

Adding Copywork to Your Homeschooling and Notebooking

by Deborah Fogelbach

What is Copywork

Copywork is simply the practice of copying a piece of well-written work from any of a variety of sources onto paper or into a notebook. The student copies from the chosen source using his best penmanship to create a “perfect copy” that is properly spaced and includes all proper capitalization and punctuation marks. It is a method that, when used consistently in your homeschooling studies, will improve your child’s penmanship, grammar, and punctuation skills. In addition, it will expose him to a variety of writing styles, structures, and techniques that he will be able to add to his own “writer’s toolbox”.

Getting Started with Copywork

You can start copywork when your child is just beginning to form his letters. First, you’ll need to write the letter(s) being practiced for him to copy. Then, he will form them himself on the line(s) that follow. The goal is for him to copy these letters as perfectly as possible and leave an appropriate space between them. You’ll not want to exasperate him by requiring too much during this exercise. Only require as much as can be accomplished in a few minutes for a child this young.

After mastering his letters, you’ll move on to words, then sentences, then paragraphs, and so on. Gradually add length to the copywork as he matures and his abilities improve. Occasionally, or as he has time or desire, add artwork to the pages as well. If he starts off well on a particular piece of copywork and begins to become sloppy by the end or is making multiple mistakes, then you may have chosen a selection that is too long for one session. Break the selection into smaller chunks and divide it up over a number of days. The goal with copywork is not to produce large volumes of writing. Instead, our goals are to improve his penmanship, to increase his ability to give his best efforts, to improve his ability to pay attention to details, and to make him naturally more familiar with grammar, punctuation/capitalization rules, and a variety of writing styles, structures, and techniques.

How Often Should I Assign Copywork

Copywork may be done daily. When my children are first learning to form letters, both manuscript and cursive, I assign it daily, remembering to assign appropriate amounts that challenge them without exasperating them. When they are proficient in forming letters and words without assistance, then we may cut this back to 3-4 days a week. It just depends on the rest of our language arts schedule.

What Should We Use for Copywork

Add copywork to any topic you are currently studying or notebooking. Choose a selection from one of your literature books, poetry readings, or other well-written book. Make sure to include selections from the classics, Shakespeare, Aesop’s Fables for younger children, famous pieces of work like the Declaration of Independence, and favorite passages from the Bible. Choose passages of scripture for copywork and use this time to help with scripture memorization. If you’re notebooking through the Bible, choose a key passage to add to each story being studied. Use your favorite hymns for copywork. Each week, my children copy from their assigned dictation sources, poetry memorization assignments, and Bible passages. To this, we’ll add selections from their science, history, and literature readings.

A great year-long copywork project would be to collect quotes from either one particular study or from all of your studies. Take turns letting the kids choose their own and mix them with ones you find especially inspiring. A long-term project for an older student might be to collect meaningful passages of scripture or whole chapters from a favorite book, such as Psalms or Proverbs. How about a notebook filled with a collection of their favorite poems? A collection of quotes from great biographies and speeches would be excellent for copywork. Is your child passionate about a topic? Copywork can add depth to a study as your child researches and collects information about this topic.

Our Resources for Copywork

In addition to our Alphabet Copywork Pages for the beginner student, we have specific Copywork Notebook Pages for older children. These sets are designed and laid out by stanzas eliminating the clutter of extra lines on the page. They work wonderfully for copywork and will “showcase” your child’s work and the literary pieces chosen. Choose from any of our other notebooking products or free resources to find a variety of pages that lend themselves well not only to copywork, but to the rest of your child’s notebook writing as well. There are many different layouts to choose from in each set with varying amounts of lines for his writing and spaces for his artwork. If you would like topic-specific pages for your student’s copywork or notebooking, check out our growing selection of specialized notebooking sets.

Biographical Information

Copyright, 2009. All rights reserved by author below. Content provided by The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine, LLC.

Debra Fogelbach has seven children and has homeschooled with a variety of methods and tools over the years. She loves to share her personal experiences, practical tools, and tips with homeschooling moms, hoping to help them unlock the love of learning in their children. Visit Debra online at www.NotebookingPages.com to find her articles, free homeschooling resources, and growing line of notebooking products designed to "fit the family" and "fit the budget". Any questions regarding this article may be sent to Debra@NotebookingPages.com