

Nature Notebooks

By Cindy Rushton



Anyone familiar with the Rushtons is definitely familiar with our wide and varied use of notebooks in our homeschool. Nature Studies is no different! For a long time I was frustrated when I would read about the neat ideas for Nature Journals/Notebooks. I think it was because I did not take the ideas and apply it to how we already do our notebooks with our children! We took the ideas from our usual copybooks mixed it with some great ideas from Nature Journals of the past and scrapbooks of today...and wala! We have our own Nature Notebook, which is very simple to begin and to keep up!

Here are some ideas for making one of your own...

- ♥ **Let Notebooking become a natural part of life.** Recording may be encouraged at the beginning, but let it become their own personal journal and scrapbook! They may work in it every day or just a few times a month depending on their interest!
- ♥ **Decide on your type of notebook that you would like to use.** Many families keep sketchbooks, which enable them to use watercolors or write. We tried these but they were difficult to add our Copywork, poems, and pressed specimens to. We decided to use the pages from our sketchbooks for pictures and just mount them in our 3-ring binder. We bought a binder with the see-through plastic covers that you can slide your own cover picture into. We let the children design their own cover for their notebook by using these notebooks! They loved it! We also gave them plenty of page protectors to slide their work into to protect it from smudges and too much handling! They added pages from their original copybook that had quotes, scripture verses, and poems with a Nature Subject. We are now really having fun as we see them using their new ideas from scrap-booking to add their own special touch to their Notebooks!
- ♥ **Let your children set up their notebooks like their very own Scrapbook of Nature!** Chances are you already have many things that could be included in a notebook around your home without their own special place! I remember a dear friend's mother who always instilled in her children (and me!) that there must be a place for everything and everything in its place! This is the perfect opportunity to develop a place for those Nature goodies while developing a nice product for displaying all that knowledge and keeping memorabilia!

◆ You may want to include the following in your notebooks...

- ◆ Snapshots
- ◆ Sketches...don't forget to include date, time, place, Latin Name, and Common Name!
- ◆ Pressed Flowers, Leaves, Feathers, Butterflies, etc.
- ◆ Reading Lists
- ◆ Glossary of Terms Studied
- ◆ Poetry
- ◆ Information about discoveries
- ◆ Lists of new findings
- ◆ Handouts from trips
- ◆ Narrations from trips, outings, hikes, Nature walks, books read about nature or scientists/naturalists.
- ◆ Instruction Sheets on "How to Care for..." or "How to Collect..." etc. (Kathryn Howshall has an entire set of her Instruction Sheets called *Nature Projects* which is great for the novice like me...but also a great idea for communicating all the children know about a topic in Nature!
- ◆ Booklets...My children began their Nature Studies by making Booklets on topics such as *Birds in My Backyard*, which was a collection of sketches of birds we spotted right in our front yard! They researched the names of the birds, the nesting habits of the birds, and their favorite foods. They sketched the birds and put the information about the birds into their little booklets, which were made from ideas in Dinah Zike's *Big Book of Books and Activities*. We soon had several to put into their own binder for science! It may be that your child has such a deep interest in one part of nature that they want to develop a notebook just for that such as Kathryn *Howshall's Bird Book* and *Butterfly Book*. That is perfectly fine! Just pick a topic and go!
- ◆ Project Data...this may be from any experiments or from just watching something for a few seasons to watch the changes!
- ◆ Bible Verses...We include our Copywork and memory work that relates to nature. You may also want to include any word studies that they do as they get older on Bible

Verses. They may have Journalled meditations from their Quiet time and want to include them!

- ◆ Hymns
- ◆ Stories...Nature, Pets, Metaphors, about Outings!
- ◆ Journal Entries
- ◆ Details from Outings
- ◆ Favorite Quotes about Nature
- ◆ Reading Lists
- ◆ Research...for the older students! Let them keep an additional copy of all research papers and notes in their notebook.
- ◆ Reports...again this is for the older students. Narrations are preferable for the younger students since they will build their skills for writing and prepare them the best for Reports and Research in the later years!

♥ **Get Your Supplies...** You will need a notebook, plastic sleeve protectors, paper (Use Card stock for mounting specimens or lined for Journaling, Copywork, quotes, notes, or lists! You may want to consider Acid free/lignin free paper if you are mounting pictures of your walks and findings!), sketch paper for watercolor pictures or sketches from nature, top quality sketch pencils, top quality watercolors and brushes, index cards for data entries, and scissors! We are taking our Science/Nature Notebooks one step further now. Elisabeth and I went to a Scrapbooking Workshop (which was fantastic!) and got so many ideas for our homeschool notebooks! We decided that since MONEY is an object for us that we would use our skills to add to our notebooks until we had the money for full memory albums of our family! We bought some pens, templates, scissors, stickers, and acid-free paper from Hobby Lobby, and Wal-Mart and got started! Maybe wild was the word! You can add a lot of life to your notebook with their special supplies! It really adds a sparkle to your notebooks and my children are hooked! You can use Die-cuts, Frames, Stencils, Shapes, and edgings galore to make your notebooks fun and beautiful! My children now beg each weekend to work on our binders/scrapbooks!

I sure hope this gives you plenty of ideas so that you can make up Notebooks for your own family. There is no certain way to do the "right" notebook/sketchbook except your own way for your family! I hope this jump-starts you so you can have fun and make a notebook that is just right for your family!

Catch Ya Outside!