

## **How Do I Start Homeschooling My Preschooler?**

**by Susan McGlohn, Sterling**

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Preschool is the easiest in the world to homeschool, because really, you don't have to do anything different than any other stay-at-home parent! You don't need a boxed curriculum or a "reading readiness" program to follow. New homeschooling parents want to know what they can do with their preschoolers, though, so I have compiled the following list of activities and books to help them see how much their child is already learning and doing to prepare themselves for more formal education in later years.

So, to put it in educationese:

### **Curriculum Resources**

Books from the church, library, friends, and all the wonderful resources offered by our communities such as zoos, parks, beaches, flower gardens, and trails.

### **Classroom Environment**

**Religious Education:** Church, our own homes, family devotion time

**Home Economics:** Kitchen, laundry, etc.

**Reading Lab:** The couch, Mommy's lap, backyard swing

**Social Studies:** The community around us—library, doctor's office, dentist, bakery, grocery store, bank, fire station, police station, playground and parks, etc.

**Science Lab:** Ponds, zoos, gardens, farms, our own backyard

**Arts and Crafts:** The kitchen table or the picnic table outside, and ample supplies of materials

**Math Lab:** The kitchen, the tool shed or workshop, the grocery store, the toy box

### **Personalized Curriculum**

Developed by Mom and Dad, and guided by the interests of the children. Start with a daily rhythm, such as mealtimes, reading time, family devotions, and work time and play time, outside time, bath and bedtimes.

After these things, the most important thing for preschoolers is the chance to build up their base knowledge of the world through interaction with it, so that when they hear the word "banana" for example, it conjures up a taste, a smell, a sight, and when they hear "bulldozer" there is a sound, a sight, maybe even a motion and a smell that comes to mind. They need to know a banana is sweet, but not the same sweet as an apple or a cookie. A bulldozer makes a loud noise, but a different noise from a train or a bus. A poodle is not the same as an English setter, but they are both dogs. This knowledge comes from experiences, and those experiences pave the way for future learning and reading comprehension.

Read books together about all sorts of things, like dogs, and bugs, and dinosaurs, and fire trucks and families and adventures and rhymes and fairy tales. And then go see the real things: dinosaurs, bugs, fire trucks. Ask for a tour of the bakery. DO! DO! DO!

Take them with you when you run errands and go to restaurants and visit friends, instead of leaving them with a babysitter. As they watch us interact with other adults they learn great social skills, in the safety and guidance of their parents.

## **Developing Large and Fine Motor Skills**

We tend to be preoccupied with developing fine motor skills while raising children in a society lacking in active work and play that develops large motor skills. Get outside, every day if possible! Buy a rain slicker and boots and jump in puddles and make snowmen and go for walks in the woods. Go to the playground a few times a week and climb and run and swing and slide and play tag.

Schools use tracing wavy lines and following mazy trails in workbooks to develop fine motor skills, but in the home, toddlers naturally do this during their play.

Here are some examples:

- Tearing paper and fabrics
- Squeezing out sponges and rags
- Playing with playdough
- Opening jars
- Constructing with Legos, tinker toys, pop beads, etc.
- Drawing in the mud with a stick
- Working jigsaw puzzles
- Dialing the toy telephone
- Drawing with sidewalk chalk

Now, you might look at this list and wonder about it, but part of my physical therapy after I broke my wrist was squeezing a ball of Playdoh® for 5 minutes every day (and it hurt to even do that!), and washing dishes by hand three times a day! All developing fine motor skills means is being able to perform various tasks requiring small movements of the fingers and hands. Watch your baby picking up Cheerios one at a time, and you will see her developing the fine motor skills needed later for school.

## **Socialization:**

Don't little ones need to be around other little ones to learn social skills? Well, I don't know about you, but I wouldn't want a group of 3-year-olds teaching my own how to behave. Socialization happens best within the family, where sharing, taking turns, and caring for one another comes naturally and is modeled for the little ones by those who are older. That same baby who was picking up the Cheerios one at a time is glad to give every other one to Mommy!

But I understand being tired of playing Candyland for the 15th time this week, and interaction for Mom and Dad is important too, so join a play group or attend a park day, make some friends who support you and your homeschooling efforts, and share the babysitting and go to the zoo together. The little ones will enjoy having another pint-sized playmate or two, and you will be close by to help them learn to settle disputes and to be gentle and kind to the babies and not hassle the older children too much. That is true socialization.

But don't just take my word for it! There are lots of links about beginning homeschooling and homeschooling the early years available. Please read those, and blessings on you and your household as you start your homeschooling journey.

### **About the Author**

Susan McGlohn homeschools her three children in Sterling.

### **VaHomeschoolers Voice Publication Information**

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### **Recommended Books for Homeschooling Preschoolers**

- [Learning All the Time](#)  
by John Holt
- [Teach Your Own](#)  
by John Holt
- [Better Late Than Early](#)  
by Dr. Raymond Moore and Dorothy Moore
- [Mister Rogers Talks With Parents](#)  
by Fred Rogers and Barry Head
- [Mister Rogers' Playbook](#)  
by Fred Rogers
- [The Three R's](#)  
by Ruth Beechick