Welcome to the village

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 skills 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!

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Welcome to the 8th issue of Stepping Stones! We’re excited to continue to bring you this wonderful members’ magazine, full of interesting items written by you for each other to enjoy. Stepping Stones is written by HEA members as a way of sharing our stories, experiences and what works (or doesn’t work) for us. We’re always looking for items, photos and illustrations for:

- stories about life as home educators, living and learning: share your passions and interests and tips on how to learn different things;
- your homeschooling story (why you homeschool, what approach you use);
- a short review of your favourite educational resource (book, game, learning program, toy, etc);
- plus your letters, tips, news and classifieds for our Market Place.

Calling all Home Ed Junior Masterchefs! Send us stories about recipes your children have invented and made – photos and illustrations most welcome! We’ll also be featuring stories about sports and physical exercise, as well as blending school and homeschool, especially looking for stories from families with part-time school experiences.

It’s also the International Year of Chemistry and International Year of Forests – share anything related to these topics, lesson plans, activities you’ve done with the children or with your local homeschooling group. Email contributions to Beverley editor@hea.asn.au before October 31st.

You can access back copies of the magazine from the members’ area of the HEA website: [http://hea.asn.au/members](http://hea.asn.au/members).

I’m sure everyone will enjoy and feel inspired, as I am, by this Spring issue. Thank you for the wonderful stories and illustrations about homeschooling with horses – animals are an important part of our educational journey through childhood. Our village theme reminds us (and others) that learning occurs in environments outside of the home, that the world is indeed our ‘classroom.’

This issue sees the introduction of our new At Home with HEA pages where we bring you news and information from your HEA committee and management team. We also have a bumper Library section, with book reviews and articles for you to enjoy.

As the year comes to a close many of us will be looking to combine educational activities with the preparation for the festive season – you’ll find lots of ideas in this issue. We also conclude our feature series of articles on bullying and home education.

Wishing you all a bright and happy spring and a gentle start to summer and hope that your holiday season is happy and safe,

Beverley Paine
I received my first edition of Stepping Stones earlier today. I just wanted to say, firstly, what a great newsletter it looks (I’ve only had time to give it a quick scan and am really looking forward to going back to it for some in-depth reading when time permits) and, secondly, thanks so much for the great coverage you gave the Home Education Winter Read-a-thon. It looks great! Thanks again for your support.

Judy

Lovely magazine… This is my first one and the layout and feel of the magazine is just gorgeous.

Kelli

I just wanted to say thanks for all you do!! We home educating Moms REALLY appreciate it.

Suzy

The magazine looks fantastic again. Thanks for putting in Emma’s article about SuperClubsPlus, she’s rapped! I would love to see it printed and in the mail. As it is now I’ll open it as a document a couple of times and then it is out of mind and out of sight which is a shame. Thank you all for the amazing effort that has gone into this issue once again!

Maaike

I like the idea of printing funded by memberships or a mix of both (less fuss than chasing sponsorship and will keep magazine to a good read!).

Vicki

Personally I would love the magazine to be a hard copy. It is too easy to put it in the “things to look at later” box on the computer and never get back to it - where as a printed magazine that comes in the post is a real treat and I’ll always make time to sit down with a cuppa for a quick read (and usually take it to bed with me to read in bed after that!)

Sharee

I would definitely prefer to receive it in the post. I am unlikely to read it all if it is on the computer, and it’s quite a lot to print out. I would prefer it to be funded by subscription.

Felicity

Don’t forget to send in your reports of the homeschooling camps you’ve attended, as well as those coming up. AND stories about life at home, living with pets and plants and why and how you homeschool! See the list of themes for our Spring Issue, or for a list of themes for Spring and Summer, visit http://hea.asn.au/resources/disp_res.asp?type=4&id=234.
feature articles

the frugal homeschool challenge

“To attain knowledge, add things every day. To attain wisdom, remove things every day.” Lao Tzu

“Frugality is about facing up to our greedy tendencies and replacing them with generosity, gratitude and grace. Then, instead of buying our way out of challenges, we can give of our time, creativity, support and encouragement, to ourselves and to others. Once we can accept in each moment that what we already have is enough, then the striving, and the stress associated with it, evaporates altogether.” Sally Lever

Homeschooling veteran Linda Dobson believes that the act of home education nurtured and honed her natural frugality. She challenges families to “have a family contest to see who can research and find the most additional ways your clan can be frugal.”

Most of us have learned how to make do with less, not only from necessity because we’re no longer in the double income bracket, but because it is a great way to help our children learn. Counting our pennies and working out discounts while we’re shopping is second nature because that’s how our children learn maths. Making things means they get to measure and quote, learn how to use tools and materials efficiently, effectively and safely. Buying new stuff all the time deprives us of the opportunity for learning!

In a recent article on her blog, Linda said, “Compared to many others during this economic crisis, I’d like to remind you that you’re in relatively good shape. After all, you haven’t grown accustomed to relying on a $4.00 cup of coffee to wake you up on the way to work every day. You haven’t frequented restaurants for so long that you don’t know how to cook. The thrift shop sales girls are already holding the ‘good stuff’ for you because they know you’ll be in soon.”

Home educators know how to get by cheaply. And their children are learning valuable lessons that will stand them in good stead for the rest of their lives.

While children in schools are working out ways to avoid doing homework, home educated kids are busy building, making, doing the chores, dreaming, playing, sewing, cooking, gardening, recycling, selling unwanted things on e-Bay or the homeschool forum… Helping mum and dad make ends meet and take care of the family. They’re active in the community, learning how to work with and help others too. Instead of learning how to be passive consumers our home educated children are building “the knowledge base necessary for self-sufficiency, self-motivation, self-employment, and self-knowledge”. Take up Linda’s challenge and write and tell us the many ways your family can reduce costs, tread lightly on the planet, and homeschool for less.
It is easy to spend a small fortune when we begin teaching our children at home but it isn't necessary. There are many ways we can source free and inexpensive resources or find appropriate substitutes. If this doesn't come naturally to you, join a local homeschooling group - you'll soon catch the bug and begin to see the educational potential of just about anything!

Get started looking for cheap or free resources by making contact with other home educators in your area. If you can't find a local support group or individual contacts in your area go further afield. The Home Education Association website has a comprehensive list of support contacts here: http://hea.asn.au/resources/default.asp?type=3. Click on the state in which you live and then 'metropolitan' or 'region'.

Online support groups are fantastic as the members regularly share information about educational places to visit, free or inexpensive subscription internet resources, tips on how to teach or learn different skills or subjects, etc. Many families belong to half a dozen different yahoo groups and forums. Check out Beverley Paine's list of online support groups on her Homeschool Australia Directory page: http://australian-home-education.com/groups.html.

There are a few homeschooling forums that specialise in trading resources. The following seem to be popular - each one has its own flavour, and some may be busier than others, but it is worth pinning a 'wanted' notice on any online support group or forum if you are looking for something in particular. If you find out about any others, please email the details to Beverley at editor@hea.asn.au.


Homeschool social networking sites, such as http://groups.yahoo.com/group/education_resources/ and http://www.rockpoolhomeschool.org/ have lists of 'freebies', and my Australian Home Education Curriculum pages are full of great ideas for developing your own curriculum, learning programs, unit studies and educational experiences and materials.

By Beverley Paine

Ideas for Earning an Income While Home Educating...

By Julie, a South Australian homeschooling mum of four

Search the internet for tips on how to build a web based business from home using your skills.

In the past I have worked as a direct selling agent for a child related company where I did workshops and demonstrations in my own home and customer's homes during the day. The demonstrations took a maximum of 1.5 hrs and I was able to take my children.

This wasn't the easiest way to work as I had to look after four young children! If you choose a company which sells children's books, toys, and educational aids your children become part of your business.

This has several brilliant side effects: whilst demonstrating to the parents your children can play with the products, read, and make things, keeping them occupied as well as learning. You also have the benefit of discounted, sometimes free, products for your children delivered to your door. My children helped me pack orders, etc.

If you have a partner, you can pop out for a few hours in the evening, leaving the children at home, and make a bit of money (sometimes lots of money!) If you don’t think you are able to stand and talk to a small group of women for thirty or so minutes and make $50 to $100 or more, I can assure you, you can. Just think of your aim or goal – which is to continue homeschooling.

Google “$21 challenge” put together by www.simplesavings.com.au and learn how you can slash $100+ off your grocery bill for the week. It's only a temporary measure, but a great instant boost for the budget. They often run competitions where you can win prizes such as $200. There are lots of great tips for saving money available from their 'free stuff' section too.

Try Mystery Shopping, a research organisation that pays a flat fee to
That man is richest whose pleasures are cheapest.  
Henry David Thoreau

It has never been easier to homeschool on a zero dollar budget. The internet is brimming with free resources such as interactive games, videos, encyclopedias, tutorials and podcasts, just to mention a few. However, it is still possible to teach just about anything on a zero dollar budget without internet access.

To teach mathematics in the early years you need very little. Most if not all of these things can be found in any given house in the Western world. The main resource needed is a loving adult who is willing to talk to their child about life. In reality there is a great deal that can be taught in this manner and it is only when numerical operations requiring carrying or the like occur that pen and paper is even needed.

By the time a young child is three she will have generally learnt to count to ten. This is no small feat, especially if she can attach meaning to these words - as in she has five fingers, one head and two eyes. The sense of what those number words mean is quite an abstract concept and that cognitive development cannot be rushed.

By the age of five - when children in Australia are starting school - most children can recognise numbers and perform simple addition and subtraction tasks, although most couldn’t tell you what those words mean. Simple mathematical operations such as cutting a slice of toast in half or sharing a handful of lollies equally with a sibling set the ground work for more sophisticated mathematical reasoning at a later date.

Books about mathematical concepts can help to take away the fear that some people have of them. Familiarity with these concepts in an informal setting where no-one is burdened with producing the answer reduces the stress that can be felt when dealing with something new.
There are many, many excellent books being written and published that deal with mathematical concepts. Some are written with the concepts as the star of the story whereas in other books the concepts take the back seat or are incidental to the narrative. Any good public library will contain a vast array of children's books that can be used to teach mathematics.

One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish is a well known book and can be found in most libraries. It is an enjoyable book to read and reinforces the concepts of 'one-ness' and 'two-ness'. The Very Hungry Caterpillar teaches about the numbers one to five, the days of the week, sizes and a whole pile of other concepts less related to mathematics.

All of us receive bills. Understanding your electricity bill requires mathematical skills. We need to be able to read the numbers, understand what the decimal point and dollar sign mean. If we want to understand why we have been charged this figure we need to understand the billing system - the different charges and how they are calculated. We need to understand that some parts of the bill - the access fee - are calculated per day, whereas others are charged according to our electricity usage. We don't necessarily look into these sections in great detail when each and every bill arrives however if a bill is unexpectedly high we would look into what is different and whether any errors have been made.

The arrival of a bill provides us with an opportunity to share our mathematical knowledge with our children. We can discuss what the numbers mean. Younger children can practice identifying the numbers: 2 means two. Slightly older children can practice reading numbers with place value: 234 represents two hundred and thirty-four. They can practice reading numbers, using number names and number words.

Measurement is integral to our lives, and probably more that we realise. At many points in our day we make judgments with regards to a measurement. We may, without knowing the precise temperature, decide that today is warmer or cooler than the previous day. We guess how long it will take to get ready when we decide whether or not we can lie in bed an extra few minutes. When rolling out dough we rarely get the ruler out or not we can lie in bed an extra few minutes. We double recipes requiring more complex manipulation of fractions to work out what double 3/4 cup is. While cooking and food preparation won’t deal with every fraction or manipulation of fractions, it deals with the most common forms and manipulations of fractions. And isn't that the point anyway, equipping our children for life?

Receipts from groceries can provide excellent opportunities for addition and multiplication. Unit pricing is also great for looking at which product is better value, although you could argue that unit pricing on price labeling has taken too much of the maths away.

Learning about fractions occurs naturally during food preparation. We slice sandwiches into halves or quarters. We cut cakes into equal pieces depending on the size of the cake and the number of people. We measure 1/2 cups and 1/3 teaspoons. We double recipes requiring more complex manipulation of fractions to work out what double 3/4 cup is. While cooking and food preparation won’t deal with every fraction or manipulation of fractions, it deals with the most common forms and manipulations of fractions. And isn't that the point anyway, equipping our children for life?

There is so much that can be taught - in mathematics and in other areas - without spending an extra cent.

Liz Parnell is a wife to one awesome husband and a mother to four blessings. She is also a homemaker, homeschool parent, life-long learner and freelance writer.

Check out her website at www.lizparnell.com.
Check out their new family blog http://welearn4fun.wordpress.com
Horse Love
by Rebecca Funk

My six-year-old daughter loves horses. She spends a lot of time pretending to be a horse with her little brother. Horses feature in her drawings. Bridles are often contrived from bits of string or an odd roll of bias binding we have lying around. She talks often about how old she’ll have to be before she can get a horse of her own. She is excited about getting a guinea pig when she learns how much money it will cost, mostly because it’s the first pet on the way to getting a horse!

There’s a shop nearby with a big plastic horse standing out the front, where they sell equestrian gear and make horse blankets. My daughter recently asked to have a look in there, so we did. She had a simple question to ask: what do you need for yourself when you’re starting to ride a horse, and what do you need for the horse?

The man inside was very helpful and generous with his time. His first answer to the question was a helmet, which hadn’t crossed my mind, so I learned something right away! Later on, when he mentioned a farrier, and I was clarifying with my daughter whether she knew what that was, she told me she did know, because she’d watched my uncle cleaning around the frog in his horse’s foot, which is part of a farrier’s work. Well, I learned another thing right there that frogs don’t just live in ponds! The man at the shop was very impressed.

It’s a thrill coming face to face with something my child knows which I didn’t know she knew. It prompts new respect for that amorphous thing called learning which happens in obvious and subtle ways, and when you least expect it!

Rebecca Funk is a writer and mother of three, who enjoys life amidst the scenic views of Gembrook, Victoria. She gathers her eclectic musings at http://fiveskies.blogspot.com/
Our names are Madeleine and Charlotte and our pet horse is called Indy B (the B stands for Boy). Indy B is 9 years old and is part Shetland pony. We visit Indy B every Sunday to ride him but before we ride him we always groom him and feed him some carrots. He loves carrots! If you want to walk behind him you have to put your hand on his rump as you’re walking around him. If you don’t, he won’t know you’re behind him and he might kick you!

We have learnt about all the different tack, like saddles, saddle cloths, bridles and stirrups and how to put them on correctly. It’s important to put a saddle cloth on under the saddle because if you don’t the horse might get a saddle sore from the saddle rubbing him. All the tack needs to be put on correctly because if you don’t it could hurt the horse, and it could be dangerous for the rider too.

During the riding lesson we learn how to get Indy B to walk, trot, steer and stop. We guide him around cones, over jumps and over poles on the ground. You have to look straight ahead and not lean forward. You really need to concentrate.

We are learning about all the different brushes and combs to groom Indy B. There are different ways to brush different parts of his body and different brushes to use for different things.

It is a lot of responsibility because you need to clean the stables and Indy B’s poo! When his hooves grow too long the farmer comes to cut his toenails. Indy B doesn’t wear horse shoes so he doesn’t need them changed.

If you like horses there are lots of different jobs you could do when you get older, like being a jockey, doing dressage (which is like horse dancing), playing polo, teaching horse riding, show jumping, or being horse vet.

Indy B is cuddly and soft and easy to please. We think having a horse is great fun and he’s our special friend!

These great signs play on the meaning of words in a fun way. Have you seen or can you think of any others?

- In a Podiatrist’s office: “Time wounds all heels.”
- On a Septic Tank Truck: “Yesterday’s Meals on Wheels.”
- At an Optometrist’s Office: “If you don’t see what you’re looking for, you’ve come to the right place.”
- On a Plumber’s truck: “We repair what your husband fixed.”
- On another Plumber’s truck: “Don’t sleep with a drip. Call your plumber.”
- On a Church’s Billboard: “7 days without God makes one weak.”
- At a Towing company: “We don’t charge an arm and a leg. We want tows.”
- On an Electrician’s truck: “Let us remove your shorts.”
- In a Non-smoking Area: “If we see smoke, we will assume you are on fire and take appropriate action.”
- On a Taxidermist’s window: “We really know our stuff.”
- Outside a Muffler Shop: “No appointment necessary. We hear you coming.”
- In a Veterinarian’s waiting room: “Be back in 5 minutes. Sit! Stay!”
- In a Restaurant window: “Don’t stand there and be hungry; come on in and get fed up.”
- In the front yard of a Funeral Home: “Drive carefully. We’ll wait.”
- At a radiator shop: “Best place in town to take a leak.”
- Sign on the back of another Septic Tank Truck: “Caution - This Truck is full of Political Promises.”
By David Blissett

In 1798, the second Governor of New South Wales, John Hunter, arranged for sketches and a skin of a newly discovered animal to be sent back to Britain for examination. The British scientists were not impressed. In fact, one of them began to cut the skin with scissors, looking for evidence of stitches or other tampering. The scientists were convinced someone in the colony had sent them evidence of nothing but a hoax. Perhaps the southern sun had been getting to them. After all, who ever heard of a beast with the body of a beaver, webbed feet like an otter and a beak like a duck?

Of course, we now know that the creature does exist and we know it by the Latin name it was given in the 1800’s, platypus - meaning flat feet. Platypus live in rivers, creeks and dams, along Australia’s east coast, from far north Queensland to Tasmania. They feed on river invertebrates, such as worms, insect larvae and yabbies, which they collect from the river bottom using their sensitive rubbery bills.

Platypus join the echidna family as the only monotremes on Earth. Monotremes are egg laying mammals. The female platypus lays her eggs in a long nesting chamber which she digs into the banks of her home river or stream. The female generally lays two eggs and the young hatch after about ten days.

The young platypus - called puggles - are fed by milk that exudes from pores in the mother platypus’ skin. After about four months, the puggles are old enough to venture from the burrow and begin to establish their own territories on the river.

Though not uncommon, platypus are notoriously difficult to see in the wild. Two of the best places to see them are in Cradle Valley Tasmania, or Eungella west of Mackay in Queensland. They do, however adapt very well to captivity and you can see them at a number of zoos around the country, including Healesville sanctuary in Victoria, David Fleay Wildlife Park in Queensland and Taronga Zoo in NSW.

Did you know that the male platypus is one of only a few poisonous mammals on earth? Male platypus have a pair of poisonous spurs on their back feet which can deliver a painful sting if they are threatened.

So if one platypus is called a platypus...what do you call two of them? Are they platypuses? Are they platypi? Or should you call them still just plain platypus? The answer is... all three. No one actually agrees on what the plural of platypus should be!

The scientists were convinced someone in the colony had sent them evidence of nothing but a hoax. Perhaps the southern sun had been getting to them. After all, who ever heard of a beast with the body of a beaver, webbed feet like an otter and a beak like a duck?

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Maaike Johnston

We are very passionate about recording our home education journey in photos. We often take photos of the work we've done; art, science experiments, nature walks, cooking, gardening, etc. Plus we also include a lot of photographs in our Nature Journal/book.

Once a year a make a year book of what we've done during that year. I do this through Clickonprint. They have great software in which I can 'scrapbook' on the computer, upload it to them and then get this beautiful bound book sent to me.

My photos are probably my best records of our homeschooling as I don't record much in any other way, except our calendar.

In the past year the girls have started using photography in their play and school projects too, making Powerpoint presentations and movies on Windows Movie Maker.

Here is a grab of some photo's of the last few weeks...

- a shared math and literacy afternoon with our friends

- searching for orchids in some Mallee country, with me nearly stepping on a stumpy tail lizard!

- Madelief's birthday party was the end of our Gold Rush/Eureka project; everyone was dressed up, camp oven tea, sleepover, making scones in the camp oven the next day and orienteering activity, where – would you believe – I nearly stepped on a bearded dragon!
Father's Day

Korina Ivatt

For a change I was not surprised by Father's Day arriving, but scrabbling around for something to pass as a gift and a fair bit of organising still went on in the week preceding the event. There were paperweights to be made. Here is how we made them:

Start off by mixing 1 cup of salt, 1/2 cup of cornflour and 2/3 cup of water together in a saucepan. Cook and stir over medium heat until it all clumps together fairly well. Take it out of the saucepan and put it on some aluminium foil. After it's cooled, knead it until it's pliable and soft. It will still be a bit sticky but that's okay. It's a good idea to leave the mixture on pieces of aluminium foil so it won't stick to the table.

This recipe makes a ball about the size of a very large grapefruit. I separated it into 2 parts and rolled each part into a ball: one for Olivia and one for Zachary. I gave each of the kids a selection of buttons, craft jewels, stones, crystals, etc., and let them get on with creating a couple of super-duper paperweights for Dad's desk at work!

We also made Dad some chocolates as we felt like spoiling him! They were super easy and are called chocolate freckles. Start by putting grease proof paper on a baking tray. Then, in a microwave proof bowl, break up 250g dark chocolate and pour in 1 teaspoon of macadamia oil (any vegetable oil will work). Melt the chocolate and oil in the microwave by cooking for 30 seconds at a time and stirring in between.

When the chocolate is completely melted, stir in 1 tablespoon of finely ground coffee. Place dollops of mixture onto the lined baking tray. Sprinkle with 100's and 1000's and put in the fridge to set. Once set, put them in a container and HIDE THEM!

We also got a last minute request for aftershave so had to ensure that was made available too. A well and truly spoiling day! The great thing about these crafts is they are suitable for any time of year and anyone can get joy from the little ones' handy work.
Decorate calico bags, aprons, t-shirts and more with pastel dye sticks.
- Wash and thoroughly rinse fabric (works best if it’s light-coloured).
- Slide greaseproof paper or thick cardboard beneath the fabric.
- Draw an image onto the fabric with the pastels.
- Cover image with greaseproof paper and iron for 5 minutes at correct temperature for fabric.
- If you make a mistake in your drawing, you can wash the item (prior to heat-setting) to remove most traces of the pastels.

You can buy bags, aprons and tea towels from EcoShopper (http://www.ecoshopper.com.au). Phone Pentel to find stockists of dye sticks (product codes PTS-7 or PTS-15): 1300 88 87 86, or try http://www.artandcraftsupplies.com.au

Cost scenario:
- $12 10 calico bags from EcoShopper
- $10 set of 15 pastel dye sticks
- $15 postage (roughly)
- $37 Total cost or $3.70 per bag (less if you find the dye sticks locally)

Soulemama’s Calendar
I love this gift idea (via Soulemama from a couple of years ago): http://soulemama.typepad.com/soulemama/2008/01/a-year-of-birds.html
- Pick a theme (in Soulemama’s case, it was birds)
- Get your kids to draw twelve or more images.
- Scan and arrange them in Photoshop or similar program (no doubt a time-consuming process)
- Publish via Lulu (www.lulu.com). Standard calendars start at US$12.49 + shipping

Inexpensive Ideas for Presents
Try to ignore the advertising hype and don’t be pressured into buying expensive and often unwanted gifts for friends and family members… Instead opt for spending quality time with them, or give a gift that emphasises the special bond you share. Before the end of the year comes rushing at you, spend a few moments now to consider how you can create or find non-material, pre-loved or homemade gifts that are environmentally friendly.

Look through your pantry for ideas for homemade treats to eat. A cardboard box, decorated by your children’s illustrations, full of goodies or favourite foods makes a delightful hamper. Redeemable ‘gift’ certificates can be tailored to individuals. A card full of certificates in which you offer to help out in different ways can be used over many months and will reinforce your relationship with that person. Or perhaps promise to share some time together doing something you both enjoy.

Make a photo calendar or DVD for friends and family who live far away. Personalised recipe books of favourite meals showing photos of your family growing, preparing and eating the dishes is another well-received idea, particularly by grandparents. Be inspired and creative this year and don’t forget, making gifts offers many learning opportunities across the curriculum for your children!

Handmade books
Simply cut or fold paper to desired size. Then Staple or sew pages together. Draw images and add text.

This idea lends itself to both simplicity and complexity. My daughter illustrated two books for her grandparents last Christmas, based on the story of Finding Nemo, which she was somewhat obsessed with at the time. Just with biro and plain paper, but the grandparents loved them. For more ideas, borrow a book on making books from your local library.
Ah! The feeling! The thrill of riding an Australian horse! Of galloping through the bush in the days when those fine animals were more important than cars. The days when people depended upon their horses to carry them far and wide across our tough land. When they were needed for rescue and communication; when they worked hard, high in the ranges, rounding up the wild cattle in a flurry of dust... ‘With a running fire of stockwhips and a fiery run of hoofs’. Yes, back in the colonial days, horses were special, they had a place in the lives of, well, everyone!

The Happy Sound of the Horse
© Janette Cassey Ingham

‘Twas merry in the glowing morn, among the gleaming grass.
To wander as we’ve wander’d many a mile.
And ... watch the white wreathes pass,
Sitting loosely in the saddle all the while.
‘Twas merry ‘mid the blackwoods when we spied the station roofs,
To wheel the wild scrub cattle at the yard.
With a running fire of stockwhips and a fiery run of hoofs;
Oh! The hardest day was never then too hard!’

‘Between the tall gum-trees we gallop’d away
We crash’d through a brush fence,
we splash’d through a swamp --
We steered for the north near ‘the Eaglehawk’s Nest’ ....
Horses had a very special place in the life of Australian poet, Adam Lindsay Gordon too. No one could express the joy or thrill of the ride better than Adam ... because he felt it himself!

He was ‘passionately fond of horses’, believing these animals to be God’s ‘noblest’ creation, only after man. He knew each horse personally and what they were capable of, back in the days when people knew them as companions; as fearless comrades who carried men into battle ‘where bullets whistle...

Hoof trample, and blades flash’; and who willingly hunt down bushrangers with ‘six-shooters’ exploding over their heads. His own faithful mare, carried him ‘twenty-six miles’ at a gallop without stopping to report a shipwreck, from the coast to the Mount Gambier telegraph station. And, he spent ‘long years’ as a horse-breaker and as a shrewd steeple-chaser; all the while, being unable to see beyond his horse’s ears!

“Clippety clop, clippety clop,” how he loved to ride ‘at a walking pace’ for ‘miles’ and miles, thinking, ‘mumbling to himself and making up rhymes in his head’. At his friend John Riddoch’s property, Yallum Park, he found a favourite place to sit, in the ‘crooked limb’ of a ‘gnarled old gum tree... in a sunny paddock’. He would climb up and sit comfortably, smoking his ‘old clay pipe’, writing thoughtfully away; surrounded by the familiar countryside and the experiences of his life and his poems...

He remembered his mare carrying him... ‘Over the wasteland and under the wood, By down and by dale, and by fell and by flat’. Of standing up ‘in the stirrups’ and feeling her ‘heart thumping’ hard beneath the saddle... He remembered chasing down a bushranger, and the time he rode for fifty miles drenched, amid pouring showers of rain.

Oh how times have changed! How sheltered and fast, without thought, we travel today. But Adam’s world was different to ours... It was a world where the towns, the dirt roads, the plains and ‘the flint-strewn ranges rang’ with the happy sound of the horse!

NB Many of the above quotes are from Mr Gordon’s poems: ‘The Sick Stockrider’, ‘From the Wreck’ and ‘Wolf and Hound’. Yallum Park is near Penola. The Admella was the wreck on Carpenter’s Rocks, SA.

Read the story from the book OUR AUSTRALIAN STORY Colour the pictures and discover AUSTRALIAN HISTORY together. Courtesy Janette Cassey Ingham. www.AUSTRALIANHISTORYPICTURES.com ...
ARCHITECTURE THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

SCAVENGER HUNT

By Bernie Meyers

This is a fun art lesson which requires little preparation. Inspire the kids by looking through some books or magazines with pictures of buildings then grab your camera and try to take unusual and imaginative photos. Remember to check your background!


Use the following checklist when taking photos:
- Portrait orientation
- Landscape orientation
- Straight on
- Side view
- Unusual angle
- Interesting negative space
- Diagonal lines dissecting the image
- Frames - doorways, windows, branches, etc (find something interesting within the frame)
- Add a human element
- Add a natural element
- Look up
- Look down
- Reflections
- Textures
- Look out
- Look in
- Symmetrical
- Asymmetrical
- Close up
- Far away
The Case for **Slow** Reading

By Beverley Paine

Thomas Newkirk, a self-confessed slow reader, advocates a general downshift in reading speed as a counter-weight to the hectic digital environment we are bombarded with on a daily basis. He urges us to redevelop the fast disappearing sense of unhurried reading for pleasure, convinced that speed reading or scanning the page means that we miss out on many of the literary nuances and meanings authors intend us to dwell on and savour.

He argues that by encouraging children to read slowly we will help to “conserve that which is necessary to a humane survival threatened by a furious and exhausting culture”, as described in 1979 by media theorist Neil Postman in his book *Teaching as a Conserving Activity*.

The push for reading quickly originates early in the 20th century when reading aloud fluently - a key component of assessing children’s ability to read and comprehend texts as well as a traditional form of family-based entertainment - began to be considered as old fashioned and inefficient. Silent readers could process texts at two or three times the rate of oral readers, with no diminishment of comprehension. With the advent of computer screens speed reading took on a new dimension: modern readers scan the page for key words at an incredible speed and are reluctant to read anything longer than 100 words, or if Twittering, 145 characters.

Slow readers are at a distinct disadvantage in this fast paced world of the information junky. Situations involving tests are particularly stressful, with slow readers resorting to using strategies such as skimming and sampling, or selecting only that text which relates to the test questions.

Newkirk insists that “our attraction to sounds, to the rhythms of speech, and to a human voice in the text is primal”. Indeed we judge a book on its ability to read and comprehend texts as well as a traditional form of family-based entertainment - began to be considered as old fashioned and inefficient. Silent readers could process texts at two or three times the rate of oral readers, with no diminishment of comprehension. With the advent of computer screens speed reading took on a new dimension: modern readers scan the page for key words at an incredible speed and are reluctant to read anything longer than 100 words, or if Twittering, 145 characters.

Slow reading and reading aloud also preserve diverse and varied vocabularies. This helps to acknowledge that our world is made up of many different cultures which contribute to the rich web of human life on our planet. Exposure to children’s literature can help children recognise elements of effective writing and can encourage them to incorporate similar elements of the craft of writing into their own work. Case studies found that teaching children to ‘read like writers’ helped them to develop confidence in their skills as writers. Writing, reading and reading aloud as well as conversations about the texts, and discussions about how they were crafted, were central components of this approach.

Children first learn to read in the same way they learned to talk: using rhyme, alliteration and “the deep pleasure of repetition, of re-reading, or of having parents reread, until the words seem to be part of them”. We should work to preserve this love of words, of the playfulness of language and the excitement of mastering new words and understandings, in our children’s lives.

References:
*Educational Leadership March 2010*
New Books on Home Education

The Unschooling Unmanual
Edited by Jan Hunt
reviewed by Beverley Paine

Comfortable – at long last – with the idea of homeschooling, the American media is now turning its attention to the concept of unschooling. Displaying the lack of research typical of talk shows, unschooling has recently been heralded by commentators as irresponsible, even labeled as ‘unparenting’. This is despite the easily available volumes of information produced over three decades by veteran home educators and other prominent proponents of autonomous learning.

The Unschooling Unmanual, edited by Jan Hunt of the Natural Child Project, is a relatively recent and much appreciated arrival on my bookshelf. This slim volume of easy to read essays is peppered with quotes by John Holt, the school reformer who, in the 1970s, turned his back on schools and coined the word ‘unschooling’. Holt’s early books How Children Learn and How Children Fail are still considered essential reading for undergraduate teachers and his later work helped to coalesce a handful of home educating families into an international homeschooling movement. Informed by Holt’s insights into how children learn and his critique of why schools fail children, the authors within The Unschooling Unmanual bring to light the how and why of unschooling as well as offer explanations for why it works so well.

The cornerstone of unschooling is undoubtedly ‘trust’. The willingness to let go of the fear that not teaching children will damage their development, and to trust that that they are innately capable of learning, shines in each essay, as does a commitment to continually questioning what does and doesn’t matter. Unschooling is learning ‘on the job’ in contexts that are relevant and meaningful to the learner. The authors see the parents’ role as facilitating this process, rather than controlling or directing it. There is a sense of freedom and joy experienced by the authors as they observe their children as competent and autonomous learners; an unburdening of anxiety and expectations that don’t really belong in a family and community-centred lifestyle.

Unschooling is ‘a way of life’ is a theme repeated throughout the book. Education isn’t segmented into subjects. Children’s appetite for learning ranges across many disciplines. It may look disorderly and chaotic, in much the same way as a jungle does, but everything is interconnected, with a deep structure that is hard to pin down but promotes amazing growth and development. The joy at experiencing this abundance comes through in many of the essays. It is obvious that the authors reflect long and hard at what is happening as their children learn without the need to be taught, perhaps driven by their need to understand and explain to others who ignorantly dismiss unschooling as ‘unparenting’.

The Unschooling Unmanual touches briefly but convincingly on the politics of school, familiar territory for readers of John Taylor Gatto or Wendy Peirsmitz. Daniel Quinn proposes that far from failing, schooling achieves its goals, though these do not reflect the goals of parents who entrust the care and educational development of their children to the school system. Jan Hunt demonstrates why abandoning school methods of regulating a child’s learning achieves the goals of parents and their children. The Unschooling Unmanual reveals what unschooling isn’t: a recipe for educating a child. However the reader isn’t left without a definition or a path to follow – the essays are very clear on what does work and why it works.

At less than 100 pages, The Unschooling Unmanual is a quick, enjoyable and easy to digest read, a great introduction to a liberating, though often challenging, way of living and learning.

Freerange Learning
by Laura Weldon

Free Range Learning, by veteran USA home educator Laura Weldon, advocates for the child’s right to learn naturally and demonstrates how to enfold this approach into daily life. It incorporates ancient knowledge as well as current research, highlighting wisdom shared by over 100 families from around the world.

In this useful book readers will discover a wealth of inspiring ideas for connecting with nature, reinvigorating their communities and sustaining the love of learning. If you need one volume about educating the whole child, Free Range Learning is that book.
Dyslexic Centre Australia

Does your child struggle in mainstream education?
Could your child be dyslexic?

By Dawn Matthews

As president of Dyslexic Centre Australia Inc., I have assessed thousands of children, and adults, from all over Australia. I have discovered that many are actually being home schooled because they struggled in mainstream education.

Dyslexic kids are slipping through the educational net all the time. Virtually the only dyslexic kids I assess who can read and write have been educated in the UK or a small private school in the USA or some that have been home schooled.

I am myself dyslexic and have been teaching dyslexics for 35 years, mostly in the UK. I returned to my native Australia 9 years ago and am shocked at the lack of knowledge about dyslexia and the total lack of available help. This is why I have set up Dyslexic Centre Australia. Even if you have been told repeatedly that your child is not dyslexic then s/he is still likely to be if s/he struggles with mainstream education.

Dyslexics are not stupid, disabled or lacking. Dyslexics turn out to be the brightest kids, but far too often their potential is not reached until they leave school.

About 20% of pupils are dyslexic; however it was discovered in research in 2003 that most self-made millionaires in the UK had dyslexic type problems throughout school. 40% knew they were dyslexic.

Here is a list of some famous dyslexics:

- Sir Richard Branson
- Orlando Bloom
- Leonardo Da Vinci
- Sir Jamie Oliver
- Robbie Williams
- Roald Dahl
- Jackie Stewart
- Steven Spielberg
- Ken Packer
- Albert Einstein
- Erin Brockavich
- Cher
- Guy Richie
- Muhammad Ali
- Jessica Watson
- Henry Winkler
- Alexander Bell
- Prince Harry
- Harrison Ford
- Billy Connolly
- Kerry Stokes
- Keira Knightly
- Henry Ford
- Whoopi Goldberg
- Winston Churchill
- Thomas Edison
- Tom Cruise
- J F Kennedy
- Jim Carey
- Will Smith

And many, many more.

For a comprehensive list go to www.dyslexia-testing.com.au/wordpress/2008/01/here-is-a-definitive-list-of-famous-dyslexics/

What is it?

Dyslexia is a learning difference and people with it perceive the world and learn differently from the norm. They are more right brained and as such tend to have enhanced inter-personal skills, creativity, design potential, spatial ability and are more able to see the “whole picture”. But they find reading, spelling, remembering sequences and numbers and visualisation very difficult. Because of this they should be taught in a different way from the norm and need a different set of learning strategies, life skills and academic work. Most dyslexics display some auditory processing problems and many also have Irlen Syndrome (read easier with a tinted overlay on the text).

Dyslexics cannot recall the look of words or numbers so need to learn how to word build and decode. We need to teach phonics if we are to learn phonics. When giving seminars at schools about dyslexia I have been asked again and again to recommend a phonics course to use with these kids. The ones used in Australia are appalling and are mostly based on speech programs. In the end I wrote one that is interactive and multi-sensory and that can teach a kid to read and write in just a few weeks. We now sell this through the site as cheaply as we can. It’s really easy to use and mostly consists of games.

If your kid is dyslexic then it is important for him/her to understand what it means, how your kid thinks and learns and to teach him/her in a way best suited for your kid. That is why I have written web sites full of free information about what it is. These can be bought as hard copies or downloadable, so that they can then be listened to using a free voiceover.

If you have a pupil that struggles in mainstream education and cannot seem to remember how to spell even common words, then the most likely explanation is that s/he is dyslexic. For tick tests please go to www.dyslexiccentreaustralia.org.au and follow the link to “tick tests”. These are free. In schools, far too much time is spent concentrating on what a kid is struggling with. While it is important to teach every pupil to read and write well, it is equally important to concentrate on what the kid is good at. This is what s/he is most likely to do for the rest of his/her life.

We have built up a collection of web sites that now contain hundreds of pages of free advice. To please, if your kid struggles with reading and spelling, do go and find out more about to teach him/her. Dyslexics are really full of potential. If your kid struggles with reading and spelling please find out about what to do and how to help teach him/her.

Above all it is important for any dyslexic to know s/he is not stupid. Good self esteem is much more important than good reading skills, as are interpersonal skills. I have lived for over 50 years with dyslexia and I would not wish to have it taken away.
Noodle Soup

**Ingredients**
- Any cans of condensed soup I have in the pantry
- Two cans of home-brand creamed corn
- Four biscuits of 2 minute noodles (I buy bulk lots of 10 from the Asian food section of Coles)
- Loaf of wholegrain bread, rolls or garlic bread

**Method**
Make up soup as per instructions (I prefer the half water, half milk combination), add creamed corn then add the noodles crushing each biscuit as you go.

Serve with a loaf of wholegrain bread, a couple of rolls or home-brand garlic bread and you have enough food to easily feed a family of five including large double helpings for the husband and two hollow-legged teenagers.

This soup takes minutes to prepare, never comes out the same way twice, is warm, hearty and satisfying and can easily be extended to feed another seven (as it did for my brother, his wife and five children – including three teenagers), by simply adding another full can measure each of water and milk and another five biscuits of noodles.

There is never any left for the next day and the bowls are always wiped clean.

Cheesy Tuna Noodles

**Ingredients**
- My kids seriously prefer this to McDonalds and for her recent family birthday dinner my 11 year old requested it as her meal of choice (even above takeaway).

**Method**
Boil water and crush noodles into it. While noodles are cooking, drain tuna and place in a bowl, fork through and combine with cheese spread and any additional items.

When the noodles are done, drain them and tip back into the saucepan. Add the contents of the bowl to the noodles and stir through well. Serve immediately as it will get a bit gummy if left to stand (however it doesn’t affect the taste, or the kids liking it!)

Cheesy Tuna Noodles can be made up easily into double quantities at minute’s notice.

Cheesy Tuna Vegetables

**Ingredients**
- 1 large can of tuna in spring-water
- 1½ bags of Birdseye chunky frozen vegetables
- ½ a bottle of Kraft Cream Cheese Spread
- Loaf of wholegrain bread, rolls or garlic bread

**Method**
Microwave vegetables in a suitable casserole dish for 10 minutes on high and then stir.

Microwave for another 10 minutes on high and then stir through the tuna (forked through to loosen) and cream cheese spread (which can also be microwaved to make it more liquid for ease of dispensing, especially in winter).

Microwave on high for another 5-10 minutes (depending on your microwave). Stir through and serve immediately with bread, rolls or garlic bread.

You can also substitute other proteins for the tuna such as chicken, pork, finely diced steak, mince and even lentils or kidney beans, or change the type of vegetables you use to suit what is in the fridge.

I change the name to accommodate (e.g. Cheesy Steak & Vegies) and the kids think it a new recipe and wolf it down.
Did you know that in Australia each year there are over 500 fatal falls recorded by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, with over 110,000 hospital admissions resulting from falls? The cost of deaths and injuries due to slips, trips and falls is estimated to be around $1.3 billion per year, excluding indirect costs. Most people fear fire yet the number of deaths and injuries related to fire is considerably less, with 110 deaths and 3,300 injuries in 2006.

Admittedly, a large number of slips, trips and falls occur to older people but a considerable number of children, especially young children, are at risk. There is a lot we can do to make our environment safer for everyone. A report commissioned by the Australian Building Codes Board recommended a range of practical measures, including:

- Making sure balustrades can’t be climbed, particularly if the floor is more than a metre above the surface beneath, and that the spacing between railings is no larger than 100mm;
- Erecting child-proof barriers for opening windows of dwellings where the drop outside is more than a metre lower than the floor inside;
- Making sure that stairs are slip resistant, with correct height and width of steps and risers, and that they have safe handrails and balustrades that children can’t slip through or climb over;
- Installing slip resistant surfaces on floors at entrances and in bathrooms, toilets, kitchens and laundries;
- Reducing trip hazards such as small changes in floor heights, shower recesses, low furniture, objects in areas of high traffic, etc;
- Regularly checking that everything is still in good working order as well as fixing problems as soon as you notice them;

In addition, it is a good idea to always supervise children on balconies and keep doors that lead to balconies closed or locked (preferably with a bolt set high on the door).

Discourage children of all ages from playing on stairs and if you have young children, or they visit regularly, think about installing gates at the top and bottom. Move the furniture and pot plants away from balcony railings and balustrades to prevent children climbing on them.

Accidents can’t be avoided, but we can reduce the incidence of them by designing our environments with those less able and capable than ourselves in mind.

Sources:
Protecting our Children from Bullying

By Beverley Paine

This final article in the series on bullying asks the question: “What do you do when communication and inclusion doesn’t work?”

This can often be the case if the parent fails to recognise that their child’s behaviour is actually a form of coercion, intimidation or bullying. Most of us have grown up surrounded by acceptance of this type of behaviour. It permeates the media in advertising, movies and television shows as well as the stories we read. It is only when we or our children become victimized by this type of behaviour that we suddenly become aware it is a problem, and more often than not our reaction is to protect ourselves by acting in the same vein.

It can be very frustrating to approach the problem of aggressive behaviour with the aim of resolving conflict, only to find that the parent can see no fault in their child’s behaviour. As I’m not bold or confident enough to speak to parents directly I found the only way I could protect my children was to intervene, firstly in a non-obtrusive way, and then if the issues escalate, more directly.

At home educating gatherings I made a point of continuously observing the activity or play of the children. This grew from the same practice of supervising my children at home where I made sure that their needs were met and they were always safe. Children are resilient and can handle many situations on their own, but if they began to show distress from continuation of inappropriate behaviour, I would have no qualms about intervening. In some situations it is important for parents to intervene quickly to stop aggressive behaviour.

Simply saying “please stop that” is often all that necessary for younger children. I would usually crouch or kneel down so that I could make eye contact with all the children involved and talk about why the behaviour was inappropriate, taking care to listen patiently to all sides of the conflict. It wasn’t always effective: sometimes the offending children would move away, but at least those who were being hurt observed a parent acting protectively and respectfully in dealing with a difficult situation. Hopefully they will feel empowered to handle similar situations without the need for help in the future.

My hope was that the other adults present would take my cue and pay closer attention and perhaps become more engaged with the children. Once children know that adults care enough to intervene a lot of the misbehavior disappears. I tried not to worry that other parents might frown or be concerned about my actions: all adults are responsible for the safety of children, not just their own children. I rarely came across parents who took offence that I had spoken to their children, and if they did, was careful to avoid getting into an argument or making blaming or judgmental comments. It is my experience with this type of intervention that, although everyone finds it an uncomfortable process, it generally has positive outcomes. If, however, the group as a whole seems to side with the parent of the aggressively behaving child and you are feeling outnumbered and victimised, it’s probably time to find another group.

Intervening and explaining why some behaviours are not acceptable, rather than trying to work out who did what or who is to blame, demonstrates that there are boundaries we must observe in social situations in order for everyone to have an enjoyable time. Cooperation is more conducive to happy play than competition. Children learn this gradually and the examples we set are important. My little ‘chats’ focused on how to think and act cooperatively, by encouraging the children to develop empathy.

I would use these strategies – being there, intervening and explaining that the behaviour is inappropriate – with my own children when they bullied their siblings. I would focus on accountability, helping them understand that they were responsible for their behaviour. I’d also help them develop compassion by encouraging them to remember what it was like when they were the recipient of the same kind of behaviour. Regularly talking about how to respond to others, regardless of how they behave towards us (that is, not in the same way we are treated but how we want to be treated) is important too.

We all want to be treated with respect, to be listened to, to be heard and to be accepted for who we are. Having a bad day, feeling upset or frustrated and transferring those strong emotions onto others is not acceptable.

Children need to learn how to resolve conflicts and manage emotions, a process that takes all of childhood to learn. We need to be patient with children, show them better ways to behave, not unrealistically expect them to be expert peacemakers at an early age! Over time children will learn to develop the skills of cooperation, compromise, sacrificing, sharing and coping with injustices and impulse control.
They need plenty of opportunities to practice these skills in safe, protective environments. They also need to be reflective, to ask “is this really the situation, does my best friend really hate me, or is she simply tired, upset, disappointed and taking it out on me?” We can help by actively being there, observing our children, working through the processes with them and modeling these skills.

My children knew that when we were out and about socialising I’d be nearby watching as they played. If I thought the game was getting a bit rough or could quickly get out of hand I would often call out and ask them an unrelated question, letting all the children know that an adult was watching. If I saw something I thought was inappropriate or unsafe, I’d walk over and ask the children not to do it. If the other children said they were allowed to, I’d say my children were not, and I’d explain why.

It’s hard for play to get out of hand if enough parents who care are watching. Some people would say it is being over-protective, however I believe that children should learn their social skills primarily from the appropriate modeling of social skills and behaviour by adults. If adults aren’t present then children naturally socialise each other, but without guidance – which means they revert back to instinctive ‘survival of the fittest’ behaviour.

As our children go through their developmental stages, they need to be encouraged to explore different ways for working out problems and getting along with other people. This includes learning how to read social situations, make friends, and understand their social environment. Until our children demonstrate the ability to manage social situations on their own it’s our job as parents to help and protect them.

**BULLYING starts early**

Jane Hamilton

A few years ago (2006), Professor Richard Tremblay from the University of Montreal visited Perth to meet with health, education and crime prevention workers. His topic was Antisocial Behaviour in Children. Tremblay is a professor of paediatrics, psychiatry and psychology and has been studying human aggression for nearly 20 years. He initially was interested in adult aggression, but found its real beginnings in the early years.

His study on the development of physical aggression in children was published in the Infant Mental Health Journal, and concludes that aggression starts in the first year of birth. “This suggests that rather than having to learn TO aggress, children are learning NOT to aggress.” The peak age for physical aggression was not during early adulthood, adolescence, or even kindergarten, but rather between 24 and 42 months. Although there are important individual differences in children’s use of physical aggression, most of them will learn to use socially acceptable alternatives when angry or frustrated.

To prevent chronic physical aggression and its terrible consequences over the whole life course, modern societies should provide children with the optimal prenatal and postnatal environments” said Prof. Tremblay.

It is a bonus for home educating parents that we can be there for our children during this crucial social formative time - to be able to model behaviour, be on the spot when they need to navigate social issues and to be able to be considerate of the ‘other’ parent in the situation.

There are two sides to every situation, and every child needs the opportunity to learn what’s right and what’s not, under the loving and caring hands of everyone around them.

**Useful Websites**

[www.bullyingnoway.com.au](http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au) focuses on schools, but has useful information


[http://www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au) is a confidential telephone and online counseling service for children

[www.kenrigby.net](http://www.kenrigby.net) is an informative site about research on bullying in schools, including intervention techniques
Protect Your Posture

It’s never too late to start looking after your back. Too many of us spend too many hours sitting at our computers, whether for study or leisure or simply catching up with friends on social networking sites. Preventing back problems in the first place makes good sense, especially when it is relatively easy to do by following a few simple tips.

Instilling posture protecting habits in our children will reward them for the rest of their lives. Poor posture leads to aching muscles which can make it hard to be creative, concentrate or stay motivated. Follow these five rules for working comfortably on a desktop computer:

• Use a chair that supports your lower back and push your hips as far back as they can go in the chair.
• Place your keyboard and mouse at elbow level.
• Adjust your work surface and chair height to assume a comfortable position. Your shoulders should be relaxed and your wrists should be hovering over, not continually resting on, the desk.
• Position the top of the screen at eye level.
• Use a footrest if your feet aren’t resting comfortably on the floor.

Adjusting to working with your arms level with your elbows, sitting relatively upright with your back supported and your legs level with your hips, may feel uncomfortable in the beginning. Persevere with a few aches – they will soon go away and you’ll feel much better and more energetic after working.

Teaching without Teachers

In 1999 Professor Sugata Mitra introduced uneducated children in a Delhi slum to computers so that they can begin to gather information. While addressing a recent TED Global, Professor Mitra shared how “he has watched the children teach themselves – and others”. He noticed that children across India will enthusiastically learn to do what they want to learn to do, often within a few hours of access to computers and without help. He concluded that “children can learn to use computer on their own irrespective of who or where they are.”

In Cambodia he discovered that children prefer to learn maths on the computer outside of the classroom - “If you leave it on the pavement and all the adults go away, then they will show off to one another about what they can do,” said Professor Mitra. Follow up experiments suggest children around the world can learn complex tasks quickly with little supervision.

Instructables

Looking for inspiration for a technology projects? Instructables is a website full of instructions on how to do and make thousands of things! The seeds of this website germinated at the MIT Media Lab as the future founders of Squid Labs built places to share their projects and help others. Anyone can become a member of the support forum or sign up to receive their regular newsletter.

Categories include bikes, decorating, electronics, furniture, gardening, jewellery, kids, science, sewing and woodworking and lots more! Children’s activities include making toys, gifts, useful items, art and craft ideas.


Instructables

Looking for inspiration for a technology projects? Instructables is a website full of instructions on how to do and make thousands of things! The seeds of this website germinated at the MIT Media Lab as the future founders of Squid Labs built places to share their projects and help others. Anyone can become a member of the support forum or sign up to receive their regular newsletter.

Categories include bikes, decorating, electronics, furniture, gardening, jewellery, kids, science, sewing and woodworking and lots more! Children’s activities include making toys, gifts, useful items, art and craft ideas.

Source: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-10663353
Education in the News

Education in the News, http://hea.asn.au/resources/disp_res.asp?type=4&id=220, features summaries of news items that may be of interest to Australian home educators from a variety of sources. Elsa, the HEA News Editor, welcomes your contributions to this regular column on the HEA website. Recent entries include:

**Telstra offer grants to help isolated children:** Community-based organisations can apply for up to $75,000 a year from Telstra Foundation for programs that use information and communication technology to improve the health and well being of disadvantaged children.

**Plan for Australian Baccalaureate** raises concerns from high school teachers and school leaders. Adelaide Now Aug 17

**Fast track teacher training planned:** Government plans to place accountants, engineers, laboratory technicians and other professionals in front of classrooms after eight weeks of teacher training. The Age Aug 11

**Tougher truancy laws in NSW** implemented last year resulted in 658 parents prosecuted for their children's habitual non-attendance, up from 100 in 2007. According to news.com.au (Aug 15), tougher truancy laws in NSW implemented last year resulted in 658 parents prosecuted for their children's habitual non-attendance, up from 100 in 2007. Under the Education Act, children aged between six and 17 must either be enrolled and attend school, or be registered for home schooling, or participating in approved training or employment. An Information Package about home education is available from the Board of Studies: http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/manuals/pdf_doc/home-edu-info-pack-10.pdf.

**Hornsby Youth Choir Led by Homeschooling Mum**

The Hornsby Police and Citizens Youth Club has established a new Performing Arts Centre. As well as Theatre, Improvisation, Music Theatre, Symphonic Band, Just Strings Ensemble, Concert and Big Bands, a new Youth Choir is now also being established.

The senior Youth Choir is a non-audition group, suitable for ages 15 to 30 and is to be directed by local singing teacher, Ian Fisher. The Junior Youth Choir, for ages 8 to 18, is to be conducted by local homeschooling mum, choral conductor and private music teacher, Donrita Reefman. Repertoire will be varied and range from early music to contemporary, with a focus on healthy voice technique, singing in harmony and developing musicianship skills along the way. There will be much movement and "mouth on" time.

This is a fun way to learn fundamental musical skills, using the musical instrument which comes for free: the voice! Junior choir time is on Friday afternoons from 4:15 - 5:30 pm. Senior choir goes from 4:30 - 6:30 pm. For more information contact the Hornsby PCYC on hornsby@pcycnsw.org.au or 02 9477 2310. Alternatively, contact Donrita at donrita@iprimus.com.au if you are interested in the junior choir.
Eisteddfod Success

HEA member, Joshua (age 11) came 2nd in his level in the Joondalup Eisteddfod in WA playing a Bach piece on the piano. His parents are very proud of him as he’s only been playing piano for a year.

Sleek Geeks!

Home educated Year 2 student Marlow got a highly commended for the ABC/Australian Museum science video competition Sleek Geeks in the primary school section with his entry “A Passion for Beetles.”

His mother, Sophia, also noted that another homeschooler, Aaron was also on the list with his Year 5 entry called “Stick Insects - Defence Masters”. More information about the competition can be found on http://www.abc.net.au/science/sleekgeeks/eureka/2010/.

The University of Sydney Sleek Geeks Science Eureka School Prizes are part of the Australian Museum Eureka Prizes, Australia’s most comprehensive science awards. The idea is to communicate a scientific concept(s) in a way that is accessible and entertaining while painlessly increasing the public’s science knowledge or, as the Sleek Geeks like to say: “Learn something without even noticing”. Entries take the form of a one to three minute video piece and a 250 word description.

Surfing Champ

Aussie surfing junior world champion, Jack Robinson, is one of many sporting high achieving youngsters home educated. As are US yachting enthusiasts siblings Abby and Zac Sunderland.

Home Ed Researcher

This brief review will cover the Top 5 Board Games in Children's Education for 2010. Each one has received at least one accolade or award from educational institutions and Board Game Associations. Education Board Games are a standard feature in our house. We usually manage to turn any board game into a fun lesson for our kids. However, not all board games were created equal. Some are better than others. Here, in no particular order are our reviews of five very popular educational Kids Board Games for 2010.

1. The Brainbox Game Series

The Brainbox series of board or and games are of UK origin and have been a runaway success. The basic thrust of the Brainbox range is this: Players have 10 seconds to study information on one side of the card before being asked a question from the back which has been chosen by the roll of the die. It is a social and memory recall game that is designed to foster interaction and cognitive development. It is suitable for 8yrs and up. This has been a particularly successful educational board game for both classroom and home. Brainbox can be used with whole families and the pace is set by the players. Subjects covered include Geography Australian Facts, Maths, A First Pictures Brainbox for 6yrs and under, and Nature. We recommend Brainbox as suitable for homeschool environments. Brainbox doesn't bog you down with loads of rules and strategies. It is straight cognitive development. Brainbox takes very little preparation, the game is quick and the questions offer plenty of variety on a number of educational subjects.

2. Akumulate

Akumulate is an Australian designed educational board game for kids after the manner of Scrabble. It was designed by world renowned educational guru, Dr. Wood and the Mind Challenge Centre. Akumulate helps develop numerical and spatial thinking by intersecting numbers with space. Players must master the space to control the numbers and they must do it by correct (though basic) mathematics. This educational board game requires some patience to grasp the rules and would be suitable for 10 years and up. It is not a fast game but one of methodical thinking and constant add, subtract, multiply and divide.

Conscious of the difficulty of getting kids to enjoy maths, Dr. Wood's Akumulate is attention grabbing with its strong blue and red colours. The Akumulate pieces are enjoyable to play with and are generally good quality. The only downside to this game is that it really will only ever do one thing and, if at the end of the day, you don't enjoy numbers, it is not likely to hold your attention. However, as a teaching tool it does work and if you love numbers, you will flourish in this educational board game.

3. Mount Kilajava

Mount Kilajava is a Fair Trade Coffee Board Game from the people of Monsoon Games in New Zealand. Though the board game itself is new and not well known, the ethos behind it is growing in popularity amongst educators who use board games with kids. That ethos is about the promotion of Fair Trade and equitable resources.

The game puts the young player in the hot seat as a farmer who must deal with economics, bad weather and intelligent trade in order to prosper. As an educational board game for kids it has limited use but that limited use is not to be mistaken for no use. Despite the fact that it is only a two player game it is very social and a good way of developing bonds between friends and family members and enhances the understanding of the nature of primary production.

Mt Kilajava makes an important point; that for farmers in the developing world growing coffee is a very precarious occupation, and slumps in world coffee prices can and do have a catastrophic effect on the lives of millions of growers who are reliant on coffee for their income.
4. Sorts for Kids

Sorts for Kids recently won the prestigious Children's Game of the Year. As an educational game, Sorts has been very successful in introducing the concept of "putting things in order". It plays on the fascination of organising and categorising any one of a hundred subjects. It makes requests of kids like, "Sort these things by their height - from shortest to tallest: school desk, golf buggy, adult lion, shopping trolley."

The beauty is the simplicity of the game play and the fact that the game can cater for a larger number of players. The educational value of this board game is its development and discrimination of objects in the world around them. Sorts helps develop discernment and levels of categorisation that will be developed throughout their education and is also a lot of fun. One really fun part of Sorts for Kids is the "Line Up". When players pick a line-up card they must line themselves up according to all manner of interesting criteria.

5. Peoples of the Planet

Peoples of the Planet is a culture and history based educational board game for kids and comes from France. It has won two prestigious awards: the Corporate Anti-Racism Award; and the Dr Toy, Most Socially Responsible Game Award. As a great world explorer, the players travel back in time visiting the most interesting peoples and places in history. The goal of Peoples of the Planet is to collect Exploration Cards from each of the nine time periods of History to make up their Great Book of Ages.

Its age range is generally 10 years and above and it can accommodate up to five players. This is a particularly useful educational board game for small group settings such as homeschool groups.

Home Education Help Needed

There are hundreds of support groups and individual contacts listed on the HEA website. The HEA is looking for individuals willing to be a central HEA phone contact person for each state - someone who can answer questions about local registration issues, support groups, and general enquiries and to help families find other home educators in their area or region.

Also needed are people confident they can answer questions about any specific area - for example, how to homeschool using a Charlotte Mason or Natural Learning approach, or Single Parent Homeschooling, or Homeschooling Teens.
What's On Around the Country: Camps, Conferences & More


**National Homeschool Network presents its first Online Conference**, a week-long celebration supporting and promoting home education during National Home Education Week, 15th - 19th November, featuring veteran home educator Beverley Paine as guest speaker. For more information contact Jenni [rainbowdivas@gmail.com](mailto:rainbowdivas@gmail.com).

**Hunter Valley/Newcastle Area homeschoolers** are hosting an all-Inclusive, once-a-term Social Day on the first Friday of each term. Friday 15th October, from 10.30am at Maitland Park, off Les Darcy Drive, Maitland. BYO Picnic lunch. For more info or to find out about other events, visit [http://hunterhomeed.proboards.com/index.cgi](http://hunterhomeed.proboards.com/index.cgi).

**SA Community School Adds Homeschool Program:** South Australian home educator Nina Ward has helped to put together the following exciting pilot program beginning at Kirinari Community School (Unley, SA) in 4th term 2010 for homeschoolers. Kirinari is a not-for-profit community school servicing alternative primary education needs in Adelaide. It will run a dedicated homeschool program one day a week where children can spend the day doing fun educational group activities and parents can have a well earned rest. Expressions of interest are welcomed via the homeschooling link (right hand side) on [www.kirinari.sa.edu.au](http://www.kirinari.sa.edu.au). Final fees and learning schedule will be set based on feedback from parents.

**Interested in Camping?** Are you interested in camping with other homeschoolers, camping on other family's properties or welcoming homeschool families to camp at your place? The Yahoo group [ausshomeschoolcampers](mailto:ausshomeschoolcampers) will help you stay in touch!


**Lake Tinaroo Camp Far North Qld**, 7th to 11th October 2010. For more information visit [http://belindamoore.com/camps](http://belindamoore.com/camps).


**Nelson Camp** 2010 9th – 14th Nov 2010. Come to Kamkendi (Aboriginal word for happy meeting place) campsite for a relaxing, informal homeschool camp. Costs: 6 bed room with ensuite $120/night; 4 bed room (no ensuite) $70/night. $50 deposit appreciated by mid October. Email or call Charlene for enquiries and bookings: (03) 5584 7333 [stringybarklane@bigpond.com](mailto:stringybarklane@bigpond.com).

**2011 Home Education CampFest** – Australia’s annual homeschool camp, conference and festival will be held near Albury, NSW, on March 22nd to 27th. Five days of children’s activities, parent workshops, fun and relaxation by Lake Hume. Hosting the 2011 HEA AGM. For bookings and more information visit [www.rainbowdivas.com](http://www.rainbowdivas.com).

**Camp Willochra Melrose, Finders Ranges SA.** 11th—15th. Linda Maher is organising this popular camp during October. For more information email [lindamaher08@gmail.com](mailto:lindamaher08@gmail.com).

**Camp With Wings** annual teens camp (now in its 7th year) will be held at Camp Constable, Mt Glorious Qld on 8th to 15th January 2011. For bookings or more information please visit [http://campwithwings.org](http://campwithwings.org).

**Raymond Island Camp, South Gippsland Vic.** 28th Jan to 3rd Feb. For bookings and more information contact Donna [dhallam@iinet.net.au](mailto:dhallam@iinet.net.au).
We sat in the circle together, holding hands and sharing affirmations for the New Year that stretched before us.

After seven days with my friends, most of whom I had only met for the first time that week, I wanted to share my hopes and dreams. In the circle, my turn to speak got closer. But I wasn’t quite sure what to say, how to express my gratitude to these people.

Every January a group of diverse young people gather together and spend one week as a community at Camp With Wings (CWW). Some of them know each other, many of them don’t. The common thread – home education – links people studying at home with people who have since moved on to formal study, be it high school, TAFE or university. CWW reminds everyone that there is something special, unique, about the experience.

What first struck me about the camp was the overwhelming acceptance from peers and staff alike. I had left my home schooling days behind seven years ago, opting to attend high school, and at first I was concerned that this experience would separate me from the others.

From the moment I walked into camp I was greeted by friendly strangers and suddenly I knew I would be ok. People come from all walks of life, and that was not only something accepted and encouraged at CWW, but also something we could talk about with each other.

It didn’t matter that my home education experiences were years behind me - what mattered was that I was there and so were supportive, interesting and friendly peers I may never have otherwise met.

Camp With Wings founder Janine Banks-Watson describes the camp as a place to “open your wings and grow from a different opportunity.”

“I really want everyone to go away with a greater understanding of their own potential and feel loved and supported by others going through that same experience,” she says. Inspired by America’s Not Back to School Camp, founded by Grace Llewellyn, Janine says it’s important for Australia to have their own camp for home educated teenagers.

“Home education communities can be far flung and often we don’t have many chances to connect.”

Unlike the home education camps of my childhood, which were family-based, CWW is focused on engaging home educated teenagers, connecting them with each other in a unique environment.

“I think it’s essential for teenagers to be able to see themselves from a different perspective…to have their visions broadened,” Janine says. She has structured the camp so that we not only feel comfortable and supported, but also have the opportunity to share our interests with other people.

Among the 30 or so people at camp, I found myself in a group of eight people, led by an amazing girl from America who was in her early 20s. Most of the other group leaders were a similar age, and I liked that they were given the opportunity to develop greater leadership skills in such a supportive environment, while also helping us develop those same skills.

Everyone was encouraged to sign up to run a workshop on something that interested them. That week I was taught how to spin poi, belly-dance, and some of the basics of Reiki. Sometimes the people teaching me were older, and sometimes they were younger, but at CWW it didn’t matter.

What did matter was that I spent a week away from my familiar friends and family, learning things about other people and about myself.

When the affirmation circle came around to me, I knew exactly what to say: “I intend to keep in touch with all the friends I’ve made here.”
With the support of the HEA I was thankful to be able to attend the first ever Unschooling Conference on the Gold Coast Qld from the 3rd—7th September, 2010. Organisers Erica Perry and Maree Riedel from Brisbane Unschoolers did a superb job managing over 100 families during an extremely busy week. Tallebudgera Tourist Park was a fantastic venue for the children with three swimming pools and plenty of space for mixing with friends. www.goldcoasttouristparks.com.au/park/tallebudgera-creek.

The many ‘grey nomads’ on their winter sojourn must have been taken by surprise to see so many school aged children enjoying themselves during school hours. Three marquees were set up on a large lawn near the camp kitchen and a daily sausage sizzle (as well as other goodies) were organised for lunches and snacks.

Families gathered together just to pass the time as well as attend the very full conference schedule. In true unschooling style there were lots of babies being breastfed and children accessing their parents. One of the marquees was set up with plenty of activities for children, especially little ones and we were treated to displays of bubble blowing, face-painting and made marvelous clay models as well as other great craft activities.

I was unable to make it to all of the talks, choosing to spend part of the day with my husband and teenage daughters. Dayna and Joe Martin from the USA, Bob Collier and Arun Pradhun from Australia were the main speakers, complemented with sessions by Anne O’Casey, Maureen Tully and Cate Crombie and many more unschooling parents.

The dads discussion group was one of my highlights from the week. It was amazing to see over 70 dads sit together and discuss their joys and issues regarding unschooling. Some of the questions and comments centred around family background and a desire to do better than their own fathers did. The men were careful to point out that their parents were products of a society that a generation ago promoted stoicism and obedience which did not lend itself towards a caring and loving environment. Expressions of love and concern for their children, a strong desire to always remain connected with their children. Some expressed sadness, even jealousy at having to leave for work each day because there was so much going on at home. The time ended all too quickly and I think many of the dads could have continued on longer.

Several ‘trade fair’ tables were set up for conference attendees to showcase their home businesses etc. I was able to set up an HEA table with HEA products and information about our organisation. The Home Education Curriculum Outline: A Study Guide for Kindergarten to Year 12 and Home Education Resources proved popular.

Overall the Unschooling Conference was an incredible success. Erica and Maree are planning another retreat around the same time next year, perhaps at a different venue. Even if you don’t identify as an ‘unschooler’ there is plenty of opportunity to connect and support home education in Australia. Please keep an eye out for more information and consider attending next year’s retreat – it can only get bigger and better.

Library Resources

- iPL2: information you can trust provides an online reference guide to internet resources. It merges the collections of resources from the Internet Public Library (IPL) and the Librarians’ Internet Index (LII) websites. The ‘For Kids’ section includes access to homework help, dictionaries and encyclopedias etc in the reference section; a reading zone; links to articles on health and nutrition, computers and the internet, history, sports, maths, science and fun stuff. There is also access to newspapers and magazines, special collections and a ‘For Teens’ section, as well as categories which list resources by subject.

- Read newspapers at home for free! Thanks to Public Library Services and SA’s public libraries, anyone with an SA public library card can now access full ‘page-by-page turning’ electronic versions of the Advertiser and the Australian for free, just by using their home computer (or anywhere with an internet connection). There are over 1000 full version titles from which to choose. To get an idea of the reading experience visit http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KEun_HQ7kTE or to access the service visit http://www.libraries.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=213. You will need to be a member of your local public library and have your library card handy. For more information, visit www.libraries.sa.gov.au or contact your local public library.
HEA position on a National Education Curriculum, by Paul Reader

It is likely that from time to time the HEA will be approached as to its position on a National Curriculum. The HEA will always defer to recognition of its members as a diverse sector of society, with individual views on the value of a National Curriculum; therefore the HEA, while recognising the perceived need for a National Curriculum, supports educational choice and diverse forms of education which are the right of parents to choose.

As a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Australia has consistently supported this parental choice in the international arena. One can question whether a national curriculum benefits a society through standardisation and portability of qualifications; or whether it hinders innovation, creativity and development, by promoting sameness rather than diversity.

Historically, a similar experience has played out in the vocational education and training sector, where the National Training System was introduced during the 1990s. The system has led to portability of qualifications and workers capacity to migrate across industries, but it has also led a shift towards more work-based learning and innovation in industry with training providers and the system left trying to catch up with industry needs.

A national curriculum would fix the orientation of schools towards education content determined by a central authority, and leave open the door of education innovation for those who remain unsubscribed to such a system.

HEA FAQ Youth Allowance

"My child is about to turn 16 and I've been told he can't get Youth Allowance?"

Earlier this year HEA wrote to the federal Minister for Education and Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs asking for home educated students to be uniformly eligible for Youth Allowance. We researched the legislation and came up with a couple of suggestions to help clarify matters for Centrelink. So far there has been no reply, but it can take months for Ministers to write back.

The stumbling block is the requirement that students ‘be working towards a qualification equivalent to Year 12’ at ‘an accredited educational institution’. HEA argued that for registered (and equivalent) home educated students, both of these requirements should be satisfied as state government education authorities have approved the home education program.

Despite this many families have been able to access Youth Allowance for their children. In some cases it has required persistence any several visits to Centrelink, especially if the staff have no prior knowledge or understanding of home education. The Social Security Act defines home education on this page: http://www.facsia.gov.au/guides_actslaw/ssa/2110d390/764e8d44/26291d26.html.

Beverley Paine, HEA Committee Member

Formation of Publications Subcommittee

At the September 16th HEA Committee meeting a resolution was passed to officially form a Publications Subcommittee, lead by Beverley Paine. The subcommittee will hold four online planning meetings each year and stay in touch via email communication. Its first task is to call for volunteers to join the subcommittee and then to determine and assign roles and tasks, including:

Managing Editor – keeps track of what’s happening when, arrange team meetings (to decide themes, etc.), keeps in touch with and supports volunteers, liaises with other editors and HEA committee, makes sure deadlines are met;

News Editor (Office Administrator Assistant) – sources news items of interest to home educators, publishes to HEA website, manages and updates information on website as necessary, produces weekly html newsletter and sends to members, deals with news related inquiries.

Commissioning Editor – sources articles and items, liaises with proof readers and copyeditors, finalises content and sends to Production Manager / Layout Artist, uploads items to website;

Proof Readers and Copyeditors – check content for typos, grammar, spelling, coherency, etc.

Production Manager / Layout Artist – arranges articles and items into final layout for printing;

Print Manager – liaises with team, deals with printers, gets printed magazine to Distribution Manager;

Advertising Manager – accepts adverts from HEA members and liaises with Layout Artist; role may be expanded in the future to include soliciting paid advertisements and managing advertising accounts.

Some of these tasks take much longer than others – layout takes around 30 hours per issue, whereas proof reading may take 1-3 hours because we have half a dozen proof readers but only one layout artist. Many hands make light work and even if you don’t want to take on a managerial role, help in all areas is appreciated. Once the subcommittee is established we are keen to get young people involved as well.
Translating Every Day Life into Educational Jargon, just one of dozens of books, e-books and resources available from Beverley Paine’s Always Learning Books.

Save time and simplify your homeschooling life. Learn from experienced homeschoolers how to write your own curriculum. It really is that easy!

Downunder Literature
http://www.downunderlit.com/

English & handwriting resources introduce classic literature, rich in cultural heritage, and help teach the basics, with a distinct “downunder” flavour.

Homeschool Australia
http://homeschoolaustralia.com
Home educate the easy way. Simplify and save time. Learn from experienced homeschoolers how to write your own curriculum.
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Curriculum Resources

HEA Courses
Cathy: 0417 264 564; missc@live.com.au

Newsletter, Magazine, Resource Directory
Beverley: editor@hea.asn.au

Distance Education
Rachael: rachel.wynberg@suasive.com.au

Centrelink
Marion - marion@alurestanthorpe.com.au

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Home Education Association Inc.
(HEA) has been formed to support, promote and encourage the practice of
home education.

http://www.hea.asn.au/