

Thoughts on Preschool

I don't know about you, but I've found that homeschooling with a preschooler can be one of the toughest jobs you'll ever love.

My youngest was a true challenge at age three and kept me on my knees praying for guidance, strength, and patience. He just seemed to go through a miserable phase where we couldn't keep him out of trouble long enough to get anything done.

We had to learn all about flexibility while bringing some structure into his chaotic little world. I actually had to work on teaching him to sit still through a read aloud, and I was convinced that the Lord knew that I'd need his two older brothers just to help me keep a close watch on our little tornado.

Slowly but surely though, he made progress and I can even remember when he finally willingly sat through a read aloud, started bringing us books to read, and then surprised us all by typing his name on the computer! What great memories!

As the mother of a preschooler, you can often feel like you're being pulled in 15 different directions cleaning up spills, changing diapers, fixing lunch, answering the phone, and trying to manage a little homeschooling in there somewhere. Just give yourself a break, moms. God doesn't expect you to be SuperWoman. He knows that those years with little ones place extra demands on us. That's why He said that He gently leads those who have young. Your little ones are precious to Him and He carries them close to His heart. He'll be gentle with you, too. Just follow.

Enjoy every minute!

~Nancy Carter

What a great topic! I love preschoolers! We can teach them so much about life and Godliness at this tender age. They can learn obedience, cooperation, servanthood, sharing, creation science, health, chores, and so many other wonderful life lessons. When I take the time with them on a consistent basis, they soak up a ton of information in that little bit of time.

Too often, though, I find myself brushing them off to help the older ones with whatever endeavors they have. I hear myself saying to the little ones, "Yes, I can do that with you later," but later sometimes doesn't happen, and they can feel left out or ignored.

That is why I take it seriously when I make a commitment to the preschoolers, that I follow through with it. If I say, "Yes, I want to read that book to you," I try to stop whatever I am doing and read it right then. If that is not possible, I set the timer for the amount of time I still need to finish something else up, and they know that Mommy will do what she says when the timer beeps. I try to always say yes to creative things such as clay or water color paints or cutting little bits of paper with scissors. I set them up, give them a time limit if needed, and we all clean up

afterwards. Yes, this is a messy age. Yes, this is a demanding age--they need our time and attention to learn puzzles or card games or counting bears or fixing snacks! But a bit of time training them at this age goes a long way in helping them transition to more formal learning later.

Keeping the preschoolers creatively occupied helps during school hours. They have their own crates full of fun things to do. Some of my favorite preschool resources have been Preschool Prep's DVDs, Preschool Activities in a Bag, (a great homeschool group project), the Old and New Testament in Pictures for Little Eyes, and of course reading aloud lots of good wholesome books.

I have found that my preschoolers just want to know my commitment to keep them at the same importance level as the older ones and to feel like a part of the learning whole. Spending time together with your preschoolers lays a foundation and can become time well-spent for eternity.

~Deborah Wuehler

Good homes like yours do not need "school" for preschoolers. That is true even through kindergarten. All the research that show gains are studies of so-called underprivileged children, homes where children are rarely spoken to and rarely included in daily activities of folding laundry or mixing biscuits. Homes with no books and no reading.

In homes like yours, researchers show that preschool children learn about 1000 words per year without any vocabulary lessons. By age 5 they know an amazing amount of grammar without any grammar lessons. By age ten they use the grammar level of the people around them. You can see that they learn more language at home than they would in a classroom full of age-mates. Conversation and read-alouds are the main vehicles for this vocabulary and grammar learning.

The same works with numbers. Handling laundry, cookies, blocks, and other toys is experience with numbers, shapes, and other kinds of thinking. Preschool home life is a rich learning environment. School cannot improve on that. If you sing an alphabet song or chant the numbers in counting order, that is play. Older children usually do those and similar activities with the younger, so you don't get to repeat much with each child anyway. Just live the rich home life. That provides the best learning for preschoolers.

~Ruth Beechick

Biographical Information

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Nancy Carter is happy to call herself a relaxed homeschooler. After years of teaching in the public school system, she cherishes being able to learn together with her own children. She and her husband Tony have three sons and are learning all kinds of new things together on their

farm. You can read more of her family's Lessons Learned on the Farm at www.HomeschoolBlogger.com/tn3jcarter or you can email her at tn3jcarter@wildblue.net.

Dr. Ruth Beechick is a lifelong educator who now writes mostly for homeschoolers, whom she sees as bright lights in these days before Christ returns. Dr. Ruth Beechick has taught hundreds of people to read, Her own newest books are World History Made Simple: Matching History with the Bible (www.HomeschoolingBooks.com or 1-800-421-6645. and A Biblical Home Education.

Deborah Wuehler is the senior editor for The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine. She resides in Roseville, California, with her husband Richard. They are the parents of eight children: three teenagers, three elementary, a preschooler and a baby. They have been homeschooling since the birth of their firstborn who is now graduated from high school. Many of her articles can be found on www.Crosswalk.com, and many other homeschooling sites. She is a group leader in her local homeschooling support organization and she loves digging for buried treasure in the Word, reading, writing, homeschooling, and dark chocolate! Email her at senioreditor@TheHomeschoolMagazine.com.