each night AND take a 3 hour nap each afternoon. If you do school in the morning (which is preferable, since your child is then most active and ready to learn), have lunch afterwards, and then your child will be ready for her nap. Wake up to a snack, then move on to some independent play in the afternoon; have the child help prepare dinner and eat, then begin the transition to bedtime.

Example:

7 am	wake up, morning verse, get dressed, breakfast
8 am	school
11 am	lunch
11:30 am	nap
2:30 pm	snack
3 pm	independent play
5 pm	prepare dinner, set the table
5:30 pm	dinner
6 pm	bedtime routines
7 pm	bedtime

PREPARING YOURSELF

Meditation

Above all else, the success of your school day depends on you.

First, in your mental preparation.

- Did you get enough sleep?
- Have you thought about how school went on the previous day? Meditated on it, journalled it, learned from it?
- Have you taken the time to clear your mind this morning, put aside your own troubles, and dedicated yourself to putting your child first?

Second, in your physical preparation.

- Do you have a planbook wherein you write what you would like to do each day?
- Have you gathered the books, the art materials, the handwork supplies, and any other items necessary to do the day's activities?
- Have you memorized the fingerplays, songs, games and anything else you need to learn and be prepared with in advance?
- Is the area where you would like to do school clean, tidy, and organized? Is it safe?

PREPARING THE CLASSROOM

Where to Have School

Choose a place which is clean and orderly; children are deeply sensitive to their environments and are unable to feel calm in the midst of chaos. The environment in which you do school will have a great amount of influence on its success. Try to have one room in your house set aside as the classroom; if this is not possible, designate one section of a room to be for school and nothing else. Try to find an area which is painted a soft color, which has a window, has in it a bookcase or shelf for your candle and to be a Nature corner, and has room for a soft wool rug to sit upon and do circle time. Sheer gauze curtains for the window are preferable as they let in natural sunlight but gently filter it for a less harsh effect.

Inside Play

Refer to the excellent reference, [Toymaking for Children](#), for suggestions on what toys are developmentally appropriate for each age group as well as how to make them yourself and save money.

This is also the resource we recommend for advice on setting up an area for **Outside Play**

YOUR DAILY ROUTINE

General Rhythm of Each Day

Make sure that you alternate between activities of expansion and those of contraction. Again referring to the Waldorf School of Atlanta, consider

- opening verse
- daily activity
- independent play (inside)
- clean up
- circle time
- independent play (outside)
- story, puppetry, drama
- closing verse

A schedule such as this gives your child time to run and play, as well as sit and learn. Alternating between the two is the most effective way for your child to process new information.

VERSES

Suggested Opening Verse

Lighting a candle while you say the verse is customary, as this helps to establish a reflective atmosphere. Even if you choose not to do light a candle, the opening verse will be a transition for the child into your care. After you declare yourselves to be “ready now for work and learning”, you can blow out the candle and begin your day!

Opening Verse:
In the morning at the sunrise
When the light of day doth break,
Children’s souls, by angels guided,
Sleep from rested body shake,
Ready now for work and learning,
Happy, steady, and awake.

Suggested Closing Verse

Use this verse to end your school time, striving to go forth and made the rest of the day a good one. Like the opening verse, lighting a candle is customary and provides a sense of closure. When the candle is blown out, you will go forward feeling positive about the next thing to come your way.

The golden sun so great and bright
Warms the world with all its might.
It makes the dark earth green and fair,
Attends each thing with ceaseless care.
It shines on blossom, stone, and tree,
On bird and beast, on you and me.
So may each deed throughout the day,
May everything we do and say
Be bright and strong and true,
Oh, golden sun, like you!

These, and other verses, are available in [A Journey through Time in Verse and Rhyme](#), a treasure trove of poetry, verses for morning and evening, blessings, meditations for parents and teachers, movement verses, as well as those for learning academic content in later years. It is an essential Waldorf teaching material and cannot be recommended highly enough.