

What We Perform, We Remember

by Maggie S. Hogan

Are you thinking ahead for the next school year or re-evaluating your current year? I'd like to share some tips and techniques to help you include a hands-on component in your homeschool.

Now, just so you know, I love to read! When my boys were younger, I always read history aloud to them. We discussed what we read, made notes, and read some more. I naturally tend towards the classical approach, and I'm not a "projects" kind of person. (I even failed arts and crafts at summer camp!) But one thing I discovered early on in homeschooling was that, as much as we love reading and talking, the "doing" of things made significant impact. Like the old adage goes, "what we perform, we remember."

First, decide how much hands-on you can do realistically. Using a current calendar and your own day planner, decide ahead of time how many hands-on history activities you can reasonably do in one year. Here are some points to consider:

1. Are you also planning lots of hands-on activities in other subjects, like science or art?
2. Which times of the year naturally work well with hands-on learning? For us, winter is a great time for more involved indoor projects, while summer is often ideal for field trips, performing plays, model building, and other fun activities. If you are doing both hands-on science and hands-on history you may want to try to alternate projects. One week (or month) work on a science project, and the next week a history project.
3. Remember that smaller, less time-consuming hands-on activities are as valuable and memorable as more complicated efforts. Mapping, illustrating, model making, and acting out historic moments are all short, fun, and valuable.
4. On your calendar, cross out dates during which you know it would be difficult to complete hands-on history. For example, the end of August and beginning of September are very busy for us with birthdays, anniversaries, travel, school and co-op start-ups, clothes shopping, etc. I try to not schedule anything extra during those weeks. For you, it might be canning season, spring house cleaning, or the week of Vacation Bible School.
5. Take the ages of your children into consideration. Gear some projects older and some younger. When the little ones have an activity, train the older ones in the art of helping/teaching. By learning to help younger siblings with projects in a patient manner, your older ones are learning valuable life skills, thus benefiting everyone in the long run.
6. Planning ahead makes hands-on projects easier to implement. In your planner, list what materials/resources you'll need to complete the project. Begin saving detergent bottle

Bright Ideas Press ♦ P.O. Box 333 ♦ Cheswold, DE 19936
Toll Free 877.492.8081 ♦ www.BrightIdeasPress.com ♦

caps, buy pretzel rods on sale, look for the perfect material for your suit of armor, collect pictures of Native American housing, etc. You may not know which specific project you're going to do for the entire year, but if you have ideas and at least a few activities planned ahead, it will be easier to get started.

7. By now you should have a clearer picture of how much you can reasonably do. Let's say you've come up with twelve weeks in the next year during which it would be feasible for you to tackle hands-on projects. Look through your upcoming history units and gather ideas from your resources about activities that would be beneficial and fun. Pick out the most appealing projects and ask for feedback from your kids. Studying the Middle Ages? Give them choices: would they rather make a coat of arms, build a medieval castle, make costumes, or perform a simple play? Knowing that any of those projects would suit your students' needs allows you to safely let them choose which they'd prefer doing. Bonus: now they have bought into the idea because they had some choice in the matter.

Keys to Success:

- A. Be realistic regarding available time.
- B. Make a plan.
- C. Follow the plan!
- D. Give kids choices.
- E. Small but frequent hands-on activities are quite effective.
- F. Utilize older students' talents.
- G. See A!

What we perform, we remember!

Biographical Information

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

Maggie and Bob Hogan live in Dover, Delaware, where they began homeschooling their two (now grown) sons in 1991. She is a regular contributor to homeschooling Internet sites as well as print magazines like The Old Schoolhouse®. She's a nationally-known speaker and co-author of The Ultimate Geography and Timeline Guide, Gifted Children at Home, Young Scholar's Guide to Classical Composers, and other resource books. They're also owners of Bright Ideas Press, publishers of the all new Illuminations curriculum, as well as award-winning The Mystery of History series, Christian Kids Explore series, and All American History series. When not reading or writing, Maggie can be found drooling over travel brochures.

Bright Ideas Press ♦ P.O. Box 333 ♦ Cheswold, DE 19936
Toll Free 877.492.8081 ♦ www.BrightIdeasPress.com ♦