



## The Homeschool Journey Newsletter

Christopherus Homeschool Resources  
Waldorf-inspired Parenting and Education

Last month I said that this month's newsletter would be devoted to 'homeschooling tips' and asked if anyone cared to submit their most useful tips to share with others. One of you complied and here, from the UK, is Noola's helpful description of homeschooling tips.



My son (who has Asperger's) is now 9th grade and is doing IGCSEs (some with me and some online). The Waldorf curriculum has suited him perfectly and he is continuing to love learning about history, especially Ancient History, and he has an excellent understanding of the story of humanity. The Waldorf curriculum has also enabled him to understand politics and the current

story of Totalitarianism. Learning about History is probably always going to be a hobby of his, whilst he plans to pursue a career in Zoology and Nature Conservation with a strong focus on birds. He also writes stories and draws maps. Many aspects of the noisy, smelly and disconnected modern world make him very uncomfortable, but I am thankful that his screen-free Waldorf-homeschooled childhood has given him strong foundations for a good life. Most importantly, he is a truly conscientious, kind, gentleman, well on his path to live well and to be of service to the world. School would have crippled him - we tried him at our local Waldorf school and even a local more mainstream private school and he rapidly became unwell. Your many resources have been essential in his journey and mine too.

My daughter is now doing your 6th grade. I also sometimes supplement your resources with Eric Fairman's, Charles Kovac's and occasionally some others. But yours continue to be my principal guide.

During the lock-downs, several friends from the Steiner school asked me for some advice about homeschooling because they were having a terrible time.



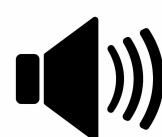
Here are some of the things I suggested as my 'top tips':

1. **Make a neat, gently colour-coded timetable and stick it on the wall** in the kitchen where everyone can easily see it. This must factor in regular break and meal times, rhythms for activities - 'breathing' in and out), 'head' lessons (such as maths) first thing after ringtime - physical exercises, songs and verses, followed by 'heart' lessons (such as languages) and 'hand' activities (such as arts and crafts and active games) go either at the end of the morning or in the afternoon. Never try to get kids to do maths in the afternoons! Also include reading stories aloud together (which we do whilst doing handwork or drawing), domestic jobs and outings, time in nature, and slots when the children are free to choose what they do (and you can do some of what you need to do).
2. Stick to your timetable as closely as you can and be in charge of it! Somehow being written carefully and beautifully on the wall makes it feel official and helps everyone feel more committed to it. Be flexible and adapt the schedule as and when it feels best, but stick to it as much as possible.
3. Modify your timetable: keep fine tuning it to meet the needs of the whole family.
4. **Never answer the phone or turn on laptops or other devices during lessons:** avoid distractions of any kind during lessons.
5. When you have more than one child, it is harder in some ways because you have to be amazing at multitasking and thinking creatively on your feet so that they are either working together on the same thing (but with different approaches and outcomes), the older one is learning by helping to teach the younger one, or one is happy doing something needing less input from you while you focus on something with the other child(ren). Sometimes it works to plan main lessons for very different aged children so that the lesson is divided into two halves. The older child starts off working on writing or drawing something based on the previous day's main lesson, while you introduce/present/discuss something to the younger child. Then you set the younger child with an activity based on something you've been learning about that week while you present the next main lesson area to the older child. This doesn't always work out, but it is possible to manage (which great creativity and energy) enough of the time!
6. When things just aren't working and everyone is falling apart (!) smile and laugh at the situation and call for a break or switch some of the activities in your timetable for the day around. It is often a case that on that particular occasion is is better not to even try to do what you are trying to do, so do something else which suits everyone's state better. Just be sure to fit in the 'missed' lesson later that day or the next day.
7. Notice the weather, especially the air pressure, and the moon phases. This really is very important because often when things aren't working, the moon is full or the pressure is falling! It helps to know that nothing is wrong and the 'clunkiness' will naturally pass without you having to change anything.
8. **Make a year plan for Main Lesson blocks:** which blocks and how many weeks for each and ordered so that you are doing a variety of subjects in a rythmn. For example, you don't want to be doing history for a whole term solid. Its better to do 2-4 weeks of history, followed by some science. Maths, Language arts and arts and crafts are good to do every week throughout the year. Every week, we do 20-30 mins maths 'practice' every morning and a 30-45 minute maths lesson once per week after morning break. The Main Lesson Block plan for the year can be changed as you go through the year, but it helps you to know that all the key areas of the curriculum that you want to cover are factored in and then you don't feel so overwhelmed and worry that you're not doing enough - there is plenty of time!
9. During term time, stick to the home-school timetable. During holidays, make a lose timetable to include music practice, domestic tasks and meal times etc, and try to manage the days and weeks so that everyone gets a balance of activities and plenty of quiet and creative times and time in nature etc, but don't try to get the children to do any 'school' work. This is holiday time. They need it and so do we!
10. With children 12 years and older, it can work well to do some of the book reading for some main lessons (especially history and English Literature) during the early evenings or after younger children have gone to bed. This can be a great help when you have less time to spend with them during morning main lessons when you need to spend most of your time with younger children.
11. Keep things age-appropriate and avoid screens and gadgets! It seems to be very tempting for many parents to give in but it definitely is worth the energy investment - its better for the children and for you (children are nicer and happier and easier to manage when they are protected)!
12. **BOOKS!** Invest a lot of time researching well-written, age-appropriate books for you to share with your children (and opinions of what is appropriate or not vary widely). It is now easy to buy second-hand books on the internet if you can't borrow them from a library. We want our children to enjoy reading. If they are not enjoying a book, even after reading a few chapters, then either they are not ready for it or it is not a good book for them. Find something else. I didn't read much at all as a child and this was simply because I didn't like the books available to me and my parents did not show any interest in what I was reading or whether or not I was reading at all. Donna, your lists of books have been very helpful indeed and there are several other sources of Waldorf-recommended reading lists with age-appropriate indications. For historical novels, follow the History Main Lesson blocks with stories set in those periods. This is enormously enriching. Avoid novels set in time periods not studied yet. Be very cautious with all stories set in modern periods until 13 years plus!
13. Read aloud every night before the children have some time reading to themselves in bed (but avoid very stimulating/exciting/tense stories just before sleep!

With love and profound gratitude to you dear Donna, and prayers for more and more happy, healthy children in the world,  
Noola G.



Next month I will write my own list of tips---and anyone who would like to contribute theirs and help their fellow homeschoolers, is most welcome to do so. One idea is to write about what you thought would work...and what did not---and why.



Until then, [do have a look through our free audio downloads](#)---there are many that are focused on the kinds of issues that are not just helpful, but imperative, if one wants to homeschool successfully.

**And here are a few select articles from my blog, all on topics which will help people navigate homeschooling:**

- [The problems and dangers of children and computers \(a 30 min talk\)](#)
- [This one is also a talk---it is about children and testing](#)
- [To Correct or Not to Correct. a post about form drawing which has relevance for other subjects](#)
- And lastly, [an old post I wrote](#) about the kind of attitudes and qualities each homeschooling parent needs to cultivate

### Self-Study Course

If you find these articles and talks helpful, [do consider our self study course](#) which is focused both on the acquisition of artistic skills and the nurturing of parenting skills which are the basis for successful homeschooling.



Til September,  
Blessings on your homeschool journey,  
Donna