It has been said “it takes a village to raise a child.” Stepping Stones for Home Educators is the ‘village’ to which all the members of the Home Education Association of Australia belong.

Welcome to our village! At the heart of our village are our homes. Rich in resources and skill these homes create a vibrant community in which our children are born, grow and thrive. Together our homes form a wonderful village, full of opportunities and support for everyone!
Spring is seen as a time of renewal, of growth, of new life (both plant and animal) being born. We generally think of the year as being divided into four seasons, with spring occupying the months of September, October and November in the southern hemisphere. Some people consider that spring actually begins on the vernal equinox on 22 September, when day and night are of equal length. Others argue that this should be the middle of spring, based on the angle of the sun and insolation (defined as the measure of solar radiation energy received on a given surface area in a given time). However, because the earth and oceans have thermal latency and take time to warm up, the effects we typically associate with spring, begin to occur at around the time of the equinox.

The first Australians have a much more complex and varied system of seasons that relates directly to location. An intimate knowledge of the environment was important to survival. Traditionally, indigenous Australians, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, associate seasons more closely with the weather cycles connected to the region in which they live. They use the reaction of plants and animals to meteorological patterns to mark the different seasons. The following link shows a chart comparing various Aboriginal seasons from around Australia with the European calendar; [http://www.bom.gov.au/iwk/climate_culture/Indig_seasons.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/iwk/climate_culture/Indig_seasons.shtml).

An understanding of seasons differs from place to place across Australia because geography plays an important role in the climate of any particular area.

Living in one region – in my case, the Adelaide Hills – offers an interesting insight into changing weather patterns over time, as well as demonstrating how local landforms create climatic effects. For me, arbitrary dates seem less important in determining the seasons that what is happening on the ground.

As a homeschooling parent, spring was a very busy time of year, with lots of art and craft activities, often happening outside in the shade of a tree bursting with new leaves. This is the busiest time of the year in the garden, with everyone on duty pulling weeds and planting seedlings. Lessons tended to reflect this seasonal influence and, from October onwards, we began thinking about and making gifts for Christmas, as well putting the final touches to costumes and rehearsing for end-of-year concerts. Spring imbued us all with a natural and wonderful burst of energy!

Beverley Paine, Editor
Spring

by Belinda Moore, homeschooling mother of six belindamoore.com

Acknowledging seasonal changes is one way for humans to experience the rhythm of life. As our children witness the unfolding of each season, they grow a little and appreciate the wonders of nature. To know each season through walks, observation, activities, and games helps our children to develop a more intense relationship with planet earth. In most of Australia, the seasons are not as marked as in other climes...

There may not be snow-capped rooftops or dazzling autumn leaves, but there are many less obvious signs that we are a part of the cycle of nature known as the seasons.

A seasonal table or shelf is one way to reflect the changes we witness through displaying items from nature, art & craft and dioramas. The table can also reflect festivals and other events that mark the cycle of our year. For ideas on creating a seasonal table you can look to books on Steiner or Waldorf education or search the Internet, where educational ideas abound.

Spring is the perfect season to take a nature walk... To witness the wonders of life emerging from the sleepiness of winter is magical for children and adults alike. Look for birds nesting, flowers in bloom, and rainbows. You could create a nature journal for sketches, photos, descriptions, pressed leaves, texture rubbings and other records of your walks.

Springtime is perfect for germinating seeds. Do you have a garden? Even a small plot will help your children to learn about the weather, insects and the life cycle of plants. Children love to grow peas, cherry tomatoes and other “snack foods” to munch on while they play outdoors. Saving seeds from what you grow to be planted next spring will illustrate the cycle of the seasons and help to mark another year passed. If you don't have a garden, a few seeds of alfalfa or cress will sprout on a piece of wet cloth. Beans can be sprouted in glass jars, and if placed correctly one can witness the root structure growing as well as the soft green leaves emerging toward the sunlight. The miracle of germination and growth is fascinating to any of us who take the time to watch. Gardens assist us in experiencing this season at its fullest.

Songs, stories and poetry are pleasing ways for children to welcome a new season. There are many wonderful books of modern and traditional poetry for children. Or write your own! Poetry and songs written together are a lot of fun and you can include your personal observations. Stories to read together in spring include those about caterpillars, insects, frogs, eggs, baby animals and plants.

Our family usually gathers together all the books from our collection and the local library which we see as pertaining to the emerging season, and keep them near the seasonal table to be enjoyed over the coming weeks. Dolls, toys and puppets can enhance the storytelling experience. You can make your own from natural fibers and items collected on nature walks, or from pipe cleaners and felt.

In the animal kingdom, we can observe many wonders when spring arrives. A simple bird feeder will ensure hours of viewing for humans, and some very grateful birds. Nesting boxes, ponds, worm or ant farms and cocoons or hungry caterpillars in jars allow close study of other creatures. Your pets or backyard wildlife and the living things you encounter on your walks will invariably show different behaviours throughout the year.
Craft is one way in which children can express seasonal observations. There are many beautiful craft books in libraries and shops, and a plethora of ideas on the Internet.

Some spring crafts include:

- Pressed flowers and leaves
- Paper flowers from crepe paper, wrapping paper or tissues
- Leis of real or paper flowers to wear
- Shredded paper birds’ nests with papier-mâché eggs
- Butterfly paintings – fold paper in half, dollop paint on one side only, fold again and rub – open up and see!
- Wind socks from lightweight, brightly coloured fabrics
- Rain sticks using hollow bamboo or cardboard tubes
- Puppets of birds, butterflies, frogs and caterpillars for your storytelling

Even very young children enjoy craft time. If they are shown how, step-by-step and provided with pre-cut materials and assistance when required, they will delight in creating beautiful and useful items to celebrate the magic of the new season.

Whilst re-hanging the clothes that made it and bagging up the ones that didn’t, I’m struck by how applicable the rules of fashion are to homeschooling (stick with me here!).

It’s all about knowing the style that works for you and having the confidence to stick with it no matter what’s mincing down the catwalk towards you. And to discard what doesn’t work – it’s easy to accumulate resources, especially in the first few years of homeschooling when, of necessity, you’re trying to work out your own style and those of your children. Having often spent a considerable amount of money on those resources it’s tempting to hang on to everything ‘just in case’ or worse, to feel that you must use it whether it works for you or not.

In the end, clutter is clutter, and by the time I’d nutted out our approach to learning (a few years down the track) I realised much of what was on our shelves could go, using the love it/use it system.

MathsPlus workbooks? Well, nobody around here loved them but they got the job done as painlessly as possible, so into the ‘stay’ pile they went. Story Of The World? Loved. Used. Stay. Once-A-Week Grammar? No and no. (It probably warns against double negatives in there but now we’ll never know…)

Guilt over waste can be dealt with by giving away or selling the ‘go’ pile, thereby blessing another homeschool family or your bank account, just as you please! This does raise the issue, however, of depriving curriculum authors and small homeschool suppliers of sales, which is where Fashion Law No 2 comes in.

That’s the one about avoiding waste (and for the homeschooler, tricky ethical issues) by buying a few classic, quality items to be the basis of your wardrobe year after year, rather than wasting money every season on tat that doesn’t fit properly and doesn’t wear well.

Well, as much as I can appreciate the sense of this suggestion, the Sussan budget, whilst a cut above tat, doesn’t quite run to investment wear. It’s do-able with books though.

Our school shelf is pretty much whittled down to the equivalent of a little black dress and a crisp white shirt or two. Wonderland of Nature by Nuri Mass, Story of the World by Susan Wise Bauer, D’Aulaire’s Greek Myths – just a few examples of classic resources – not faddish, well and knowledgably written and able to be used in multiple ways by multiple children.

Everyone’s taste in a LBD is different and the Charlotte Mason-influenced resources on my shelf might not be the ones you and your children want on yours (though Charlotte Mason’s emphasis on the use of living books does lend itself beautifully to the idea of a worthwhile simplicity), but the principle holds, whatever the method or the family interests.

Of course, dowdiness in dress or thought is to most certainly be abhorred! Which is why, in Fashion Law No 3, the investment dresser is also encouraged to update her look each season with a few key accessories. If you already have a collection of classic resources and don’t feel the need to shell out for the latest learning program/resource/system, with all its bells and whistles, you’re free to add resources as the need or desire arises.

An interest in learning German this spring? Madam, perhaps, wishes to try out drama class or raise a guinea pig? Colour and interest are easily added and even more easily justified – after all, it’s just a bangle or two!

As to why, if I’m so good at this simplicity business, I’m procrastinating about the bookcases, let’s just say that whilst the school shelf is tidy, if works of fiction were shoes, you’d have to acknowledge there’s more than one Imelda in this house…
For anyone interested in a Charlotte Mason-influenced education, freely interpreted, these are some of the resources on my shelf that have well and truly earned their keep.

- **Story of the World Volumes 1-4** by Susan Wise Bauer
- **Wonderland of Nature** by Nuri Mass
- **Five In A Row and Beyond Five In A Row** by Jane Claire Lambert
- **Shakespeare Stories** by Leon Garfield
- **The Ordinary Parent's Guide to Teaching Reading** by Jessie Wise and Sara Buffington
- **Usborne Art and Science books**
- **Our Sunburnt Country** by Arthur Baillie
- **Mike Venezia's Artist books**
- **Roger Lancelyn Green's books of mythology**
- **Pocketful of Pinecones** by Karen Andreola
- **Real Learning in the Heart of the Home** by Elizabeth Foss

And too many biographies, anthologies, novels, audio books and CD's to mention!


DownUnder Literature [www.downunderlit.com](http://www.downunderlit.com)
or your local independent bookseller or second hand bookshop for ‘investment' titles.

Melissa homeschools Emily (12), Lizzie (10) and Noah (5) in Sydney.

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**How I Got Rid of the Mess in My Life**

by Beverley Paine

I wasn’t always organized or tidy. I was one of those people who used to shove everything into the spare room and squeeze the door shut whenever we had visitors. The children’s bedrooms looked much the same with piles of toys, clothes and boxes in dreadful disarray. The children slept on mattresses on the floor in our room for almost a year; such was the extent of the mess!

What happened? We cheated! The five of us moved into a converted garage that measured 8m by 5m for four years while Robin built our lovely home. Space was at a premium, especially during winter. I quickly learned that it was impossible to live in a mess, let alone homeschool. Everything had to have a place and be returned to that place or we would be forever tripping over and breaking things, probably bones.

As homeschoolers we were always creating and making and playing. Toys, games, puzzles, books, stationery, resources and junk had homes which could be easily accessed by all three children and which also encouraged them to put the items away after use.

Because floor space was precious we lined our tiny home with shelves and used an assortment of plastic and cardboard trays. Colourful cubes and covered magazine boxes completed our shelving storage system.

None of this would have worked without some basic rules. The children weren’t allowed to play with another set of toys until they’d put away the first lot. The floor and table had to be clear at the end of the day. I labeled shelves and boxes with words and pictures to make it easier for the children to pack things away. The rules were fair and made sense: this made it easy to be firm. In no time the children had developed relatively tidy habits.

Clear surfaces and swept floors make for a calm atmosphere at home. I found this essential at the end of the day before preparing the evening meal. It created a boundary between the busy day and a restful evening and set us in the right mood to wind down for bed.

Lists were essential to organising my time and making sure that my daily and long term goals were achieved. I would have several lists going at once, often in different locations. Crossing something off the list was very satisfying! I’d transfer uncompleted items to a new list, making sure that my lists never really grew too long. I’d rather have five short lists than one huge one!

Cutting back on commitments is something all homeschooling families gradually learn is essential: in our early days we tended to go out too much, cramming into every week many educational and social opportunities because we thought it was necessary. Instead, it just wore us out.

We gradually learned to pace ourselves. As I learned to cut back on my expectations of what the children could learn and do in a week, I also stopped hoarding materials and resources. The house became less ‘busy’ and cluttered. It seemed to take forever to learn to relax and not feel compelled to turn every moment into an opportunity for learning!

A seasoned home educating mum once said to me that the most important tip she could offer was simply, “Relax.” We really don’t need to make homeschooling as hard as we do!
Heard on the Grapevine

“I think for me it was hearing another mother talk about documenting her morning with her kids. What the children spent the morning learning:

a) the viscosity of various liquids;
b) different volumes and masses;
c) aerodynamics;
d) colour refraction;
e) what the weather is doing;
f) nature exploration.

I must admit I was amazed her kids could cover so much in one morning. She smiled at me, leaned over and whispered in my ear, ‘That’s what I told the education department official – in reality we spent the morning blowing bubbles in the back yard.’”

- Penny

“Some of the most important ‘learning’ we have done during our few weeks of home schooling is our own version of the 3 R’s:

Reconnecting – with each other, the garden, the world, the dog, everyday life without the stress of school;

Rediscovering – enthusiasm, wonder, wanting to learn, explore, experiment;

Reading – I spent some of the first 2 days reading aloud to my son. On day 3, he pulled out some Dr Seuss books and began reading aloud to us, completely spontaneously…”

- Beck

“My daughter once managed to justify that baking a cake filled in all of her subjects for one day; Maths for measurement; reading the recipe for English; Society and the Environment because it was from another country; LOTE because the name of the cake was in a foreign language; Science because the combination of ingredients caused a chemical reaction; PE because she could identify it as a ‘sometimes food’ and show which parts of the food pyramid it fit into… and on it went!”

- Amanda

Hey!
I’m a 10 year old home’ed kid from Tasmania and I’m a BIG fan of the book series WARRIORS by Erin Hunter!

I’d like to meet more warriors fans, especially here near Deloraine. If you are a warriors fan, can u email me at kiahwinsburg@yahoo.com.au.

Thanks,
Kiah Swinsburg!

A Science Story

The following is a question on a physics exam at the University of Copenhagen:

“Describe how to determine the height of a skyscraper with a barometer.”

One student replied: “You tie a long piece of string to the neck of the barometer, then lower the barometer from the roof of the skyscraper to the ground. The length of the string plus the length of the barometer will equal the height of the building.”

This highly original answer so incensed the examiner that he failed the student who immediately appealed on the grounds that his answer was indisputably correct. The university appointed an independent arbiter to decide the case.

The arbiter judged that the answer was indeed correct, but did not display any noticeable knowledge of physics. It was decided to call the student in and allow him six minutes in which to provide a verbal answer, which showed at least a minimal familiarity with the basic principles of physics.

For five minutes the student sat in silence, forehead creased in thought. The arbiter reminded him that time was running out, to which the student replied that he had several extremely relevant answers, but couldn’t make up his mind which to use. On being advised to hurry up the student replied:

“A Science Story”

is continued on page 11
Impossible Pie

This is an old favourite and very easy to make. I’ve heard two different interpretations for the name:

a) that it’s so called because it’s impossible to get it wrong and
b) it’s called ‘impossible’ pie because you mix everything together, but as it cooks, it magically separates into 3 layers - a crunchy topping, a custardy filling and a chewy pastry-like base.

1/2 cup plain flour
1/2 cup castor sugar
1 cup coconut
4 eggs, lightly beaten
2 teaspoons vanilla essence
125g butter, melted
2 cups milk

Grease a pie dish.
Mix dry ingredients together in a bowl.
Stir in wet ingredients.
Pour into prepared dish.
Bake in a moderate oven for about 45 mins or until lightly browned and set.
Serve warm or cold with fruit or cream if desired.

Shloobabahs

By Veronica Brandt

A gluten free, dairy free, low salicylate, amines, muesli bar recipe.

2 cups rolled rice
1 cup buckwheat kernels
1/2 cup dried chick peas
1/2 cup yellow split peas
1 cup water
100ml oil (I used Rice Bran oil today, but usually sunflower)
1/2 cup corn-flour
1/2 cup tapioca flour
1/2 cup rice flour
1/4 cup rice bran
1/2 cup sugar
extra water (about 1 cup)

Into the blender go the chick peas and split peas and water. Blend until you’re happy with the consistency or until the motor starts to smell funny.

Mix everything together.
Pour into trays lined with something.

Bake for about an hour at 180 degrees - interrupting briefly to score the bars to make it easier to break them up.

Comments on this recipe: I didn’t add egg or baking powder but either would probably help. If in doubt, add more sugar. I think a pinch of salt might help too. Carob powder is great, especially lumpy.

Cup-a-cake Recipe

1 egg
1 tablespoon oil
2 tbsp sugar
1 tbsp carob powder
1/4 cup brown rice flour
1/4 tapioca flour
50ml rice milk

Beat egg, sugar and oil together.
Mix in carob and flours and milk.
Pour into cup cake mould or mug.

Microwave on high for just under 2 minutes.
Allow to cool and eat.
Little Ambassador

By David Blissett

You would have no doubt heard about the recent birth of an elephant calf at Sydney’s Taronga Zoo. The birth was very special, as it was the first elephant to be born in any Australian zoo. Now, this very cute little elephant, named Luk Chai, is taking on a new role as an important ambassador for his kind.

Luk Chai and his zoo relatives are the only elephants many Australians will ever get to see. The sad fact is; the number of Asian Elephants, like Luk Chai, that live in the wild is dropping quickly. They are losing their forest and savannah homes to land clearing and farms. They are being killed for their ivory or as a result of conflict and war. There are now as few as 40,000 Asian Elephants alive today. Unless the situation changes, they will be extinct in the wild within twenty years.

So Luk Chai and his family have a very important job to do. They are ambassadors for elephants everywhere. Zoo visitors learn more about elephants and the threats to their survival when they come along to visit the family. Money raised by zoos is also donated to projects that help protect elephants in the wild.

There is more exciting news to come. Two more elephants at Taronga Zoo are pregnant as are two at Melbourne Zoo. Both zoos are hoping to have more little ambassadors in the months ahead. If you can’t get to one of the zoos and want to learn more about the elephants, you can watch videos, look at pictures and read more information at http://babyelephant.taronga.org.au/ or www.zoo.org.au/MelbourneZoo

20 Benefits of Having a Pet

by Chantelle Meyers

1. Pets have been proven to reduce stress.
2. They help you learn responsibility.
3. They are loyal companions.
4. They are always waiting for you when you get home.
5. They are humorous.
6. Some are great alarm clocks.
7. They are great company.
8. Pets can even save lives.
10. They make you exercise.
11. Some actually talk back to you.
12. They always need you.
13. Their poop can help make things grow.
14. They can help you learn how to be patient.
15. You will learn about birth, life and death.
16. Caring for pets help to establish routines and discipline.
17. Pets can make you happy.
18. Pet lovers tend to be friendly people.
19. It’s hard to feel lonely hugging a pet.
20. Talking about pets is a great way to start a conversation.
**Book Reviews**

**Kitchen Garden Cooking with Kids by Stephanie Alexander**

The story of a kitchen garden for kids and the recipes they cooked with the food they grew.

A feast for the eye as we would expect from Stephanie Alexander, this is the account of her project to start a kitchen garden with the children of an inner-city Melbourne primary school. They then went on to learn how to cook their produce.

The book abounds with practical tips and ideas that will motivate your family to garden and cook. The recipe section offers delicious options such as pumpkin gnocchi and sage, polenta and rosemary bread with fresh sweet corn, and banana and pear smoothies. Alexander offers facts about ingredients, explains cooking techniques and asks questions to get children thinking.

Even though most of us won’t start a school garden, we can all learn from this fascinating account of the experience. The project has grown since that first exercise (see details on www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au).

There is so much to this substantial book that a short review leaves too little room to sing its praises. Have a look in your library and if you can’t bear to part with their copy, order your very own from Leatherwood Books: www.leatherwoodbooks.com.au

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**Animal Architects by John Nicholson**

John Nicholson is the author-illustrator of *The Mighty Murray* and other award-winning books and we have come to expect the very best from him.

In Animal Architects he does not disappoint as he celebrates the architects and engineers of the natural world.

We learn about creatures that bore wood, weave grass, sculpt in clay and tunnel deep into the earth.

We see creatures working on maintaining comfortable temperatures, stocking pantries and arranging secret hidey holes for their offspring.

Follow the wombat in his underground maze and see how the titmouse builds a padded nest with a drawbridge.

Nicholson’s delicate drawings show the finest details and help us realise there is something magical about being taken into these most secret of secret hide-outs.

Available from Leatherwood Books on www.leatherwoodbooks.com.au

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**The Barefoot Book of Earth Tales by Dawn Casey & Anne Wilson**

A beautiful, gift-quality book from the acclaimed Barefoot Books, one of those publishers producing books seen as most likely to become collectible.

This large format hardcover with dustcover is packed with lovely illustrations. *The Barefoot Book of Earth Tales* includes a series of culturally diverse stories from around the world telling tales of communities living in harmony with the natural world.

The seven stories start with one from Australia and cover different continents and cultures. Each earth tale is followed by a hands-on activity promoting environmentally friendly living and reinforcing the green messages of the stories.

A wonderful resource for homeschool studies, *The Barefoot Book of Earth Tales* combines society, environment and English studies for a large age range (from pre-school through to upper-primary). Great family read-aloud! Available from Leatherwood Books on www.leatherwoodbooks.com.au
gravitational formula, which I have determined here" - this time on a long sheet of paper with a very long and complicated calculation!

"Or, Sir, here's another way, and not a bad one at all. If the skyscraper has an outside emergency staircase, it would be easier to walk up it and mark off the height of the skyscraper in barometer lengths, then add them up."

"But if you merely wanted to be very boring and very orthodox about the answer you seem to seek, of course, you could use the barometer to measure the air pressure on the roof, and on the ground, and then convert the difference in millibars into feet to give the height of the building."

"But since we are constantly being exhorted to exercise independence of mind and apply scientific methods, undoubtedly the best way would be to knock on the janitor's door and say to him 'If you would like a nice new barometer, I will give you this one if you tell me the height of this skyscraper'."

The student was Niels Bohr, the only Dane ever to win the Nobel Prize in physics.

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Science on the Internet

One of the best resources I've found on the internet lately is an excellent website called Good Science Books for Children http://tinycc/g4JBT

This site lists hundreds of books in different age group categories - a must for any visit to the local library or your favourite bookstore! Some of the books listed are no longer in print, but you might be able to find a pre-loved copy on the Aussie Homeschool classifieds forum http://aussiehomeschool.com.

The site separates the books into topics, such as animals, famous scientists, physics, plants, etc and includes a brief review of each book, author, publisher, how many pages and date of publication. Compiled by Lynne Babbage and Eleanor Stodart, the books listed are screened for accuracy and must have 'that extra spark of inspiration that will challenge and extend the reader'. Babbage and Stodart look for interesting books that don't simply offer information, but that engage reader and encourage them to think and feel like scientists. 'Good science books,' says the website, 'do more than inform about facts. They also show how beautiful, intricate and interlinked physical existence is; and they are written in a way that helps children develop language skills.'

There is also some great advice on how to assess science books, such as the quality of language, aesthetic appeal, suitability of the illustrations, integration of text and illustrations and how well the story is told or presented. Use the list, together with your local library, to supplement unit studies or to help build a science learning program for your children each term or year.

Try Science, http://tryscience.org, is another top internet science resource for families. Sponsored by the New York Hall of Science, it includes online games, live cams, experiments, and more. Although it is geared more to an American audience, there is a lot it has to offer the Australian homeschooling family in all the different areas of science.

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A Science Story

continued from page 7

"First, you could take the barometer up to the roof of the skyscraper, drop it over the edge, and measure the time it takes to reach the ground. The height of the building can then be worked out from this formula I have worked out for you on my text paper here."

Then the student added, "But, Sir, I wouldn't recommend it. Bad luck on the barometer."

"Another alternative", offered the student, "is this - if the sun is shining you could measure the height of the barometer, then set it on end and measure the length of its shadow. Then you measure the length of the skyscraper's shadow, and thereafter it is a simple matter of proportional geometry to work out the height of the skyscraper. On the paper is the formula for that as well."

"But, Sir, if you wanted to be highly scientific about it, you could tie a short piece of string to the barometer and swing it like a pendulum, first at ground level and then on the roof of the skyscraper. The height is worked out by the difference in the gravitational formula, which I have determined here" - this time on a long sheet of paper with a very long and complicated calculation!

"Or, Sir, here's another way, and not a bad one at all. If the skyscraper has an outside emergency staircase, it would be easier to walk up it and mark off the height of the skyscraper in barometer lengths, then add them up."

"But if you merely wanted to be very boring and very orthodox about the answer you seem to seek, of course, you could use the barometer to measure the air pressure on the roof, and on the ground, and then convert the difference in millibars into feet to give the height of the building."

"But since we are constantly being exhorted to exercise independence of mind and apply scientific methods, undoubtedly the best way would be to knock on the janitor's door and say to him 'If you would like a nice new barometer, I will give you this one if you tell me the height of this skyscraper'."

The student was Niels Bohr, the only Dane ever to win the Nobel Prize in physics.
Book Reviews

English resources: Grammar

It is no easy task to assist others while they are learning the intricacies of a language as complicated as English. Good resources help a lot and therefore Leatherwood Books tracked down some to share with you. This time we’re looking at grammar resources and next time we’ll focus on books about writing.

First Language Lessons for the Well-Trained Mind

Levels 1 & 2
First Language Lessons for the Well-Trained Mind Level 1 & 2 is a complete grammar and writing text for 6 to 8 year olds, written by Jessie Wise, who is the co-author of The Well-Trained Mind: A Guide to Classical Education at Home.

This work uses the classical education techniques of copy work, narration, dictation, memory work and picture study to develop an understanding of grammar, and the technical aspects of writing. It is extremely thorough and easy to use, with scripted lessons (that is, you, the parent, are instructed on what to say throughout the entire lesson). Very good for building confidence in parents!

This is not a creative writing or spelling text, but an extremely rigorous and academic grammar and writing primer. That sounds scary, but in practice, it isn’t. Everything that you need to do or say in a lesson is right there, and there are also enrichment activities suggested, with opportunity to draw, cut and paste, or do hands-on activities that complement the lesson. As well as grammar basics (parts of speech, ie: nouns, verbs, prepositions etc), it includes the technical basics of writing, such as use of capitals, how to write telephone numbers, addresses, dates, punctuation etc.

In the second part the techniques for writing compositions are introduced. There is a lot of memorisation of short poems. If you choose to use this text, you can be assured that nothing will be left out of the grammar and technical writing part of your young child’s education (and you will finally find out what prepositions and conjunctions are!).

Although the next two books in the series (Levels 3 and 4) have workbooks, this one does not as a lot of the work is oral. It is suitable for students aged 6 to 8 or others requiring this level of work.

Levels 3 & 4
First Language Lessons for the Well-Trained Mind. Level 3 and First Language Lessons for the Well-Trained Mind Levels 4 (by Jessie Wise and Sara Buffington) are the sequels to First Language Lessons Levels 1 & 2. This extremely thorough course of grammar and language use includes letter-writing, poetry and dictionary skills.

Again the authors have produced a wonderfully parent-friendly text for homeschooling parents. Level 3 covers a huge amount of ground using a four-strand approach:

Strand 1: Memory Work - Memorising poetry, rules & definitions.
Strand 2: Copy work and Dictation
Strand 3: Narration
Strand 4: Grammar

All four strands are woven through each lesson, so the student is covering a number of bases each lesson. There are 89 lessons in the book, with an additional 7 which cover Writing Letters, another 7 looking at Dictionary Skills, and a final 7 on Oral Usage, looking at common errors in everyday speech. A sample schedule shows how these lessons can be covered in one year, but nothing prevents you from taking longer. The book is designed for use at mid-primary level, but can be used to great effect by much older students.

Level 4 also uses the classical techniques of memorisation, dictation, and narration to develop your child’s language ability in the important, foundational years of language study. Again the authors have produced a wonderfully parent-friendly text for homeschooling parents.

The text covers a full range of grammar topics, including parts of speech, punctuation, sentence diagrams, and skills in beginning writing and storytelling. Optional end units provide practice in dictionary use and letter writing. Designed to follow Levels 1–3, Level 4 can also be used as a first grammar text for older students.

Although the book is designed for upper primary level, it will be perfectly suitable for use at early secondary level to ensure that students have the necessary background required for upper secondary work. Student workbooks are available for Levels 3 and 4 which will make life easier for the parent, but it is perfectly possible to do the work without the workbooks.
The Usborne Guide to Better English

Even while unschooling it can be useful to have some good grammar resources for those occasions when a debate about correct English ensues. *The Usborne Guide to Better English* by R Gee and C Watson is a very useful tool and provides access to a website with links to plenty of extra online activities.

It is a compilation of 3 previously published Usborne books (Guide to Spelling, Guide to Punctuation and Guide to Grammar) covering all the basic information. This is a serious work, despite the cartoon characters (why do publishers think students need these to learn something?). Along with some writing, reading and comprehension, *The Usborne Guide to Better English* could also be used as a complete English course for students aged 9-12.

Collins Improve Your Grammar

If you are after something a bit more advanced, have a look at *Collins Improve Your Grammar* by the late Graham King, an Australian-born writer, poet, newspaper man and artist. King starts off with “The Thirteen Gremlins of Grammar”, a humorous list in which each point contains the mistake it warns against.

*Collins Improve Your Grammar* is aimed at adults and the writing style reflects that. The initial grammar test is useful to check where one stands and would be suitable for students of 13 and older. The chapters that follow touch on sentence structure, parts of speech, verbs, nouns, pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, determiners, conjunctions, prepositions and punctuation.

Each section ends with a two minute test to check progress. In the final chapter, “Elements of Style”, the writer gives tips on how to improve writing. Recommended for secondary students and parents.

Guinea Pig Books

Here is a handy list of titles available at the moment. These books can be ordered from *Leatherwood Books* at [www.leatherwoodbooks.com.au](http://www.leatherwoodbooks.com.au).

Please allow up to 3 weeks for delivery.

1) *Guinea Pig: Your Happy Healthy Pet*, by Audrey Pavia
   Hardcover, 128 pages, $22.95
   Comprehensive guide with good colour illustrations. Includes, under nutrition, suggestions for a guinea pig garden. Aimed at American readers.

2) *Slim Goodbody’s Inside Guide to Pets: Guinea Pigs*
   Hardcover, 32 pages, $32.95
   Detailed descriptions, with drawings and cutaways of the body of the guinea pig. Pet care tips, colour photos & glossary.

3) *The Essential Guinea Pig*, by Betsy Siino
   Paperback, 96 pages, $12.95
   Besides colour illustrations and tips on feeding, housing and caring for guinea pigs, also focuses on how to have a good relationship with them.

4) *I Completely Know About Guinea Pigs*, by Lauren Child
   Hardback, 32 pages (suitable for young children), $19.95
   Lola is really, really excited about looking after the school guinea pig. But when he goes missing, she soon discovers that she knows something about Bert that no one else has even thought of...

5) *Collins Family Pet Guide: Guinea Pig*, by Peter Gurney
   Paperback, 128 pages, $19.95
   A practical family guide, full of helpful information and expert advice, with information on origins and history. A good overall book. [Note: Distributors indicate low stock level of this title.]

6) *Get To Know Your Pet: Guinea Pigs*, by Jinny Johnson
   Hardcover, 32 pages, $35.99
   Helps a child to understand guinea pigs by explaining their behaviour and needs. Also tells you how to choose and care for a guinea pig.
Enjoying Art and Creativity with your Children

The first in a three-part series looking at teaching art to children.

by Bernie Meyers

"Their words aren’t heard, their voices aren’t recorded, But their silence fills the earth: unspoken truth is spoken everywhere."
Psalm 19

Art can be full of beauty and truth, or it can speak of evil and torment. Of all the artists throughout time, surely God is the greatest with his exquisite creation.

The most important part of teaching and making art is to enjoy the process and not be concerned with the product. It takes time to build the skills to draw or paint the way we want to. But your children will never get there if they are frustrated with each piece along the way, expecting perfection. The fact that they are practicing looking and seeing will improve their skills.

I believe that drawing is more to do with seeing than drawing. The more we learn to observe carefully, the better we are at drawing. Sometimes the seeing is from our hearts rather than with our eyes. Not all art is realism!!!

If you only have time for one thing in art, a sketchbook journal is the most useful and powerful tool.

I also can’t overstate how important it is to look at works by great artists.

What is art?

“I saw what the moorhen sees as it dives: the thousand rings that encircle each little life, the blue of the whispering sky swallowed by the lake, the enraptured moment of surfacing in another place. Know, my friends, what images are: the experience of surfacing in another.” Franz Marc

Art is not just painting! The main forms of visual art are: painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, digital art and installation. There are lots of other things all around us that are ‘art’. Think about food, graphic design, architecture, landscape design, floral arrangements, mosaics, fashion design, ceramics, textiles, fibre art, woodwork etc. What about nature; when was the last time you noticed how beautiful the clouds were?

Process not Product

Art needs to be an enjoyable process. The feel of moving pencils or brushes over paper is special. If children are stressed about what they are producing they are robbed of that joy. It is important to emphasise the enjoyment of making the piece and not have expectations of “correct” work.

Often we begin with a plan or an idea and it develops into something completely different, either because a new idea has grown or from a “mistake”. Either way, it is ok. Art isn’t like maths, with a correct answer. It has to come from deep within our hearts or it isn’t really art.

“I’m not sure what ‘coming out right’ means. It often means that what you do holds a kind of energy that you couldn’t just put there, that comes about through grace of some sort” - Jasper Johns

Anyone can learn to draw realistically if they are taught the right techniques and spend enough years Practising, but it doesn’t make their work “art”. Just like someone can press all of the right keys on the piano to play a piece of music, but if they don’t put their heart into it, it is just notes being played coldly, there is no real music. I would prefer to hear someone play with all their heart and press a few wrong notes, than someone who is technically correct but lacks life and soul.

Children begin making art so freely and it is our responsibility to TRY to keep them that way. It isn’t always easy because they soon see what adults’ pictures look like and want to do the
same. I constantly tell my daughter that her art is special and no less real than any adults. She won’t always have the freedom to draw and paint so naturally. I try to get her to enjoy the way she draws now.

If our goal for an art project is to explore a certain medium or to look at the work of a great artist, for example Van Gogh’s “Starry Night” and to paint the sky with expressive marks, then it doesn’t matter so much what the finished product looks like. On the other hand, if the goal for the project is to paint a picture just like Van Gogh’s or to copy it, we almost set ourselves and our children up to fail.

If an art session becomes stressful to a child or the parent, it is usually wise to change tack or leave it for another day. Or if a child really doesn’t like doing art, why make them? Sometimes they will find a need to express themselves visually and when they want to do it they will gain something from the experience.

“The average dairy farmer gets up at dawn because he has to go to work in the cow yard. I get up at dawn too. But it is because I want to find some leaf, hung with dew; or a spider web which the dew has made into the most delicate ropes of pearls...I take my camera with me, get down on my knees in the wet grass, and photograph these exquisite bits of nature. Because I do this I can show these lovely things to people who never would have seen them without my help. They will get their daily quart of milk, all right. Other farmers will attend to that. But I think I am giving them something which is just as important.”
Wilson Bentley (The Snowflake Man)

Wilson had a passion for studying snowflakes from the time he was a small boy; he was criticised by and scoffed at by the dairy farming community he lived in for his photographs of them. Now his images are considered works of art and sought after around the world.

So, relax and have some fun with your kids while they explore the wonderful world of art. Let them follow their interests and you never know where they will end up.

Next edition will have part two of this article on ‘Learning to See as an Artist’ as well as practical tips for making the most of sketchbooks.

“My Room,” by Isabella Sheppard, age 10
De-cluttering Kids’ Collections
by Beverley Paine

Enough is enough! Sometimes those collections get a little out of hand… It can be hard to know when to stop collecting. I often found myself collecting ‘spares’ for ‘swaps’ but then not getting around to sharing. ‘One of each’ sounds a reasonable goal if there are ten to a set but some collectables come in the hundreds…

Here are some tips for de-cluttering those collections! The aim with organising collections is to contain a child’s possessions – not his passions.

• Sit down and talk with your children about their collections on a regular basis. You’ll get a better idea of what is most important for your child. Encourage your child to realise that those less favourite collections can be passed on to friends, sold, swapped, stored or given away, creating more room for their latest ‘best’ collection.

• Get creative and display your child’s collections and use them to decorate their bedrooms or your family room: spotlight using picture frames or shadowboxes on the wall; install a high shelf around the room; set up a display table or shelf – change the display regularly, putting away one collection and showing off another.

• Become ‘museum curators’ and classify and label collections, storing them neatly in containers, trays and drawers. Get storage ideas from the museum next time you visit. As you categorise, label, date, name and thin the collection to only those items worth keeping. Try to think of different ways to categorise and catalogue collections – your child might have some surprising and interesting suggestions.

• Turn collections into works of art: a themed stamp collage; a fluffy toy sculpture; coin wind chimes; shell plastered pot for indoor garden, etc.

It’s easy to see the educational value in organising collections – so many skills are easily and naturally learned through this wonderful and sometimes obsessive past time!

Remember though, that children derive the most pleasure - and learning - from their collections when they are handling them. Some collections will consist of rare and delicate treasures – such as fossils, crystals, pressed flowers, etc. Others are robust and should be played with: marbles, cards and toys.

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Book Review

A Port Through Time by Dr Anne Millard, illustrated by Steve Noon

One of the joys of selling homeschooling books is encountering one that is not only exceptional in itself, but demands to be used as a homeschooling resource. Such a book is A Port Through Time, by Dorling Kindersley, written by Dr Anne Millard and illustrated by Steve Noon. Subtitled “A 10,000-year journey – from trading post to majestic seaport”, it graphically presents the story of a port through the ages, from its beginnings as a human settlement up to modern times.

The port is not named, but is somewhere within the reach of Mediterranean civilisation, since it goes through Roman occupation, a Crusader period and the Middle Ages. The various stages are presented as a series of twelve “snapshots”, beginning with the earliest human settlement and ending in the present day.

The drawings, by Steve Noon, are wonderfully detailed and evocative. They invite you to lose yourself in the wide range of activity taking place in each of the scenes, and to imagine what it would be like to be a part of it. By focusing on the microcosm of one vibrant place, and providing a picture of life, housing, transport and trade at stages in the development of our modern civilisation, it gives a vivid sense of the stages of development of humanity. There are additional pages on the world of trade, providing a précis of major ports around the world and shipping through the ages.

By presenting a series of scenes of the same place at different ages, this book does a great job not only of recreating history, but of suggesting the continuity and development that has taken place from the earliest times to the present. This sense of continuity was something sadly missing in the schooling of this reviewer. Any child with a sense of curiosity about history and origins should devour this book.
Lush with History
by David Blissett

Have you ever visited one of the world’s ancient wonders? Perhaps you’ve seen pictures of them in books, or watched programs on TV. Each year millions of people visit ancient historical sites like the Great Pyramid, the Rome Coliseum or the Incan city of Machu Picchu. And archaeologists are always making new discoveries about how our ancient ancestors lived. It is quite awe inspiring to stand and stare at a building or an art work that another human created hundreds, maybe even thousands of years ago. But did you know you can experience ancient culture without having to go overseas? Recently I visited such a place, in Central Queensland.

Carnarvon Gorge is about 720km north-west of Brisbane. Stretching for a length of over thirty kilometres, some people have described the gorge as Australia’s Grand Canyon. It is certainly an inspiring geological feature. Surrounded by semi-arid scrub, the gorge is home to a permanent supply of clear fresh water that filters down through towering sandstone cliffs. The presence of this water means the gorge is home to a vast array of wildlife and plant species you would normally associate with the rainforest.

Ferns, palms and mosses thrive in moist gullies only a few kilometres from salt bush and dusty scrub. Kangaroos, wallabies, platypus and millions of birds call the gorge home. It truly is an oasis in a parched landscape.

Europeans first discovered Carnarvon Gorge in the 1840’s. During the late 19th Century, it provided shelter to a number of fugitives, bushrangers and criminals, until finally the gorge was made a national park in 1932. However, Carnarvon’s human history goes way beyond the activities of white settlement.

Scientists believe Aboriginal people have been living in the gorge for thousands of years. In a few special locations, you can visit stunning examples of their art and culture. One such place is called the ‘Art Gallery’. A sixty-metre long wall of fine white sandstone, the gallery boasts thousands of individual paintings, stencils and engravings.

There are over 2,000 individual works in the gallery and they have stunned researchers with their scale and complexity. The artwork depicts human life, warfare, fertility and the natural world. There are more complex works that suggest a strongly developed culture and belief system.

Latest evidence dates some of the older etchings at over 3,000 years old. That’s more than 1,000 years before the birth of Christ, around the time David was King of Jerusalem. This is Australia’s own ancient history!

I found it especially humbling to stand so close to such ancient works of art. And it is hard not to feel a bond with the people who created them. Obviously they were as inspired by the lush beauty of Carnarvon Gorge as visitors are today. Even more, the gorge provided the first Australians with bounty in a land that was so dry and harsh.

Most importantly, the art reminds us of our shared humanity. As you stand and stare at the ancient painted stencil of a hand, exactly the same size and shape as your own, it is a stark reminder of how we are all unique and wonderfully made; all colours, races and creeds. Perhaps this should be the greatest lesson of history.

If you want to find out more about Carnarvon Gorge, its ancient history and natural wonders, go to: http://tiny.cc/eBBpd
Ebooks in the Homeschool: A Great Resource

by Michelle Morrow
http://www.downunderlit.com

The exciting developments in technology today mean that so many new resources can be available to us through the use of ebooks (electronic version of books that you can download and print). Don’t panic about ebooks. Now that I am used to them and have a good system I have found them invaluable.

Ebooks have so many advantages:

• In most cases you can have them instantly;
• You have access to many authors (many of our resources may never have seen the light-of-day without this great new medium);
• Many ebooks are free;
• No postage required;
• Easy to breakdown the book into sections to encourage children to read;
• Reusable – in many cases copyright allows reuse within the family; and
• Most ebooks have been made to suit A4 paper, perfect for home computer printing.

I’ve just found another great use in our homeschool for ebooks. We utilize them for our workboxes. You can put a portion of the book into the folder for them to read.

To Print Your Ebook

Printers: For most of my ebooks we print using a laser black and white printer. In Australia these cost less than $100 to buy and they are quick and very economical, worth buying if you print a lot of ebooks. Nearly all of my ebooks are printed on this printer. We also have a multifunction inkjet colour printer that I use to print the covers just to make the ebooks look a little prettier.

Paper choice: Regular 80gsm paper is fine for printing your ebooks.

Double-Sided Printing: This option is quite easy once you get the hang of it. Open your ebook and select ‘print’. Then under the pages box select ‘print even pages only’. Then press the ‘OK’ button. As the sheets are printing keep them in the order that they come out. Then put all the pages back into the printer tray (paper loading differs) so that the pages will print on the other side. This time select ‘odd pages only’. Then press the OK button. You should then have printed a double sided document. I made a few mistakes in the early days: you may need to do a practice on page 1 and 2.

Binding Options: If I have an ebook that I will want to keep and reread I print it at home and take it to a quick copy centre and have it bound. For resources that are more like worksheets I either staple, or use a hole-punch and paper fasteners (see illustration).

Copyright on ebooks

Copyright issues relating to ebooks is one reason many publishers choose not to use electronic publishing. Copyright on ebooks is like software: it is usually licensed for one computer.

Sharing of an ebook that you have bought is breaching copyright and considered stealing from the author, unless it is clearly indicated that it is okay to share. I was annoyed to see a couple of months ago that someone had put some of my ebooks on their blog and file share site and was sharing it with anyone who visited their blog.

Here is a good video about sharing homeschool materials: http://tiny.cc/06015
Copyright can be confusing. We often can think that if something is old or out of print so it is no longer in copyright. The law in Australia states that copyright lasts until 75 years after the author dies (it used to be 50 years). This means that for any authors who died after 1955 their work will not be available to copy for public domain until at least 2020.

For example, Downunder Literature had to pay and acknowledge the copyright owners in order to print My Country by Dorothea Mackellar in Our Sunburnt Country because she died in 1968 – this poem is not public domain until 2043. We are allowed to print it 2000 times – after that we would have to reapply.

There are times when it is okay to do some copying. For more information look at this fact sheet from the Australian Copyright Council: http://tiny.cc/i3nAo

For more information about ebooks, see the entry in Wikipedia (the ultimate ebook!) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E-book

Where to get ebooks
- E-Library includes most of the ebooks sold on the internet: http://e-library.net
- Free-ebooks.net has thousands of ebooks on just about any topic: http://www.free-ebooks.net/
- Ebook claims to be ‘the world’s premier eBook depository’: http://www.ebook.com/

How to Write Your Own Ebook
Electronic Storybook is a self-guided tutorial that outlines the steps and technologies for writing ebooks. http://tiny.cc/jg0x8

Great Sites
Expert Village
With almost 3,000 experts, Expert Village offers over 12,000 professional produced and researched videos hosted by reliable and well informed sources. The site offers expert advice from professionals in just about any area of interest! Expert Village’s free How To Videos have tips on school and teaching related issues. Expert Village’s videos are easy to follow and packed with information.

Update: Expert Village has merged with eHow. You can find the free How To Videos at: http://www.ehow.com/videos.html

Elearning Gurus
Elearning gurus is an interesting blog which mainly consists of lists of weblinks. The blogs are divided into categories: educational resources, tips and tools and uncategorized. Each link is accompanied by a brief description. It’s offers a cornucopia of learning tools for anyone interested in making the most of information technology in their education. http://tiny.cc/S1dwp

TED
TED is an annual conference which brings together many of the most brilliant minds in Science, Enterprise, Innovation, Technology and the Arts. The TED website is collection of "riveting talks by remarkable people, free to the world." Search through the archives for countless hours of fascination and learning about leading-edge developments in the world. http://www.ted.com/

Spring Craft Ideas on the Internet
Take your cue from nature or let your imagination soar as the days brighten and the earth warms! At this time of year life becomes busy and productive and the children seem full of energy, so why not enjoy the abundance of ideas for spring crafts from the following websites?

Free KidiCraft http://www.freekidscreations.com/spring.html has a wonderful list of ideas with instructions for children of all ages.

Easy Child Crafts provides parents with a selection of spring craft ideas – flower crafts, butterfly crafts, milk carton and plastic bottle crafts. http://tiny.cc/wLQPA

FamilyFun have dozens of crafty ideas to do both inside and outside using a plethora of natural and other materials – enough to keep you busy until summer starts to heat things up! Find them at http://tiny.cc/j1ylV

Creativity Portal encourages children to explore and express their creativity and include ideas for writing as well as art and craft ideas for spring: http://tiny.cc/zo649


Pictures right and middle: examples of ebooks which have been printed and bound.
Are You a Home Education Activist?

by Beverley Paine

This article was inspired by an article in Fruitful, a regular e-zine by UK homeschooling mum and lifestyle coach, Sally Lever: http://www.sallylever.co.uk/

As a teenager I wanted the world to change, to become a more child-friendly place. My frustration that generations of wise, educated people hadn’t fixed the world’s problems continued to nag at me and pointed me in the direction of education. Luckily I failed high school, missed my chance at becoming a teacher and became a home educating parent instead!

Teaching my children at home – changing the world one child at a time – was never enough to satisfy me. I needed to share what I was learning with others. My brief foray into alternative schools was disappointing but illuminating. It was hard and often unrewarding work being an activist pushing for change within the education system. I gave up on that and put all my energies into helping other families enjoy an old, tried and proven approach to education, one that within a supportive community works really well.

Activism conjures up images of people chained to trees, lying across roads in front of bulldozers, defying soldiers with guns in poverty stricken or totalitarian countries far away… Those people put their freedom and even their lives on the line to make a statement about what they believe in or to fight for change. We don’t do that, but we do push boundaries and engage in activities that challenge our perceptions about ordinary everyday life; who we are, what we want and how we can achieve our goals.

In her article Sally asks: “How can we follow our hearts and speak out for what we believe in without causing further suffering or hardship? How can we be effective and consistent in how we decide to act? How do we engage in non-violent methods of transformation?” Fortunately for home education the issues we face rarely require radical action, but many of us do face challenges that leave us stressed, disturbed, frightened and sometimes inclined to react rashly, often in ways that can impact negatively on our lives.

One of the side effects of becoming an activist is being more visible in the community – we put ourselves in the spotlight and this means we can become the target of criticism or adulation. Neither is welcome and both are stressful to manage. We can also, as I did, expose our family life to the world, which can be a positive experience, provided our families are happy to have their privacy destroyed for a ‘good cause’. It is difficult to be an effective activist when using a pseudonym and probably impossible in this internet-connected world.

For a long time I wasn’t clear about my abilities as an activist and tried to do too much. ‘Burn out’ is a common symptom; too many of my friends suffered breakdowns, ill-health and even marital problems due to not understanding their personal limitations or the limits set by their circumstances. The need for change is so great and the work required to bring it about so vast it is hard to know where to begin or where to stop…

This means that the first thing to do if you’re thinking of becoming a home education activist is to take inventory of your personal skills, ambitions, limitations, situation and circumstance. Work out what you are a good at, what comes easily, what can fit into your current lifestyle without too much personal or family sacrifice. This will translate into action that doesn’t drain you of energy.

Determine what kind of action suits your personality. Are you a communicator that loves writing, I am, hence I write for my website, edit and produce newsletters and magazines and books. Perhaps you love talking to people; you could find yourself happy giving seminars or training people. Or maybe you are a whiz at debating and love a good argument; working towards legislative change may be your niche. If
you are great at persuading people, finding ways to market your goals to a wider audience could be the way you work to change the world. Or you could be a ‘people person’, able to put people in touch with other people; every cause needs a campaign manager.

What life skills do you have that you can bring to support this cause? The home education movement needs book-keepers, lawyers, public speakers, salespeople, writers, child-minders, caterers, managers, teachers, sound technicians, secretaries, visionaries – you name it, there is a job that can be filled by a volunteer at some time now or in the future. Organisations like the Home Education Association have volunteer registers where people can put their names down for helping out should the need arise.

Activism doesn’t have to be loud campaigns seeking solutions to immediate problems; a softer form of activism exists in which ongoing education, mentoring, coaching and training, writing and journalism and facilitation of discussions work continuously to effect change. I take heart when I read that over 400 home educating events and activities were organised by HEA members in the past year – every one a sure and steady statement that home education works and is a viable alternative to school based education. Getting together and sharing our experiences is the simplest but probably most powerful form of activism.

If you’d like to help promote home education, ask yourself what moves you emotionally the most. Are you angry that the law, or how it is administered, discriminates and victimizes some families? Are you passionate about promoting an educational approach that respects children’s individuality? Follow your heart when picking your causes; your passions will motivate and energise you.

Analyse the situation carefully; what needs to change? Research all aspects. Tune into news about your cause. Have others found appropriate solutions that could be adapted to your situation? What can you learn from them that can help you in your cause? Anticipate and understand the obstacles that may stand in your way, be they legislative, bureaucratic, lack of education or training, lack of funding, etc.

Find allies, people who think the same way as you. It is more productive to seek like-minded people and form coalitions than it is to spend endless hours persuading people with opposing opinions to your point of view. Think laterally – you may find allies in surprising places. Don’t be an island; communicate with others regularly. Keep in touch by telephone, messaging, emails, newsletters, online social networks, blogs, etc. Seek out mentors and personal heroes, activists that inspire and encourage you by their stories.

You will need to work out how much time and energy and which of your personal skills and attributes you can dedicate to your role as a home education activist. We are all time-poor parents living busy lives and our first responsibility is to be there for our children and families. Be realistic. Set clear boundaries about what you can do and when you can do it. Learn to say ‘no’ as often as you say ‘yes’.

But most of all take care of yourself. To serve others and your cause you need to regularly express gratitude for being, work to stay healthy and enthused about life, serve and take care of others, be interested and involved in your community and what’s happening around you and in the world.

On a personal level, being a home education activist has added meaning and purpose to my life and given me a tremendous feeling of achievement. Feedback from people whose lives I have touched by my writing or workshops – families who were desperate with children falling behind at school, or homeschoolers who felt lost and ready to quit – encourages me to continue. I know that my efforts, no matter how small or insignificant they feel to me, count and make a difference.

www.iamanactivist.org

“I am not an activist in pursuit of recognition or fame.
I am not an activist so that strangers will think I am a good person.
I am not an activist because it is good for business (although more often than not it is).
I am an activist because being an activist makes me feel alive.
Activism is being a voice for the voiceless, standing up for the weak and the frail, engaging the human spirit. It’s putting your head above the parapet, being heard, being seen, being counted... Do something. Do anything. Just do something.”

Dame Anita Roddick
1942-2007

Some other, related, websites that you might also like to have a look at are:
UK: www.38degrees.org.uk
In the USA: www.moveon.org
In Australia: www.getup.org
For world citizens: www.avaaz.org
Guinea Pigs on Birth, Life and Death
by April Paine

Guinea Pigs...

...on birth, life and death:
Guinea pig mums have a short gestation period (just 8 weeks), so you don't have to wait long to enjoy playing with our babies. Better yet, after their mum has given them a quick clean and first feed, our babies are ready for cuddles. They are also easily sexed at this age, so are ready for their names too, without any second guessing!

Litters range from 1 to 5, but are generally only 2 or 3, which means less competition for food, easier for their mum and dad to care for, and less early heartbreaking deaths than some rodent species.

Sadly we don't enjoy as an extended life span as some other pets, while this means that we're only around for a few short years, we are a gentler introduction to mortality than a cat or dog.

...on friends:
We are a very loving and social creature, we enjoy the company of our own species, as well as others, including you! Don't neglect us, we are easily tamed, but without regular cuddles will resume a more wild nature. Fortunately this can be remedied with further cuddles! We don't like to be alone: either have two guinea pigs, or a guinea pig and a rabbit.

Multiple boy guinea pigs can get along quite well provided there aren't any girls around. So if you're looking for two guinea pigs, and don't want babies arriving down the track, get two boys!

...on family:
Unlike many other rodent species, daddy guinea pigs play a large role in their babies lives. We can be found pointing out the best bit of food for our babies to eat, cleaning them, or tucking them underneath us in the cold and wet to keep them warm and dry.

Not all mothers are born to the job, and especially those that start young have a bit of trouble adjusting. When mother guinea pigs and their young are kept in groups, you find a few mothers bearing the load of all the young. While this can benefit the young who might miss out from their less-than-maternal mothers, it can be quite debilitating on the mothers who are taking on extra young.

...on food:
As a species we are not overly fussy, and cost a lot less than most pets to care for. Our daily diet can be as easy as feeding us the vegie scraps and some weeds from the garden, supplemented where necessary with grains, seeds, and hay or straw. Our favourite meals include carrot ends and apple cores, mmm... sweet and tasty!

Our babies are born with teeth, and the ability to eat solids from their second day. Mother's milk is more of a supplement than a necessity for survival.

...on sex:
Sex is a very natural part of species survival. Some animals are more graphic than others, and some get quite obsessive. We are reasonably quiet with our mating habits: while it might need to be explained what we are up to, we won't appear to be attacking each other, there won't be anything on display that might offend, and we won't hump your leg! Where same sex guinea pigs are kept together, instinct might prompt us to establish a same sex relationship, this is perfectly normal, and not cause for panic.

Female guinea pigs are fertile from a very early age. It can be quite detrimental to a young guinea pig to fall pregnant at an early age, so best to keep them away from the older boys after they reach about a month of age until at least three or four months old, when their bodies are more ready to handle the rigors of pregnancy. It is important to note at this stage however, that it's best not to leave pregnancy too late in a guinea pig's life if it is intended to breed from her. Just like people, as we get older our bones harden and it is safer to birth our babies while young.

...on responsibility:
We are a very dependant species, not at all good at looking after ourselves if caged. It is very important to make sure that we have fresh food and clean water every single day. We also need a dry place to sleep, as we are susceptible to colds (which are commonly fatal), as well as shade from bright sunlight as our ears burn easily. We don't burrow and easily caught by predators like cats, dogs and large birds so we like somewhere close we can run to and quickly hide. If you don't care for us properly, you will soon be heartbroken, as we require daily maintenance to survive.

...in summary:
We are an excellent pet, we'll be your best friend, and teach you some of life's important lessons with regards to survival, responsibility, family, sociability, sex, health, and mateship. All pets are a commitment, but we won't be a burden or get in the way.

April Paine is a homeschool graduate.
What My Guinea Pig Taught Me

Sometimes one’s love goes unrequited. - Isabelle

That every being (human or not) deserves a gentle rearing. That nothing is forever. The circle of life is an amazing learning tool. - Marissa

To get up each day and get on with the job or there will be an overload of crap to deal with if you don’t.

How to keep a child entertained for hours and to teach them gentleness and nurturing.

To witness the circle of life and for children to grasp the concept of death a little less harshly in their early years although it still breaks their hearts. It doesn’t seem nice to say, but I enjoy watching my child perform her burial and funeral rituals for her animals with such compassion and sincerity that I know I am raising a goodie. - Kym

Guinea pigs are really hard work, especially in the winter when they need to be brought in at night. The summers in Perth are too hot for guinea pigs. Two of our girls died of heat stroke.

Our guinea pigs caused us such heartbreak: one died in childbirth (all her insides came out and blood was spattered everywhere). We (I) had to bottle feed the babies every two hours.

I now firmly believe that it is really cruel to keep these poor little animals in captivity; fully reliant on us humans to remember to feed them, clean them out, put them in the shade or the warmth and get them the appropriate veterinary treatment...

I would have passed them on sooner, except that the children got so upset when they had to go. At one time we had eight babies and a male and female – the children wanted to keep them all!

My husband shudders when he hears the ‘g’ word and now they’ve made a film about them! My guinea pig days are well and truly over....

Sandie

That pets can live a lot longer than they tell you in the pet shop if you look after them really well. - Beverley
Crafty Gifts with an Eco Touch

by Beverley Paine

One of my favourite past times as a homeschooler was lingering in shops that supply art and craft materials, including sewing shops, and toy stores that stock craft or science kits.

Back then it was hard to find quality kits for my children, so I had the extra pleasure of buying all the bits and pieces and making my own kits, which generally ended up as either birthday or Christmas gifts. I’d also keep a few tucked away as ‘rainy day’ project packs or for those days when the dreaded ‘boredom’ bug struck.

Making craft kits was so much more satisfying and fun than buying ready-made ones. Our home-grown kits tended to contain better quality and sturdier materials, with generous quantities so that the children did not run out of materials before their enthusiasm waned - and I could tailor them to the children’s interests or current passions.

If we bought those mass-produced craft kits, more often than not the children would make something interesting from the packaging materials, such was the abundance used to display the item and make it attractive for purchase. I liked to keep things simple: stuffing goodies into brown paper bags so that delving into them meant pulling out surprises, or I’d cover recycled boxes with our own fancy packaging, made from some of the children’s old artwork.

Craft kits provide excellent opportunities for children to learn new skills, though they are often sold as ways to keep a child occupied and busy. Children quickly see through this ulterior motive and won’t bother exploring the materials, instead probably making a mess no one wants to clean up!

Quality, well-thought out and well-prepared craft kits will engage your children’s imagination and help them develop hand-eye coordination, organisation, problem-solving and dexterity skills.

By supplying enough materials to ‘have a go’, craft kits can also be an inexpensive way for a child to try a new hobby. Make sure you include enough materials to create at least one complete project. The best kits are those that don’t just make ‘one’ item, but allow the child to use imagination and create lots of different things.

When putting the craft kit together, think thoroughly through its purpose and remember to add any specialist tools, glues and binders that may be needed. If you are putting it together for a gift for a friend, you will probably need to add such items and perhaps even some quality scissors.

On the subject of making craft kits as gifts, make sure that the kit is tailored to the skill level of the person you’re giving it to, and that he or she actually likes doing crafty things. Otherwise it is likely to end up stored on a shelf in the cupboard!

Children often like some kind of guidance: what worked best for our family was for me to sit down and play with the materials beside the children. They soon began to come up with their own ideas of what to make from the craft kit. Provide instructions with your craft kit or a finished product to copy.

Collect and cut pictures from magazines and start an ‘ideas folder’ – you can include some of these when you put together your craft kits. Alternately, hunt online for downloadable patterns and instructions to add to the kits.

Sometimes I’d see at a market, for sale by a local artisan, a quality craft kit made from recycled or earth-friendly resources, that was unique, well-priced and perfect for one or more of my children. Often the products on sale would inspire me to come up with ideas for activities I could do with the children, or ideas for creating new craft kits. Talking with the artists and craftsmen usually meant finding new
suppliers. Often I’d buy materials in bulk and create several kits.

Where possible I’d use recycled materials: here in South Australia we have ‘That’s Not Garbage’, a business that recycles waste from businesses and industry. In Brisbane, ‘Reverse Garbage’ offers the same service. Cultivate relationships with business people who are often happy to provide off-cuts and scraps for free. Opportunity shops are great places to hunt for interesting materials, too.

There are dozens of great reasons to indulge in creating crafty kits, but my favourite is that, instead of passively consuming, my children were able to actively create and had fun doing it. For years our house was littered with pompom caterpillars, God’s-Eyes and creatures made from electronic components.

As adults, they are ardent do-it-yourself people, keen to make and create using recycled materials rather than buy off-the-shelf. Making our own craft kits saved us money, and the values they helped to shape in our children then, are helping to save the earth now.

Make Money from Crafts: Earn While You Play
by Audrey Harvey

Lots of homeschooling mums have a craft they enjoy as a hobby. It’s often their downtime, or relaxation, after spending their day teaching their children.

Many people make money from crafts by taking their creations to a market or fete, and selling them from a stall. That works well, but it does take precious time away from your family. How do you fit a craft business around homeschooling your children?

It’s not too difficult to see that you can make money from crafts such as sewing, scrapbooking, and jewelry making. In fact, many crafts can be turned into a profitable sideline business, that not only can work well around your children, but can also allow them to participate and learn business skills in the process. There is a more convenient way of selling your crafts, and that is selling them online.

Firstly, you can sell on EBay. The advantage of this is that EBay has lots of traffic, so plenty of potential customers. The downside is that you’ll have lots of competition, buyers are looking for a bargain, and you’ll have to make enough money to cover their fees and your materials before you see any profit.

Another site where you can earn money from crafts is Etsy, which is a really nice site selling all sorts of home-made items. Again, there are fees to contend with, but it’s worth a look to see if it will be profitable for you.

A third way is to have your own website selling your products. You can do this with Vstore, which is completely free. I’ve briefly set up a store with this service, and it’s quite simple to use. The costs would be minimal, but you’d still need to promote your site and get visitors to make any sales.

A similar method of earning money from crafts is to have your own domain, install my old favourite software Wordpress to set up your site, and then use an e-commerce plug-in such as WP e-Commerce to manage your products. I personally haven’t tried this method, only because I haven’t been actively crafting of late, but it would be my preferred choice. Although you’d still have to get traffic to your site, your shop would be on your own domain which always looks more professional. Also, you can have your email address; yourname@yourdomain.com, which also is very smart.

How else can you make money from crafts online other than selling?

You can create a niche blog around your craft, and sell advertising and affiliate products.

You can write ‘how to’ articles and send them to magazines for payment. I have a good friend who is a wonderful scrap-booker who has been published several times in a national scrapbooking magazine.

You can create ebooks, online training courses or downloadable designs, depending on your niche.

You can sell craft kits or craft supplies online, but this would entail investing money in stock, which may not be an option for you.

I know another lady who sells scrapbooking layout kits online. It’s run as a ‘kit of the month club’ using a membership set up which gives a recurring income. The other benefit is that she only has to stock the materials to make one kit a month, so she’s not initially out of pocket.

The beauty of earning money from crafts is that you are combining your hobby with your business, which can make it a lot more fun. However, if you sit down and work out an hourly rate, it may not be that high. You often have to look at earning from your craft as a bonus from enjoying your hobby. However, many people do make a decent amount of money from crafts, so it is possible.

Think about what crafts you like to do, and how you could earn a dollar or two from them.

Audrey is a homeschooling mum in Brisbane who writes a regular blog showing homeschooling parents how they can earn an income online without getting caught up in the scams and without investing a lot of money: www.homeschoolingincome.com
On Homeschooling and Rocket Science, Making and Controlling Division and Divisiveness

By Paul Reader

People choose homeschooling for a wide variety of reasons. Making the decision to homeschool often calls into question perceptions about mainstream state and independent schooling. Homeschooling is growing; various commentators and researchers have created frameworks to interpret and theorize this phenomenon.

Some, like Michael Apple have analysed the US movement and see it linked to female power in Christian, right-leaning politics. I don't see it that way; I see homeschooling as a much broader response to the various situations in which parents find themselves today.

Reading the news a few months ago, I learned of the Elomar Case in the Sydney Morning Herald and suddenly realised just how difficult things can get for some homeschoolers. What shocked me was not the link between homeschooling, anti-terrorism surveillance and the courts, but that under different circumstances it could have been our family in the Elomars’ position.

Some years ago we sent Darbi to the chemist to buy ingredients for making rocket propellant. The chemist was reluctant to supply. His caution caused us to reassess the risk and abandon the project, because of the volatile nature of the ingredients. We chose to approach the rocket propulsion and robotics part of our curriculum in a different way.

I do recall however a similar rocket produced by a local independent school that also gives its students an army cadetship option. Clearly, class and cultural background seem to determine what will be acceptable curriculum. This has been especially true in recent years, where politics has extended to racial and religious divisiveness.

My point is this; it is important to support homeschooling across sectarian lines and accept that there are a broad range of reasons for choosing home education. Homeschoolers will face derision, disbelief and even persecution depending on their stance.

As a social movement however, we do need to support each other when we can. It is so easy to find things to disagree about, right at the time when there is need to focus on the bigger picture and the practical benefits which could be achieved from working together.

I’ll conclude with a question that may help us focus on the rights and benefits of homeschooling in general, as if there are no pressing issues on which we should be united. On what ethical basis should a society or a government decide that it will accept rocket science in the curriculum of an elite independent school and not in the curriculum of a homeschooling parent?

I hasten to point out that the Elomars were not intending to build a rocket (as we were), but simply possessed an array of literature for home schooling study, that was presented by the prosecution of evidence of terrorist intent.

References:


Part-time School Attendance and Homeschooling

by Beverley Paine

My family enjoyed part-time attendance at school as home educated students in South Australia for several years and I’ve written about our ‘flexi-school’ experiences in my book Learning in the Absence of Education.

Ours was an informal arrangement we negotiated with the children’s teacher and principal. Several of my homeschooling friends had set up similar arrangements with their local schools, both public and private. The SA Department of Education did not support or encourage part-time schooling; it was left up to individual school principals. About ten years ago our local state school set up a more formal part-time school arrangement called ‘shared schooling’ and as far as I know it is the only state school in the state to offer this option to home educating families.

Over the years I’ve heard of similar incidences of informal part-time school attendance from interstate homeschooling families. One of the continuing frustrations was that not all homeschooling families that wanted or needed to access part-time school attendance could; the school had the final say which meant that many families were told it wasn’t possible, even though they knew of families in other towns or suburbs enjoying part-time schooling.

Only Victoria has made a move to legislate to allow the provision of partial enrolment for home educating students. In 2008 it became possible to enrol as a part-time student if you are registered with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (see guidelines at http://tiny.cc/8L3sn).

Victorian home educating mum, Maaike, investigated and took up this option last year. Before the legislative changes, Maaike had sought contact with the local school but had been given the ‘cold shoulder’. Small rural schools often resent home educators as many of them depend on maintaining sufficient student numbers to retain teachers or to obtain funding for extra staff or resources.

When Maaike found out about the new partial enrolment provision she wrote a letter to the principal outlining the changes, attaching a copy of the guidelines from the website. She also stated the activities and lessons in which she was keen for her girls to participate. The principal replied promptly indicating that they could enrol immediately and start the next day.

Even so, his reluctant but polite manner and vagueness about the enrolment procedure meant that Maaike had to chase him to arrange a meeting where she could discuss points such as access to the school newsletter, library use, policies, transport, and which events and activities her daughters could access, and so on. At the meeting it was agreed that the family would contribute to the school fees. The girls were enrolled as attending 0.2 on the roll.

Since then the family has been very happy with the arrangement. They are able to pick and choose activities and lessons and the girls have attended arts performances, excursions, school camps, athletics, a dance evening and more. The girls are also happy and fit in well with the other children, and although they knew many of the children already at the school, enjoy that they’ve been able to make new friends too.

As a member of a small rural community, Maaike felt strongly that she wanted her family to participate as much as possible in community life. The local school is a community hub that draws families together; working together with the school and sharing resources was always Maaike’s hope when she started homeschooling. She saw it as an essential aspect of
building a sense of community as well as tapping into some of the exciting opportunities the school had to offer at the local level. The girls were also excited to participate in group and team activities, like sport and camps.

Although they are partially enrolled, the arrangement is fairly flexible; the girls don’t attend every day and may not attend at all for weeks. A lot depends on the nature of the activities offered at the school. For example, when the swimming program is underway the girls go every afternoon, or they take the school bus once a week to do physical education, with Maaike picking them up from school after the lesson.

There are five arts performances a year that the family attends, and the camps are once a year. They have attended quite a few of the excursions as well. Maaike finds out what is on offer through the school newsletter and phones the school to arrange participation.

The children went to school full time for two weeks at the start of this year as a project and decided that they liked homeschooling better. The family feels they are able to tap into some great educational opportunities for the girls, but lament that their social skills have suffered, with the girls being grumpier and not getting along as well together during periods of more intensive attendance.

Maaike’s positive experiences have encouraged other homeschooling families to give partial enrolment in the local school a go. Provided the ability to remain flexible isn’t eroded in the future, there is the opportunity for such arrangements to be mutually beneficial to both the school and homeschool communities.

Partial enrolment has allowed Maaike’s family to integrate more fully into community life and the school and local families no longer see homeschooling as a threat. There is no pressure on the family for the girls to attend full-time or more often, or to attend more academically oriented lessons. Maaike sees partial enrolment as neither making homeschooling easier or harder, only more enriching. She is happy that the Victorian government has made it a legal option for her family and for the school.

For Maaike’s family and my own, our interest and participation in part-time attendance arrangements at school were driven by our remoteness from other homeschooling families. We both live in small rural communities. Had there been dozens of homeschooling families living nearby we would have put our energy into building strong and vibrant homeschooling groups that tapped into and contributed to community life.
Registering in Queensland
by Jane

I am a Queensland homeschooler. I am really warming to my relatively new title. It adds to mum, wife, friend, etc. They all make me feel good about myself and the way I choose to live.

Not long ago I was not feeling good, in fact I was pretty traumatized and depressed. Every day involved anxiety! I was living the pain that my child was facing in the school system. I was beside myself with worry for him and our family! I was battling for him, crying for him, even howling for him. It is hard to describe how nightmarish my life had become.

But in the end I am a fighter and an optimist. I pulled myself together and removed him from the problem; the school system. The relief was almost instantaneous. Prior to school I had never considered homeschooling. I can't say that I really knew that it existed. Oh well, we live and we learn.

During my son's life, my journey has been one of becoming the parent he needs and I finally feel that I am getting there. Whilst I still wish I had withdrawn him from school earlier, I refuse to look back and instead look forward to being his partner in the development of a wonderful future man.

So that past is gone but then came the next challenge. I wanted to register. I still had one child in school and did not want to be worried about "being legal" so to speak. I wanted to be able to be open about what I was doing.

Okay, so that is all fine and dandy, but of course there are hoops. Governments never seem to be able to make things simple and seem to like to accumulate paperwork. However, I felt that writing my own programs would work best for me and my son. We could focus on his interests and not be told what we should learn.

So I examine the stuff on the website, print out the rego forms, read them and cringe! "I have to write a whole year's program! Now?! I have only just started! How do I know what we will do? Argh!" I pictured the pages and pages of information I would have to write. I felt overwhelmed.

So I tentatively rang the "Home Education Unit" ...of course, an answering machine! I waited nervously. "Am I really going to be able to do this?" Finally she rings me – my consultant -- and ... she's lovely; warm, supportive and reassuring. She asks me to complete my goals for my son as a first step. This is a relief considering the pages of documentation I had been picturing. I could do that.

My goals are simple and holistic. They cover academic and life goals, and include re-engaging my son with learning. She was extremely complimentary and again encouraging. For the next step, she told me; "Just write out a program for the first 10 weeks, in brief. This will be enough for your interim registration."

"OK," I thought, "I can do that too." So I consulted with my son and came up with 3 brief pages on my plans for those first weeks. I addressed each subject area and also talked about how I would achieve the goals I had set. I sent this in expecting to then be asked to provide a detailed plan, but no, apparently 3 pages was enough, so my 10 week program was complete.

My next task was to develop my program for the year. I now had a handle on the detail required and was assured that the unit do not expect this program to be set in stone and understand that changes will be made along the way, so I jumped the next hurdle.

This document included the goals I had already written and an expansion of my 10 week program to include the rest of the year divided loosely into terms and a paragraph on my son's learning environment. It took me about an hour to complete. Whew! It just seemed too easy.

Again I was surprised and relieved to be told that it was fine. I was done and could now concentrate on becoming a good homeschooling mum.

I have now completed one whole cycle of registration. I wrote my report at the 10 month mark and it was accepted and I submitted a new program for this year which was also accepted.

I am now feeling confident that I understand what is required. I was relieved to receive feedback on my report recently as a large component of what we do is unschooling with no formal output and so there are not always work examples to show and the unit must rely on my anecdotal info. The report was great. My consultant really got me and what I was trying to achieve alongside my son!

So in the end the process empowered me. I know now I can provide the education I want for my son and check the boxes I need to stay registered and not only that I have my own personal cheer squad: my HEU consultant.

The mother who was beaten and traumatized 18 months ago is gone. Now our home is at peace and I am energized by my new role. I am loving it! My son is happy and I am now writing programs for my daughter.

I wish all you homeschoolers out there had told me about this earlier!
We Never Should Have Survived

story from
http://www.WantToKnow.info/inspirational

According to today's regulators and bureaucrats, those of us who were kids in the 50's, 60's, and 70's probably shouldn't have survived...

Our baby cots were covered with brightly coloured lead-based paint which was promptly chewed and licked.

We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles, or latches on doors or cabinets and it was fine to play with pans. When we rode our bikes, we wore no helmets, just flip flops and fluorescent 'clackers' on our wheels.

As children, we would ride in cars with no seat belts or air bags. Riding in the passenger seat was a treat.

We drank water from the garden hose and not from a bottle - tasted the same.

We ate dripping sandwiches, bread and butter pudding and drank fizzy pop with sugar in it, but we were never overweight because we were always outside playing.

We shared one drink with four friends, from one bottle or can and no one actually died from this.

We would spend hours building go-carts out of scraps and then went top speed down the hill, only to find out we forgot the brakes.

After running into stinging nettles a few times, we learned to solve the problem.

We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back before it got dark. No one was able to reach us all day and no-one mind.

We did not have Playstations or X-Boxes, no video games at all.

No 99 channels on TV, no videotape movies, no surround sound, no mobile phones, no personal computers, no Internet chat rooms. We had friends, we went outside and found them.

We played elastics and street roundsers, and sometimes that ball really hurt.

We fell out of trees, got cut and broke bones and teeth, and there were no lawsuits. They were accidents. We learnt not to do the same thing again.

We had fights, punched each other hard and got black and blue - we learned to get over it.

We walked to friend's homes.

We made up games with sticks and tennis balls and ate live stuff, and although we were told it would happen, we did not have very many eyes out, nor did the live stuff live inside us forever.

We rode bikes in packs of 7 and wore our coats by only the hood. Our actions were our own. Consequences were expected. The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke a law was unheard of. They actually sided with the law.

This generation has produced some of the best risk-takers and problem solvers and inventors, ever. The past 50 years have been an explosion of innovation and new ideas. We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned how to deal with it all.

If you are one of these people who shouldn't have survived and you're still alive, congratulations!!

Three excellent books on the topic of childhood are:

Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder, by Richard Louv

In Defence of Childhood: Protecting Kids' Inner Wildness, by Chris Mercogliano

Watch Yourself: Why Safer Isn't Always Better, by Matt Hern

These books are available from AERO (Alternative Education Resource Organisation)
http://www.educationrevolution.org/products.html
or from Amazon.com
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Add accommodation cost to CampFest entry.
Visit www.rainbowdivas.com for details and to book.

Camp 1 - Children Focus
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Tuesday 23rd March to Sunday 28th March 2010

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Teen Tent: Space for Teens to gather, chat and listen to music.

Soap Box: Enjoy the opportunity to get up and talk on any topic—general discussion, debating, poetry: hecklers (keep it nice!) and lively conversations encouraged!

Always Learning 'Tent': Join with Beverley and Robin Paine and friends in a Home Ed Question and Answer session each afternoon from 4pm – 5pm.

Conference Sessions: each week 2pm – 4pm (Final details still to be confirmed.)

Home Education, the Big Picture – what have we got, what do we want and need, and how do we get there?

Home School Workshops - various speakers

Home Education in Practice – wading through the choices and finding a path right for your family.

Home Ed Suppliers show and sell their wares on Thursday in the Trade Fair and bring your old books for the 2nd-hand curriculum sale/swap on Friday!

All week enjoy a cuppa at Café Divas or selected meals at Café Roman.

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Email Jenni at rainbowdivas@gmail.com
Phone: Jenni on 0409 163 372
Kirrily Kuschert: Home Schooling Consultancy Service

Do you want to home school but you’re not sure of where to start?

Have you home-schooled one child but your next child has different needs?

Would developing a greater knowledge of each Key Learning Area (KLA) assist your daily planning and teaching?

Want some strategies to feel more equipped in teaching curriculum areas?

Want to enrich your maths program with some hands-on activities?

Would your kids benefit from some unit-based ideas linked to their Maths & English programs?

Does your child want to explore a topic of interest and you are not sure of how to link it to the curriculum?

Are you currently using text books yet want to bring your program alive with some relevant, easy-to-organise, fun activities?

Want to know some great ways to maintain concentration and focus?

My name is Kirrily Kuschert and I home educate my three sons, Brock (9 years), Jett (6 years) and Cooper (2 years). I am a trained K-6 teacher with extensive experience in many schools in all grades from K-6. I have also worked as a mathematics consultant, ‘Early Childhood & Primary Education’ university lecturer, textbook author, and as a seminar presenter for both publishing companies and ‘Gifted and Talented’ education training.

I have assisted many mums and dads in both New South Wales and New Zealand, in organising their home-schooling environments, planning to meet their children’s needs and in furthering their strengths as educators. I would love to help you develop your home-schooling dream for your family.

 Whether you are just starting out on your home-based education journey, or you have been homeschooling for a while and feel you would benefit from some fresh ideas, I am keen to assist you in any of the following areas:

- setting up a learning environment;
- developing your curriculum knowledge;
- devising programs for your children;
- sharing strategies for better concept development.

For parents in a particular area who wish to do a workshop together, a group learning option is also available upon request. For example, consider a 2 hour workshop each month on understanding a particular KLA, including relevant associated activities. Reasonable hourly rates available for training and program writing. I am also connected to Skype for outer Sydney Metropolitan area training at a time that suits you. Email me kuscherts@optusnet.com.au with your details and we will take it from there!

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Beverley Paine writes and publishes books and booklets about home education and natural learning.

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Bella's Enchanted Garden

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A total sensory experience! Stunning flowers, tantalising fruits, and heady spices have been blended synergistically to create a light, yet warming, infusion. Perfect for a day or night time brew. The delightful colours, and fragrant flavour along with the soothing and calming botanicals make this the ideal blend for children.

Inspired by homeschooler Bella and produced by Wildflower Botanicals, proceeds from the sale of this delicious tea support Bella’s participation in a homeschool exchange program and service project overseas.

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Free “Keep On Track” e-zine will provide you with practical advice & food for thought. Helps you focus, keep motivated and strive towards your homeschool goals.

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