

From Italy: The Block Family
Liz Block

Buon Giorno mia familia! Being a military spouse and homeschool parent in Italy offers a rich bouquet of hands-on learning tools. The last three years stationed here has been a well rounded experience and opportunity to immerse our children in the culture, religion, diverse foods, and language of every region of our host country.

Going back into the Navy, my husband had to attend several different schools scattered across the U.S. in only a matter of two years. We traveled through 37 states within six months. We used the endless changes we had to endure to the advantage of our children.

Before our children even started school we knew the freedom of time and schedule would work on our side. It was best to not have to continually pull them out of public school and to keep a steady flow of education no matter what month, year, or country we happen to be in. Homeschooling was our decision.

Our daughter Stacia (9) wants the challenge of completing fourth and fifth grade this next year. Our son Tony (8) opted for basic summer school work followed by third grade starting in the fall. Our days mostly average a six to eight hour schedule, starting with getting up with dad in the morning around 6:00 and finishing one subject before they have an hour's breakfast break. We then plow into the rest of their seven subjects, breaking for lunch and usually finishing no later than 2:00. Sometimes on stress-free days the kids are able to finish the day off by noon.

This one-on-one work environment provides a great attention to detail and provides an easier time to move on in their books and finish earlier. They still do their book reports, science fairs, experiments, sports, and social activities.

The Naples homeschool community gets together on a regular basis and does field trips together; shares curriculums, book fairs, testing, and activities; and offers support. I have not taken advantage of this phenomenal group but do still enjoy the regular flow of information provided by this homeschool community via email letters and roster info.

We used **Christian Liberty Academy** for two years because of their ready-made boxed curriculum and for their logging of the children's tests, papers, and grades. After I felt steady enough to plunge into this on my own over here, we tried our own curriculum consisting of **McGraw Hill** from our exchange and **ABeka** from the many online web sites. My husband and I are thrilled we have the numerous homeschool websites to choose from to order more texts and tests if needed. However, we have found the Naval Support Activity library and exchange here in Naples, Italy has more than enough materials to use and learn from. We have used the library's media and texts almost daily.

We love the freedom to go to places and sights that our new home has to offer on our own schedule. My children have learned something new every time they have stepped out of our front door. They have witnessed Mozzarella-making in a Naples factory, cameo-making, and glass

blowing. They have viewed artwork in the many palaces across this country. The Naples museums, Pompeii, Vesuvius and surrounding volcanoes, Tuscany, Florence, Pisa, Lucca, and all the fishing villages in between were some of the field trips Stacia and Tony remembered by writing papers about.

They enjoy picking up the language and interacting with other local children. They are able to go to the outdoor markets and buy things on their own apart from us. Ordering their favorite dishes at a trattoria is not a problem.

Stacia and Tony also have sports and social events offered to them through the Naval Morale, Welfare, and Recreation office and the Italian government. Both attend summer golf camp. Stacia rides and show jumps with her horse at one of the many Italian horse schools in the surrounding area. Both attend Awana at church on base. We spend most of our summer at the beaches. During the week we go down to the local beach in Lago Patria. We spend weekends on Gaeta beaches an hour away.

All around us is a wealth of materials for us to use. We try to do our best in giving our children a well rounded education of a lifetime in the comfort of their own home in Italy.

Biographical Information

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Ciao from Bella Napoli, Gene, Liz, Stacia, and Tony Block