

A photograph of a child sitting on a wooden fence post. The child is wearing a blue denim jacket, light-colored corduroy pants, and dark brown leather shoes with light-colored laces. The background is a blurred green field with a white fence and a building in the distance. The text 'HOME-SCHOOL STYLES' is overlaid on the right side of the image, enclosed in a white rectangular box with horizontal lines above and below the text.

HOME- SCHOOL STYLES

PHOTO: LOUISE GIBBONS

A top-down view of a child's art supplies and drawings on a dark wooden table. In the center, a large white serif font spells out 'WALDORE'. Below it, in a smaller, italicized serif font, is 'Words and Photos by Deanna McCasland'. To the left, a child's hands are visible, drawing on a large sheet of paper with blue and green crayons. The drawing shows a pair of glasses and two small figures. To the right, there are several art supplies: a wooden box with markers, a black tin of colored pencils, a blue tin of watercolor paints, and a purple tin of colored pencils. Two drawings are also visible: one with a yellow sun and the text 'TWO GRAY W...', and another with a blue bird and the text 'TWO GRAY W...'.

WALDORE

Words and Photos by Deanna McCasland

If you could describe the Waldorf style in your own words, what would it be?

For my family, Waldorf has been so much more than just a way to educate my children. It has been a positive lifestyle change as well. Waldorf is everything it appears to be and more. It is about peaceful parenting, getting back to simplicity and nature. It is about nurturing the child as a whole. The focus isn't just on their minds, but also on their hands and hearts. I want my children to know how to grow their own food and knit a hat just as much as I want them to understand long division. Waldorf covers all of this and more. Children are allowed to blossom at their own pace, and I adore how the lessons are based on nature, imitation, and imagination. Some days there's no book work. Sometimes math is simply counting eggs or happening in the garden. Or we're taking language arts outdoors and writing our ABC's in the dirt with a stick. Science follows the flow of the seasons and social studies starts with our own community. It makes us feel very connected to each other, our home, and with Mother Nature.





Why did you choose to do Waldorf

We chose the Waldorf method because it fit best with our life-style. We are modern homesteaders in a little cabin in the mountains – staying in-tune with nature, being outdoors – and the seasons play a heavy role in our everyday lives. For example, in the spring, it is time to plant seeds. I know our Waldorf curriculum will support this and offers botany lessons so we can break down what is really happening under the ground. Now, do you need to live in the woods or close to nature to home school following Waldorf? Absolutely not! Anyone can plant a small garden, nature-walk at a local park, and simplify their lives in general.

I adore how Waldorf supports simplicity with toys and media. When we first gravitated toward this style, we were up to our ears in plastic, junky toys. Over time, we were encouraged by Waldorf to weed out the junk and replace it with natural, quality items. Media was a hard thing for us to cut out at first, but after the first week or so, I couldn't even get my children to watch television during the week. We do have a special movie night on Saturday evenings, so now TV is a treat. We were even inspired to go the extra mile and cut out dishwashers, microwaves, air conditioning and heaters like my husband and I grew up. You don't have to live that simply to be a Waldorf family. It's much more about the connection you have with your children and keeping the magic of childhood alive.



Are there any disadvantages of Waldorf?

The only disadvantages we had were at the beginning. It is so easy to jump on Pinterest and come across these beautiful, Waldorf inspired homes and feel the need to purge everything at once. I tried to rush into it way too quickly when the reality is that living a Waldorf lifestyle takes time. There's so much online about rhythms, cutting out media, throwing out plastic toys, baking bread, nature tables, knitting and so forth. When I first started, I didn't know how to knit or bake bread, but I eventually learned, and it took us about a year to weed out the toys. This was not something that happened overnight, and we are still a work in progress.

Can you give an example of a typical day that reflects the Waldorf lifestyle?

I adore how Waldorf approaches all subjects, but one of my favorites is Language Arts. For example, children learn the upper case alphabet in Kindergarten. There are many ways to approach this depending on the curriculum (we use Oak Meadow). But for us, the night before the main lesson, we read a fairy tale at bedtime that relates to our new letter. The following morning, we discuss the fairy tale, and I introduce the letter and a chalkboard drawing that relates to the story and connects all of this back to the letter. The children draw their own version of the letter and connect it to the story in the main lesson book. For the rest of the week we practice writing the letter while out on nature walks in the dirt, made out of sticks or other nature findings. We bake bread in the shape of the letter or mold it out of beeswax. The child also plays game and draws the letters on my hand or back while I guess what it is and visa versa. There is also another game we play where I dust flour out on the grass in the shape of the letter and the child "walks" the letter with their entire body. Poetry is introduced early on, and they grasp the sound of the letter by reciting poems and rhymes. This one lesson goes far beyond just putting it in their heads. We incorporate the hands and the heart as well.

What would you say to other homeschooling mamas who are considering it?

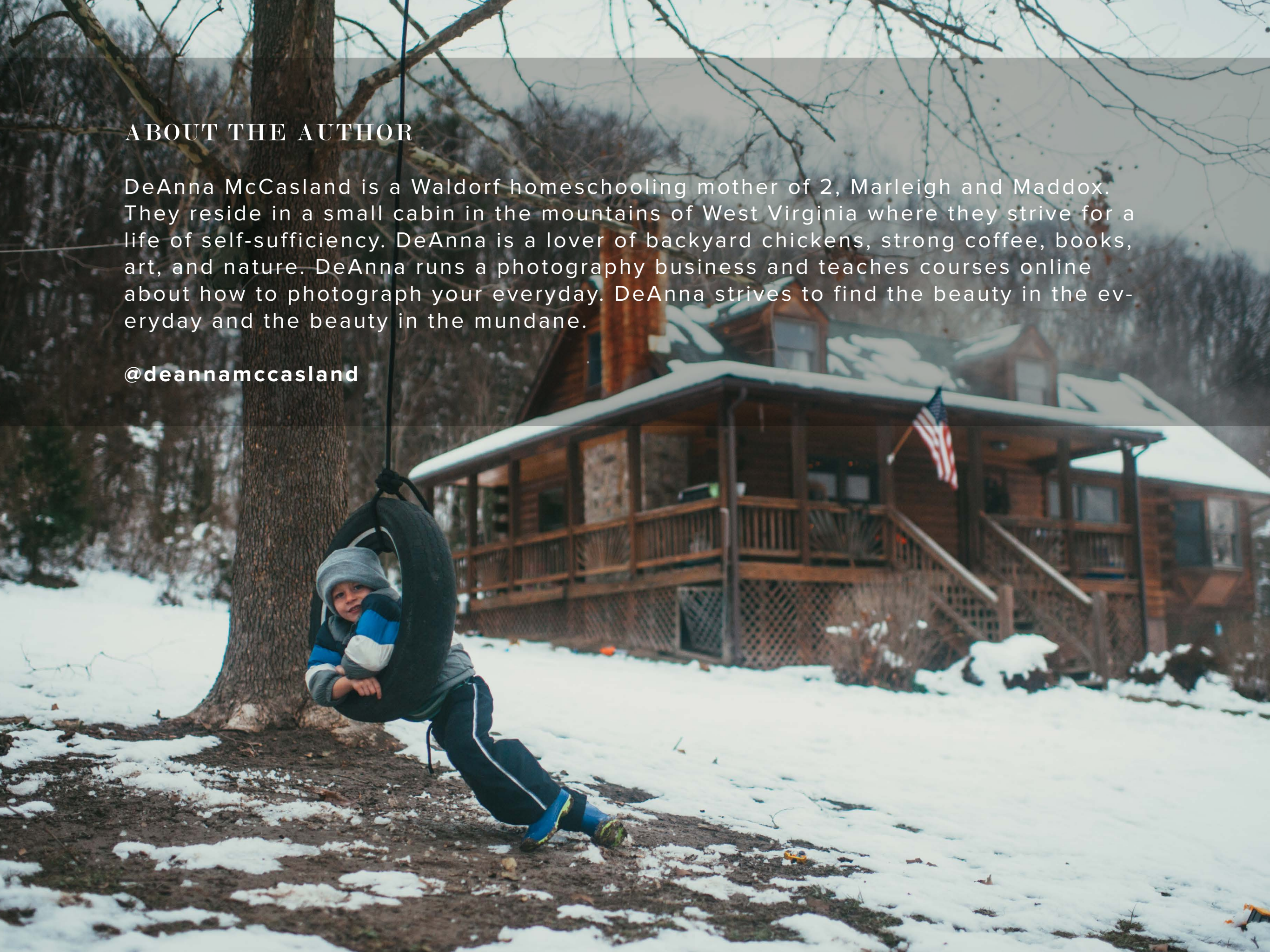
The best advice I could give is to take it one day at a time. Don't get overwhelmed by the beauty you see on the Waldorf homeschool blogs. Remember that the natural "stuff" Waldorf encourages can come later. First, take the time to do the research, work on finding a daily rhythm, and find what works for you before moving on to the aesthetics of Waldorf. Having a steady rhythm seems to be the most important part of our daily routines, so I highly recommend making it the main focus. Take a few days and let your day flow how it normally would. Keep a notepad close by and write down what is happening. After a week or so, reflect back to those days and write what you want it to look like and slowly let yourself fall into the new routine. Once you have a good framework to go on, start making other changes one at a time. The most important thing to remember is that it's not about having a room full of all natural wooden toys or that you use beeswax crayons (while they are fabulous by the way), or that you know how to knit. The most thing is the connection you have with your child. It is so important to be fully present with them because the first seven years in Waldorf is based around imitation. Keeping childhood magical and peaceful is the key.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DeAnna McCasland is a Waldorf homeschooling mother of 2, Marleigh and Maddox. They reside in a small cabin in the mountains of West Virginia where they strive for a life of self-sufficiency. DeAnna is a lover of backyard chickens, strong coffee, books, art, and nature. DeAnna runs a photography business and teaches courses online about how to photograph your everyday. DeAnna strives to find the beauty in the everyday and the beauty in the mundane.

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CHARLOTTE MASON

Words and photos by Amy Seegers

If you could describe the Charlotte Mason style in your own words, what would it be?

Charlotte Mason is a learning style rich in art, history, nature, character building, and the Bible. For us, it's getting out of the house and learning about the world around us, whether it's checking the ditches on our gravel road for milkweed, kayaking and stopping at every sandbar to find animal bones, or trying to catch the biggest fish, only to realize it was spawning and then going home to water-color or journal it all.

Why did you choose to do Charlotte Mason?

I chose this method for two reasons. I've already gone down the road of doing what others were doing and was miserable. Any style of learning that supports character building, observing creation, and finding satisfaction in making things with your hands all while glorifying the Lord has my vote! It fits our family's style of learning. We love observing nature. Our bookshelves were filled with good books. We love art and reading. When I found out about Ambleside and Beautiful Feet, we discovered that the way we loved to learn was really a style! We've never looked back.

Are there any disadvantages of Charlotte Mason?

I haven't been impressed with grammar or phonics. I am constantly looking for and tweaking different styles. We have settled on All About Reading and Spelling for the young ones, and we use Bananagrams to make it more hands-on. I'm not a fan of workbooks or diagramming sentences to death. I'm trying to raise lifelong learners, not shove facts in them so they'll score the highest on a placement test. I decided to create my own materials with a focus on writing and grammar. It's not perfect, but it works for us right now.

Can you give an example of a typical day that reflects the Charlotte Mason lifestyle?

We follow Ambleside pretty closely. The one thing that sets us apart from other families is how many handicrafts we do. We all love to learn new life skills. We've carved wood, sewed, learned how to latch hook, knitted, crocheted, and water-colored. My favorite thing about handicrafts is it doesn't feel like you are learning, but you are! I love showing my kids there is a deep satisfaction in making things with their hands.

What would you say to other homeschooling mamas who are considering it?

For other mamas considering this method, pray, pray, pray. If this fits your family's lifestyle, and you love being outside, go for it! Or if you've tried other things and are ready to throw in the towel, try this. It's usually not someone's first choice, but I find that once people find Charlotte Mason they never leave it. There are many other home educators you can find on Instagram under the hashtag #charlottesmason for ways to incorporate it into your homeschool.

"What the book is about is friendship on earth, affection and protection, adventure and miracle, life and death, trust and treachery, pleasure and pain, and the passing of time. As a piece of work it is just about perfect, and just about magical in the way it is done."
—OLIVIA WELTY, THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

THESE ARE THE WORDS

Charlotte's web, high in the barn. Her spiderweb tells of a little pig as well as the little girl named Wilbur, too. They are shared by friends.

"High caprice on a farm, handled with wit and wisdom, that serves to put an imperfect work back into joint."
—THE NEW YORKER

"A fantasy that has the beauty and delicacy of the web itself."
—THE SATURDAY REVIEW

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E. B. WHITE

Charlotte's Web

60TH
ANNIVERSARY
EDITION
Foreword by
Kate DiCamillo

Charlotte's Web



E. B. White
PICTURES BY
Garth Williams





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amy Seegers is a wife and mother of 4 in the heart of Iowa farm county where the land is flat and everything looks best in John Deere green. She and her husband have dreamed about the future together for 11 years while enjoying the present moments that the Lord has blessed them with. She is a passionate natural food advocate who believes that food and faith can heal anything that ails the body and soul. She loves farm animals, but refuses to go with the herd on the issues in life just because it is what society says we should do.

@createplayhomeschool



- CLASSICAL - CONVERSATIONS

Words and Photos by Bre Chang

If you could describe the Classical Conversations style in your own words, what would it be?

Because of my daughter Bailey's age, we are in the Foundations program of Classical Conversations. I would describe this part of CC as "the packing phase." The child's brain is like the moving truck. In the Foundations phase, you are filling up the truck as full as you can get it. The whole point of this phase is to fill up the truck. The second phase of CC is called Essentials and that is "the unpacking phase." You take all of the info that was stored and start opening up those boxes, learning a bit more about what's inside, until you figure out which room they belong in. The last phase is the Challenge phase. This is where you start forming opinions and take that box in the living room and decide what you want to keep, donate and how you really feel about that interesting piece of art. You start to make the house a home. I really hope that makes sense! This year of CC has redeemed my education as well and given me an even greater love for learning.

Why did you choose to do Classical Conversations?

Before I started homeschooling, I wanted to see how real-life families homeschooled. So I visited a few families during their normal days – some with young ones, some with 5 or more kids, and some with high school age kids. I was able to see how I could cater our school to my families needs. We chose Classical Conversations after visiting a family that has very small. I was blown away by how much the little kids knew, and I loved the idea of going to meet with other kids and families once a week. I went to a meeting where they explained the in's and out's of CC, and I was sold. It made so much sense for our family and, because I have a small baby, I loved the fact that I didn't have to 'teach' anything like in a co-op.

Are there any disadvantages of Classical Conversations?

It is really hard to think of any disadvantages of doing CC. The hardest part has been letting go of how I would want to learn and doing what helps Bailey learn best. I would say I am more of an "unschool" learner myself, but as I tried to get my daughter to learn this way, the arguing broke out between us. I thought it would be so fun to go collect leaves and paint them and learn about trees and do art projects and see where that took us, but she doesn't learn that way! I kept saying, "I want this to be fun!" But I learned that fun for her was sitting down and quizzing her on Latin or having her make up hand motions to show the parts of the respiratory system. So letting go and embracing this new way of learning would be the hardest but best thing about CC.



Can you give an example of a typical day that reflects the Classical Conversations lifestyle?

One activity that reflects CC is geography. This year, we are learning the US states, capitals and major mountain ranges and waterways. My daughter absolutely loves geography, and since she picked it up so fast, I thought we would learn more! We use a free website called sheppardsoftware.com. We decided to start with Canada. For a few days, we played the games to learn the Territories and Provinces. Once she knew them, we started with the capitals. We would constantly talk about Canada and quiz one another while in the car or at home. It was a blast because I knew nothing of Canada as well. We did capitals for a few days then put it all together. Within 4 days or so, my 6 year old knew all of Canada along with Capitals. We did lots of repetition and it worked! Last week, we started with Asia. Since there are 32 countries in Asia, which I didn't know, we broke it down into smaller regions. She can name almost every country in Asia now, and this week, we will start with capitals. It's all about repetition. We play the games, and then take a break. I ask her to tell me five countries in Asia, and then we take a break and play again later. My one year old loves it too! As Bailey is saying the countries out loud, the little one is repeating her and putting that information in her little brain too! It is so fun to watch.

What would you say to other homeschooling mamas who are considering it?

If you are considering CC, I recommend going to one near you just to see what it is like. I am sure it is not for everyone. I honestly didn't think my daughter would be into learning lots of information and the structure that CC provides. Take your child to CC and see if THEY like it. After the first week, Bailey said, "Mom, I wish we could go there everyday. I love this so much."





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I am a 30 something mother to two girls (Bailey age 7 and Eleanor 23 months) with a baby boy who will be here early spring! I am married to a stud and living in the DC metro area. Before I had my hands full with kids, I worked as an actor/model and look forward to getting back to that someday. I never thought I would homeschool because the 2 years I was homeschooled as a kid was torture. It is so funny how the things you say you would never do soon become your reality.

@brechang | brechang.wordpress.com

A high-angle photograph captures a woman with long, dark, wavy hair and a blue floral-patterned top leaning over a light-colored rug. She is pointing with her right index finger at a small wooden tray containing yellow beads. To her left, a young child with blonde hair, wearing a red shirt and tan pants, is also looking at the beads. To the right, another child with brown hair, wearing a dark brown shirt with a small animal pattern, is looking towards the woman. In the center of the rug, a piece of corrugated cardboard is laid out, featuring several Montessori materials: a small wooden tray with yellow beads, a small wooden tray with red beads, a small wooden tray with yellow beads, and a small wooden tray with red beads. A white card with four colored symbols (green, blue, red, green) is placed on the cardboard. A large, rectangular wooden block with a grid of red dots is also visible. In the background, a woven basket filled with various wooden blocks and cards is open. The overall scene is a warm, indoor setting with a light-colored rug and wooden flooring visible at the edges.

MONTENESSORI

By Jessica Mueller

If you could describe the Montessori style in your own words, what would it be?

Montessori is such a beautiful, comprehensive philosophy of education; it's hard to break it down into just a few words. But I'd say, the Montessori method is a holistic approach to educating the child based on observation and following the child's interests and abilities rooted in hands-on materials and activities. A few main tenets of the Montessori philosophy are to follow the child, freedom within limits, a prepared environment, respect and order, nature and reality, and abstaining from rewards.

Why did you choose to do Montessori?

In many ways, Montessori chose me. My first introduction to Montessori was in college and one of my education professors laughed at it, explaining it as a free-for-all environment with no structure where kids did whatever they wanted without intervention. Of course, that sounds like a ridiculous way to educate children, but out of necessity, I ended up teaching as an assistant in a primary Montessori classroom. As I began to experience Montessori firsthand and research it on my own, seeing the children interact, learn, and truly enjoy the experience, I knew it was what I wanted for my own children.

What are some of the disadvantages of Montessori?

Much of the Montessori environment is rooted in community and that has been one of the harder things to compensate for at home. The environment is set up in a way that motivates younger children to pursue work they see older children doing, and older children are encouraged to lead the younger children in classroom activities. This year we're trying something new and my oldest is attending a public Montessori school. Having the community environment was one of the main influencers in our decision. Another disadvantage of Montessori at home can be the lack of space for shelf work and materials. Montessori is very hands-on with a heavy emphasis on environment. We have two shelves at home I regularly rearrange to fit the kids' needs.







Can you give an example of one activity that reflects Montessori?

Oh, gosh, there are so many great Montessori activities; it's hard to choose just one. Maria Montessori believed "the hand is the chief teacher of the brain," and materials are designed to move from concrete to abstract. I struggled with math all throughout school, and what I love about Montessori's math materials is they give a visual representation for each concept. For example, to teach exchanging ones to tens, tens to hundreds, and hundreds to thousands, we use beads. A unit bead represents the ones, 10 unit beads are exchanged for a 10 bar (10 beads strung together), ten 10 bars equal a hundred square (ten 10 bars), and ten 100 squares equal a thousand cube. So instead of simply seeing a one with a bunch of zero's the child can see and work with the physical quantity of the number.

What would you say to other homeschooling mamas who are considering it?

I'd say to research the Montessori method; don't just trust Pinterest. I'd suggest reading *Montessori: A Modern Approach* or *Montessori Today* by Paula Polk Lillard. Both books are a comprehensive overview of the method. Tim Seldin's *How to Raise an Amazing Child the Montessori Way* is a great basic and visual introduction to Montessori. Maria Montessori's books are also good, but can be a little heavy for an introduction. I'd highly recommend contacting a local Montessori school to set up a tour or ask if you can observe a classroom. There's nothing like seeing a Montessori classroom in action. After that, I'd suggest starting small. Don't worry about getting all of the materials or presenting lessons, but begin implementing the culture of Montessori.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jessica is a Montessori mama and shares her family's journey on her blog, Our Montessori Home, in hopes to encourage families to explore and learn together. Jessica lives in upstate South Carolina with her husband Joe, where they lead their kids in dance parties and leaf fights amid catechisms and phonics. She's a bit of a sojourner, occasional cross-stitcher, book advocate, tea drinker, and wild dreamer. She spends her days at home creating, corralling, and exploring with her three little adventurers Joey, Otto, and Olivia.

ourmontessorihome.com | [@jess_reflects](https://www.instagram.com/jess_reflects)

A photograph of a person walking from left to right on a white ledge. The person is wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt, blue jeans with rolled-up cuffs, and brown leather sandals. The background is a light blue wall, and the foreground is a red brick wall. The title 'UNSCHOOLING' is overlaid in white serif font, and the subtitle 'Words and Photos by Louise Gibbons' is below it in a smaller, italicized serif font.

UNSCHOOLING

Words and Photos by Louise Gibbons

IF YOU COULD DESCRIBE UNSCHOOLING IN YOUR OWN WORDS, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Unschooling is really an entire way of life. It's about trusting that learning is natural and happening all of the time. True learning doesn't require coercion, nor should it be tedious or difficult. It's not about being taught or filled up to the brim with knowledge, ready to take an exam, or reach a goal. Learning should be fun, interesting and meaningful, and how we learn is as individual and unique as how we look. The real beauty of unschooling is that it takes all of this into account. It's a process that is truly child-centered and driven by interests. For quite some time after coming out of school, my unschooled 8 year old was convinced that he wasn't learning anything! He was, of course, but all of a sudden, his learning wasn't forced or dictated, and he often had little or nothing to show for it on paper. Instead, he was doing the things he loves and was free to play. The learning has become so much a part of the everyday that it's impossible to separate it from everything else.





Why did you choose to Unschool?

Like many, we started unschooling more by accident than design. [I decided] to put in place the interest led project-based homeschooling life I'd researched and decided was the best way forward. I thought this approach would allow a great deal of autonomy for the children, with me guiding and facilitating, maybe even teaching at times. But oh my goodness, did [my son] Archie have other ideas! Anything that remotely resembled schoolwork, however fun and pressure-free, flopped or was met with resistance. Each time it happened, I took a step back and waited. Gradually I realized what was actually happening was unschooling! All of a sudden, the pressure was lifted from both of us. Being totally honest, a big part of me would still love to do project work with my boys; to see them dig deeply into their learning simply because they want to know more, and to have a reassuring portfolio of work at the end of each project. But the wonderful thing about home education, and unschooling in particular, is that they are in charge of their own learning and can choose whatever suits them best. They don't have to fit into anyone else's boxes, only their own.

Are there any disadvantages of Unschooling?

The hardest part about unschooling has been an unspoken pressure to prove to our close family, and even my husband at times, that the children ARE learning. They will learn what they need to, when they need to, and that, at times, this may be ahead of their schooled peers, and certain skills might develop later on. Because I didn't initially plan to unschool, I have more "wobbles" over whether I'm doing the right thing for my boys. Am I setting them up for a failed future, unable to secure a decent job or go onto university – if that's what they'd like to do? This is far more likely to enter my head when I foolishly compare my children to those we know who go to school. I know, for example, that Archie's handwriting is a particular problem. It was a problem in school too. Perhaps if he were still a pupil there would have been some intervention, some specialist help for him. But the truth is, he would have hated that extra help, and to what end – beautiful writing but unhappy? Instead, he has been concentrating on drawing. This has helped develop his fine motor skills, which, for some reason, were holding him back. Slowly but surely, his writing has dramatically improved. The other thing about unschooling, which occasionally troubles me, is how the children will fare if they decide they'd like to go to school or if our family situation changes and they have to go. When this thought enters my head, I simply remind myself that it may not happen and they are pretty resilient and resourceful too. Trusting the process takes quite a leap of faith, and I'm still working on that some days.



Can you give an example of a typical day that reflects the Unschooling lifestyle?

Archie is the first one to wake up, and he takes this opportunity to play Minecraft or read. When his brother and I make an appearance, the game is switched off and we have breakfast together. There are usually two to three days a week when we join other home educators at organized groups. At the moment, our favorite activity is a craft meet-up on a local beach. Sometimes we meet in a local orchard or woods, where tree climbing, fire lighting, and water-play are the main unstructured activities. If we're not attending a group session, the boys either have an "in day" where they play with Lego, dress up, enjoy drawing and crafting, and reading – always reading. I'm there simply to help facilitate what they choose to do. Some days it's very obvious to me that learning is happening in abundance. On other days, it may be less apparent. At some point in every day we make time to be outside. Sometimes we'll go on our own little field trip – from the local library and museums to beaches, castles, and galleries nearby. Other times, they go to sessions that other home educators have organized, such as theater trips, book clubs, and educational tours. Their lives are rich and full. Trying to do all of these wonderful things on top of being at school would allow them no time to just be, to relax, to play.

What would you say to other homeschooling mamas who are considering it?

Go for it, wholeheartedly! Prepare to face the doubters with confidence. Prepare also to have the occasional wobble yourself. This approach is probably a far cry from your own education so it can feel like you're straying from the herd a little. But that doesn't make it wrong! Create a learning-rich environment for your children; have as many books, art and craft supplies, and games available. When they get an idea they'll need to make it happen NOW! Above all trust in the process. Your child learned to crawl, walk, talk, question, simply by interacting and watching and trying. This doesn't suddenly stop when they reach school age. It never stops. And try hard not to compare them or yourself with others. Ask yourself if your children are happy. Do they love what they do? This is really all that matters. If the answer to both is "yes," then they are learning.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I'm a 40-year-old Mum to two beautiful boys, Archie (8) and Jody (4), and wife to Spencer; he's the one who works incredibly hard to allow me to be at home with the children full time. We live in a village near Canterbury in Kent, in the south of England. My main hobby is photography and I'm a self confessed Instagram addict. I sing in two community choirs, one rock and pop harmony, the other gospel. Those two evenings out are my precious 'me time' and keep me just about sane! I'm far more at peace with Spring and Summer than I am with Autumn or Winter but you have to take the rough with the smooth, I guess. My dream is to live somewhere with an abundance of wild outdoor space to call my own, and a much sunnier climate. I have heterochromatic eyes; one is blue, the other brown. | @loopygibbens | mummykarma.wordpress.com

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