Homeschooling is more than books and papers

When I ask my boys what they remember about their homeschool experience, they don’t talk about tidy schedules and stacks of paper. They talk about the living books we read, independent projects, dinner-table debates, time spent outdoors (lots of it!), and the surprise of getting to college and finding out they actually knew a lot compared to their peers, even though they’d had fun learning it. I’m grateful for that.

It wasn’t that we knew what we were doing—sometimes I felt as if I knew nothing at all! But I remembered the frustration of my own school experience; the feeling that so much time was being wasted and I wasn’t learning any of the things I wanted to know.

I wanted to spare the boys that experience and give them a richer, deeper education than I had received. Homeschooling gave us the chance to learn and grow together, and I’m grateful for that, too. I hope that you and your family will have delightful memories too.

I wish you joy in your homeschool journey!

Janice Campbell

In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.

Isaiah 30:15

How to enjoy the convention

What you need most—information or curriculum—will help you decide where to focus. The key to enjoying your day is to prioritize and to realize you don’t need to make decisions on the spot. You could decide to:

- Purchase the MP3 of all the workshops and spend all your time in the exhibit hall (that’s what I usually did).
- Spend part of the day gathering catalogs and talking with vendors, then enjoy a few workshops as you think about what you’ve seen.
- Visit the specific speakers and vendors you want to see, then either listen to a few workshops, or make an organized sweep through the entire vendor hall.
- Make a quick sweep through the exhibit hall and take advantage of convention specials on resources you know you’ll need; then spend the rest of the day doing what interests you most.
- If you are just getting started and truly don’t know what you need or want, purchase the MP3 of all the workshops, then spend the day talking with speakers, authors, and exhibitors who have resources appropriate for your children’s age. Gather catalogs and literature from everyone, and take it home to read. You can always order online, and some small vendors will even honor convention specials if you e-mail and tell them you met them at the conference but weren’t ready to purchase then.

Italic-style penmanship is versatile and easy to learn

Perfect Reading, Beautiful Handwriting is a simple step-by-step program for teaching your child to read well and write beautifully. It can be a primary or supplementary teaching tool.
- 60 lessons;
- Phonics based;
- Italic handwriting, progressing from upright to cursive (slant and joined);
- Print or ebook.

Look for us online!

- Website: EverydayEducation.com — Here you will find all our resources, plus articles on how to use Excellence in Literature, how to teach spelling with the 1857 McGuffey Readers, and more.
- Context resources for teaching literature: Excellence-in-Literature.com

Social Media

- pinterest.com/janicecampbell/
- facebook.com/excellenceinit
- twitter.com/everydayedu
- etsy.com/shop/ThresholdBeyond & SoulCraftPrintables

Newsletter Contents

- How to Keep a Learning Journal
- Time Map Sample and Ways to Take Time for Things that Matter
- Does Handwriting Matter?
- What will your children remember?
- 13th-Century Rules for Study
- Four-Year High School Plan
- Rubric for High School Essays
- Model-Based Writing
- How to Grade Papers with the Handbook for Writers

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The best way to reach me is by email: Janice@DoingWhatMatters.com
How do you learn? Long before textbooks and workbooks were invented, people of all ages used notebooks to help them learn and remember important things. Because they had to focus in order to write their study notes, they could remember what they studied.

You can learn in this way, too. To do so, you need a sketchbook or “learning journal” and a handful of pens, colored pencils or markers. You will use your notebook to ask and answer questions, draw maps, diagrams, graphs, charts, and illustrations, and write down ideas, observations, and quotes. Your learning journal will become like a personal encyclopedia with notes for everything you have studied, in school and out.

Leonardo daVinci (1452–1519) chose to study this way. He recorded his questions, answers, and discoveries in notebooks—over 5000 pages of notes on art, architecture, anatomy, and other things he wanted to study over a period of about 30 years. Notebooks helped Leonardo think, understand, and remember, and they can work the same way for you.

**Key points**

- Notebooks are not extra work; they are used during school time instead of workbooks so that students can actively think through and record what they are studying.
- Writing and drawing take more mental engagement than just filling in blanks, so students will remember what they learn.
- Keeping a learning journal is a process, not a product. Students write and draw so they can see the big picture of a subject and remember what they learn. The goal is learning; not artistic perfection.
- Learning journals are not compared or corrected. The purpose of the learning journal is to record essential points as well as what individual students find interesting, not just to copy what they think someone else wants to see. Once students realize this, their books become increasingly interesting.

**How to begin**

Let your student decide what to record and how to record it. Since they will be spending a lot of time with their notebooks over the course of a school year, make sure they have something sturdy such a hardbound blank sketchbook. They will use it for both writing and drawing, so blank pages tend to work best.

To begin creating a page, the student should survey the information available in books or other notes. Write the subject title on the page in an appropriate style, and then begin adding information using short bullet points, diagrams, summary sentences, illustrations, questions, mind maps, and whatever else helps to make the subject clear and interesting.

Some pages will have more text; others will be mostly images or diagrams — both styles are fine. Students will gradually develop a style of their own as long as they have the freedom to try things. They can always turn the page and move on if something doesn’t go as planned (don’t rip or erase—it’s not necessary).

Here are a few questions to help students decide what to record.

1. How can this historic event, science experiment, or literary journey be recorded and illustrated in a way that is understandable and memorable?
2. What are the most important ideas?
3. What patterns or connections do I see?
4. What elements should be emphasized by changing size, color, weight, or style of lettering?
5. What questions still need to be answered?

It can help to look at models when you start to keep a learning journal. Pinterest has examples of creative study notes that can provide inspiration for how to fit a lot of information on a page in a clear and compelling way. You can also find good models at RemarkableLearningLogs.blogspot.com and LearningLogs.co.uk. You may have to remind students that these are for inspiration, not comparison—their notes will look different, and that is okay.

One of the best things about using notebooks for learning is that it’s easy to see progress and remember what has been studied each year. The best learning journals I’ve seen have recorded studies on every subject except math—all in the same book. Science experiments, maps, commonplace quotes, and historic events are recorded as they are studied. Just imagine graduating from school with a shelf of books that document what you have learned in all the subjects!
Does Handwriting Matter?

I won’t keep you in suspense—it matters a lot! Neuroscience has shown that the act of writing by hand is an act of learning. Handwriting is not only a primary communication skill, it is also one of the best ways to study and understand other subjects. What the multiplication tables do for math, penmanship does for communication. If your student masters penmanship well enough to do it easily and fluently, it makes every other learning task simpler and less stressful.

True ease in writing comes from art, not chance, As those move easiest who have learn’d to dance.

Alexander Pope

When to teach handwriting

The boys saw me writing a lot, so they understood that letters had meaning and purpose. Informal penmanship lessons began early when I started hearing “Mommy, I want to write my name” or “How do you write ‘cat’?” I would write the desired word and my son would copy it. It was simple and direct, and I felt comfortable doing it since I’d taught calligraphy for several years (if you don’t feel that your handwriting is a good example, you may want to join your students in learning a more beautiful penmanship style).

Because I mostly use cursive italic in my daily writing, I began by teaching them italic print letters, which are both beautiful and easy for small hands to form. Teaching cursive first can be a great option, too, especially if a child shows interest. Because cursive letters are connected, learning cursive can help students who struggle with letter reversals.

Pen practice

Start by practicing five minutes a day, and get additional practice as you write lists and calendar notes in your neatest hand. Choose a model of good penmanship to copy and pay attention to slant, spacing, and proportion. For the best results, sit upright with your forearm supported and feet on the floor, hold the pen correctly in a relaxed grip, and remember to breathe. Writing should not hurt; if it does, something needs to be corrected. This is usually a result of clutching the pen in a death grip or leaning over so far that your nose is practically touching the paper. Do not do this, and do not let your children do it. As often as is necessary, remind yourself and your students to sit up, relax, and breathe.

Below is a simple exercise in which straight strokes (bottom) and a series of connected ovals (top) have been used to fill a shape. You can use something like this to warm up before writing and to help strengthen pen control. As you practice, try to make the lines and ovals smoothly with consistent slant and spacing. Try practicing with marching music to help you develop an even writing rhythm.

Suggested resources

Here are few resources to help you begin (you can see these at our booth in the exhibit hall).

Perfect Reading, Beautiful Handwriting begins with simple, upright italic penmanship, and ends with instructions for creating joins to transform it into a beautiful, legible, cursive italic. The triangular form of italic letters was an especially good fit for my oldest son, a left-handed perfectionist, who was intimidated by looser, more rounded writing styles.

For cursive, CursiveLogic teaches all the letter forms in four easy, shape-based lessons. After the first book, additional books provide more practice with poetry and short biographies of interesting Americans.

The Art of Cursive coloring book offers a unique and beautiful way to practice pen control and cursive lettering. I color in it with Prismacolor colored pencils.

French-ruled composition books: These special composition books have a unique, flexible system of lines that helps a student’s writing stay neat, and the smooth, opaque paper makes writing a pleasure.

Clear penmanship is an art form that virtually anyone can master—I hope your students will enjoy learning it. You’ll find more at my blog (doingwhatmatters.com/penmanship-matters), including a compelling TED talk by a modern Master Penman, as well as links other helpful articles and resources. Enjoy!
Everyday Education Alphabetical Book List
Excellence in Literature • Penmanship • Living Books • Charlotte Mason • McGuffey Readers • Planning • TimeFrame Timeline • Practical Math

12-Year Planner A DIY Scope and Sequence
Blue Fairy Book by Andrew Lang
Burgess Animal Book
Burgess Animal Book (b/w edition)
Burgess Bird Book
Burgess Flower Book (color edition)
CM-1: Home Education by Charlotte Mason (Volume 1)
CM-2: Parents and Children by Charlotte Mason (Volume 2)
CM-3: School Education by Charlotte Mason (Volume 3)
CM-4: Ourselves by Charlotte Mason (Volume 4)
CM-5: Formation of Character by Charlotte Mason (Volume 5)
CM-6: A Philosophy of Education by Charlotte Mason (Volume 6)
Consider This by Karen Glass
Cursive Made Easy with CursiveLogic
CursiveLogic Poems, Rhymes, and Songs
CursiveLogic Presidents and Citizens
E1: Introduction to Literature English 1
E2: Literature and Composition English 2
E3: American Literature English 3
E4: British Literature English 4
E5: World Literature English 5
Elegant Essay Student Book
Elementary Geography by Charlotte Mason
English Fairy Tales by Joseph Jacobs
Evaluate Writing the Easy Way
Excellence in Literature Complete Curriculum (5 years)
Excellence in Literature Handbook for Writers
Fifty Famous Stories Retold
For the Children's Sake
French-Ruled Composition Book
Get a Jump Start on College A Practical Guide for Teens
Grammar Made Easy
High School Student Record A Peaceful Planning Booklet
Home Geography for Primary Grades
How to Change a Tire Life Skills Journal
In Vital Harmony by Karen Glass
K-8 Student Record A Peaceful Planning Booklet
King of the Golden River
Know and Tell by Karen Glass
Madam How and Lady Why by Charles Kingsley
Marco Polo His Travels and Adventures
McGuffey Fifth Reader
McGuffey First Reader
McGuffey Fourth Reader
McGuffey Second Reader
McGuffey Sixth Reader
McGuffey Third Reader
Men of Iron by Howard Pyle
Number Stories from Long Ago
Otto of the Silver Hand by Howard Pyle
Parables from Nature by Margaret Gatty
Perfect Reading, Beautiful Handwriting
Personal Reading Log: 100 Books You Won't Forget
Pied Piper of Hamelin by Robert Browning
Practical Math Application Guide
Practical Math Dictionary
Red Fairy Book by Andrew Lang
Richard Halliburton's Marvels of the Occident
Richard Halliburton's Marvels of the Orient
Secrets of the Woods by William Long
Sing Song A Nursery Rhyme Book
Songs of Childhood
SU: Liquids and Gases Secrets of the Universe - Paul Fleisher
SU: Matter and Energy Secrets of the Universe - Paul Fleisher
SU: Objects in Motion Secrets of the Universe - Paul Fleisher
SU: Relativity and Quantum Mechanics Secrets of the Universe
SU: Waves Secrets of the Universe - Paul Fleisher
The Art of Cursive
The Bears of Blue River by Charles Major
The Great Astronomers by Robert Ball
The Little Duke by Charlotte Yonge
The Little Grammar People
The Living Page by Laurie Bestvater
The Princess and the Goblin by George MacDonald
The Story Book of Science by Fabre
The Wonderland of Nature
TimeFrame: The Twaddle-Free Timeline
Transcripts Made Easy
Understood Betsy by Dorothy Canfield Fisher
Unknown to History by Charlotte Yonge
Viking Tales by Jennie Hall
When Children Love to Learn
Working It Out Poetry Study with George Herbert

“When you wish to instruct, be brief; that [children's] minds take in quickly what you say, learn its lesson, and retain it faithfully.
Every word that is unnecessary only pours over the side of a brimming mind.”
Marcus Tullius Cicero
“It does not do to leave a live dragon out of your calculations, if you live near him.”
J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*

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**TIME MAP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task focus</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laundry /</td>
<td>Laundry /</td>
<td>Baking</td>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>Errands /</td>
<td>Home projects</td>
<td>Sabbath</td>
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<tr>
<td>bathrooms</td>
<td>bathrooms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>kitchen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early morning</td>
<td>Morning prayer and devotional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-morning</td>
<td>Literature and writing,</td>
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<td>language arts, and Latin or</td>
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<td>other foreign language.</td>
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<td>Late morning</td>
<td>Math, logic, and</td>
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<td>entrepreneurship.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midday</td>
<td>Lunch prep, eating, nap or</td>
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<td>quiet time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early afternoon</td>
<td>History, Science, Art, music,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>creative pursuits, outdoor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>activities, free play</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-afternoon</td>
<td>Church, family time, planning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>for the week, leisure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late afternoon</td>
<td>Quick pickup throughout the</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>house; preparation for family</td>
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<td></td>
<td>dinner, eating, clean up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evening</td>
<td>Family reading with creative</td>
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<td></td>
<td>projects, personal reading,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>free time</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

“No matter what the work you are doing, be always ready to drop it. And plan it, so as to be able to leave it.”
Lee Tolstoy, *The Journal of Leo Tolstoy*

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**Ways to Take Time for Things that Matter**

- Have a vision for your family and plan with the end in mind.
- Teach head, heart, and hand with great books and daily creative, hands-on activities.
- Read and learn about teaching and parenting skills.
  - *The labour of the mother who sets herself to understand her work is not increased, but infinitely lightened.* CM, v2, p. 91
- Create a structure of habits and routines.
  - *Wise parents: are careful to form habits upon which the routine of life runs easily.* CM, v3
- Teach with classics and models (it’s delightful).
- Build relationships with clear, loving communication.
  - *Be kind to one another . . .* Ephesians 4:32
- Cultivate patience in all the seasons of learning.
- Go outside every day!

---

**Have you seen the TimeFrame Timeline?**

- Easy to use, no cutting and pasting
- Quick! Less than a minute to record a lifeline
- Active learning increases retention
- Century-at-a-glance reveals trends and patterns
- Visual record helps you study for exams
- Great for college study, too
- Complete how-to instructions included

**Working It Out**

Spend a year with the beautiful poetry of George Herbert, and you’ll not only learn to understand great poetry, but you will also deepen your devotional reading.

- One poem /lesson per week for a year (51 in all)

---

**The Living Page:**

**Keeping Notebooks with Charlotte Mason**

How to keep notebooks like Charlotte Mason, including:

- commonplace books
- nature notebooks
- parent yearbook
- book of centuries
- calendar of firsts
- “enquire within” household book
- and many more!

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We offer printable posters in our SoulCraft Printables shop on Etsy. You’ll find the Doing What Matters Printable Planner and Peaceful Planning and record booklets at EverydayEducation.com.
Thirteenth-Century Rules for Study

Robert of Sorbonne, the founder of the famous Sorbonne College in Paris, gave some excellent rules for study to his students. He wrote:

The student who wishes to make progress ought to observe [these] rules.

1. **Be consistent:** He ought to consecrate a certain hour every day to the study of a determined subject, as St. Bernard counselled his monks in his letter to the Brothers of the Mont Dieu.

2. **Focus:** He ought to concentrate his attention upon what he reads and ought not to let it pass lightly. There is between reading and study, as St. Bernard says, the same difference as between a host and a guest, between a passing salutation exchanged in the street and an embrace prompted by an unalterable affection.

3. **Consider:** He ought to extract from the daily study one thought, some truth or other, and engrave it deeply upon his memory with special care. Seneca said “Cum multa percurriseris in die, unum tibi elige quod illa die excoquas”—When you have run over many things in a day select one for yourself which you should digest well on that day.

4. **Summarize:** Write a résumé of it, for words which are not confided to writing fly as does the dust before the wind.

5. **Discuss:** Talk the matter over with your fellow-students, either in the regular recitation or in your familiar conversation. This exercise is even more profitable than study for it has as its result the clarifying of all doubts and the removing of all the obscurity that study may have left. Nothing is perfectly known unless it has been tried by the tooth of disputation.

6. **Seek wisdom and understanding:** Pray, for this is indeed one of the best ways of learning. St. Bernard teaches that study ought to touch the heart and that one should profit by it always by elevating the heart to God, without, however, interrupting the study.”

7. **Go outside and think:** Meditation is suitable not only for the master, but the good student ought also to go and take his promenade along the banks of the Seine, not to play there, but in order to repeat his lesson and meditate upon it.

Although this advice is couched in old-fashioned terms (he was writing in the thirteenth century, after all), it is still good advice today. In fact, it is very similar to the study methods that were taught at my graduate school study skills class, and virtually identical to the way I have always studied scripture and other important books. No matter what subject you choose to learn, these rules for study will help you and your students learn deeply and remember long.

Robert de Sorbon (or Sorbon) (1201 – 1274) was a French theologian who founded the Sorbonne college (now the University of Paris). In addition to his educational duties, he was also the chaplain to Louis IX of France.

Rubric for High School Essays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideas and Concepts</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The essay contains a strong, easily identified thesis.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Relevant anecdotes, appropriate quotes, and specific details support the writer’s position and demonstrate understanding of the prompt.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- The structure of the paper enhances the presentation of the thesis and supporting ideas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Clear transitions move the reader easily from idea to idea.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Word Choice</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Chosen words clearly convey the intended message.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sentence Fluency</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Sentences flow easily, with graceful transitions.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Voice</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- The writer speaks directly to the reader, using an appropriate tone and level of formality.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Mechanics**

- Standard writing conventions (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, usage, paragraphing) are observed.
- Mechanical or typographical errors are few; only minor touch-ups needed.

**Presentation**

- Essay is in college format: Times-New Roman (or equivalent) font, 12 pt., 1” margins.
- Paper header with student, class, instructor, and date included.
- Essay prompt included after header and before title.
- Single space following all terminal punctuation.

**Evaluation Scale**

- Indicates that your essay was exemplary in this area and exceeded assignment expectations.
= Indicates that your essay met assignment expectations in this area.
_ Indicates that you should write down this skill as a goal area for improvement when you write your next paper.
* May also be evaluated on a scale of 1-5.

Rubric and evaluation scale excerpted from Evaluate Writing the Easy Way by Janice Campbell.

**Why Learn?**

A well-informed mind is the best security against the contagion of folly and vice.

The vacant mind is ever on the watch for relief, and ready to plunge into error, to escape from the languor of idleness.

Store it with ideas, teach it the pleasure of thinking, and the temptations of the world without will be counteracted by the gratifications derived from the world within.

—Ann Radcliffe

Janice Campbell and her husband, Donald, homeschooled their four sons using a lifestyle of learning approach influenced by Charlotte Mason and classical education. She writes and speaks nationwide, and is the author of the Excellence in Literature curriculum, Transcripts Made Easy, and other resources.
Four-Year High School Plan

Freshman year
• 6 courses, 1 unit of each required subject
• Read for pleasure as much as possible
• Study Latin or learn Greek and Latin roots for vocabulary
• Establish solid study habits
• Practice note taking skills
• Begin developing test-taking skills (PSAT skill book can be useful)
• Think about personal aptitudes; read up on career options
• Start keeping a transcript (complete instructions in TranscriptsMadeEasy.com).

Sophomore year
• Same class balance as freshman year
• Continue or develop extracurricular activities that fit interests
• Schedule PSAT for the fall of junior year
• Begin researching college, trade school, or apprenticeship options and request info
• Use test-prep books to get ready for the SAT, CLT, or ACT
• Take CLEPs whenever ready
• May begin classes at a community college
• Update the transcript with semester and cumulative grades (FreeGPACalc.com)

Junior year
• Six classes
• Take the PSAT in the fall (optional, but there are benefits)
• Focus on time-management & study skills
• Narrow down college and career options
• Spring: Take SAT/ACT/CLT and visit colleges
• May/June: Apply to two or more colleges
• Update the transcript with semester and cumulative grades

Senior year
• Six classes
• Scholarship search/essays/applications
• Take SAT Subject Exams, AP, CLEP exams
• Retake SAT, CLT, or ACT if desired
• Continue good study habits and extracurricular activities
• Finalize the transcript with semester and cumulative grades
• Provide support and necessary information as your student makes a final decision about college, vocational school, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship, a gap year, military, or other options.

Transcripts Made Easy
Now in its 4th edition!
This classic guide to homeschool paper-work has been revised and updated, and now it's even better.
You'll learn all you need to know about records, grades, credits, GPA, and more. If you'd rather spend time with people than with paperwork, this book is for you.
TranscriptsMadeEasy.com
$24.95

Free Context Resources for Literature Study
The award winning Excellence-in-Literature.com website has articles, art, music, and poetry to round out your study of the great books. If you are using the curriculum, start with the Curriculum User Content Index. You’ll find the latest links and resources, organized by module at:
• Excellence-in-Literature.com/curriculum-user-content/

Grammar Made Easy is Back!
Did you know that grammar can be simple? I fell in love with Connie Schenkelberg’s Grammar Made Easy: Writing a Step Above when my boys were younger.

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Three Questions to Ask Experienced Homeschool Moms
When you have a chance to talk with a graduated homeschool mom who enjoyed homeschooling and did it well, here are three questions you might ask:
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• What do you wish you had known while you were homeschooling?
• Is there a book, podcast, or other resource that helped you grow as a mom?

How to Use the Handbook for Writers to Grade Papers
It’s easy to offer specific, constructive feedback with the Excellence in Literature Handbook for Writers. Information and instructions are written in numbered paragraphs, which allow you to direct the student to exactly the information he or she needs to fix an error or improve a skill.

For example, if your student is having difficulty with subject/verb agreement, look in the table of contents of the Handbook. Subject/verb agreement appears in section 1.8 on page 242. On the student’s paper, note the section number so that the student can visit the handbook, read the paragraph, look at the examples, and see exactly how to correct the error. It is quick and simple, and much more helpful than just reminding the student to make the subject and verb agree.

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