

DERS! So, plan! Plan well! Don't wait until the last minute! Plan...then, you can settle in to go a slow pace!

- ♥ **Write it DOWN!** Give your brain a rest! Talk about stressing out—our brains will stress out if we are keeping all of our to-do's...plans...goals...heartbeats...EVERYTHING on our brain! Write it down!

Not only will it help to keep things from slipping between the cracks, but it will also help us to evaluate where we have come from and where we have to go. Plus, the best yet! We will have a sense of accomplishment when we look back!



- ♥ **Watch that attitude!** There are going to be some life-stresses that quite honestly cannot be changed! However, we need not walk in a life of defeat and stress! Instead, when we recognize life-stresses that cannot change, that is the time to sit right down at the feet of Jesus! Ask Him to show the purpose. At minimum, KNOW that victory is guaranteed! There is no temptation or trial that is original with any of us! Nor is there anything that we are allowed to walk in that is not first filtered through the loving hands of God. He always guarantees VICTORY! So, watch that attitude! When things cannot change, change what can—that perspective...that attitude!!

- ♥ **Delegate!** What is it that makes it so hard for moms to get help? Our children LOVE to be Mommy's helpers! We really steal their blessings when we do not delegate to them. Even toddlers can help fold a load of

laundry! Don't try to do it all by yourself! Delegate and you will find some of the stress dissipating!

- ♥ **Get enough rest!** Oh! This one is soooo tough for me! But, let's honestly look at what happens in our families when we get tired: don't get enough sleep>get cranky>don't enjoy life>not too great to be

around> others get cranky> irritates you more>get more tired... Why not simply get that rest?? Sleep AND that rest in body, spirit, and soul!

- ♥ **Self-control!** Hummmm... Such a challenge! However, we will find ourselves constantly stressed

out until we learn to say "NO" to those activities, commitments, all that stuff! Bit-by-bit, they wear us down. Saying, "NO" eliminates the whole threat of stress from the onset!

- ♥ **Keep it simple!** Don't overload! We already KNOW we cannot do everything, but we have to remember this when choices are there to be made! Always look at anything new, whether an activity or a possession, judging its importance by what you are willing to swap for it. This works for everything—shoes, books, activities, commitments. Keep it simple! You can't do or have everything, so go for the very best!

- ♥ **Give yourself a break!** Don't pick yourself to death NOR let others pick you to death either! It is so easy to focus on the negative, get overwhelmed by the weaknesses and inadequacies, and get frustrated

about how far you have to go! Then, PEOPLE trivial stresses of life! Let Him restore your sure do not help! Let another person loose spirit! What you are doing is vital! Your enemy in your life with the license to critique you wants you stressed out, overloaded, out of or your situation and you will be ready for balance! He is defeated! When he snarls, the nut-farm! Give yourself a break! See throws forth his darts, and lies to you, just this thing as a process—you will not arrive snuggle up closer to your Lord! Give Him the until it is all over but the shoutin' so relax, struggles! Give Him expectations! Give Him enjoy life, and give yourself a break! every single burden! You won't be sorry!

♥ **Find ways to fill your cup!** We are each wired so very different. Certain things stress some of us that do not bother others. Likewise, certain things just fill our cup! STOP! Step back! Shift into low gear -or reverse! Do what it takes to DE-STRESS! Rest! Relax! Rejuvenate! Renew! Refill! Whatever it takes, find



Get Back To the Main Thing! Relationships!

Remember Matthew 22: 37-40? Jesus was asked, "What IS the most important thing? The bottom line? The main thing?" I love Jesus' ability to summarize ALL of life in ONE response! He summed up the main thing in three commands:

those things that fill YOU back up! Oh! The to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and benefits go beyond de-stressing and re- body...to love others as ourselves...and storing balance—you finally have living wa- obviously, to love ourselves! Do you see this? ter to pour forth into the lives of others! The MAIN THING...the BOTTOM LINE..THE most important thing was relationships!

♥ **Make the most of EVERY minute!** Cherish this time! Make sweet memories! Take time for the most important—the best things! Your husband! Your children! Your family life! Don't let life just slip by! Look at life and decide what you would do if this were your last year...last month...last week... last day? Would you go to the park to enjoy watching them play? Would you cuddle up and read a great book? Would you take off to the beach? Why not make those things YOUR thing? Oh, and probably find that education can be EASY along the way too!

Want to restore balance and get rid of all of that overload? Take a deep look at the MAIN THING! Anytime things are out of balance, take a look to see how relationships are doing? Are they being "put off" until the pressures go away? Are they quiet while the rest of the "stuff" screams, demands, and pulls you to pieces?

De-stress! Crawl up into the great big comfy arms of our loving Heavenly Father! Let Him hold you during the most turbulent or precious opportunities for ministering to those

Ask God to constantly keep you attuned to relationships in which you are charged with ministry. Ask God to show you ways that you can love and minister to Him. Ask Him to quicken you all along the way with ideas and

you are called to minister to—your husband, restore balance? Make life really count? Sit your children, your parents, your siblings, at the feet of Jesus! Snuggle up close! Listen those that come within your sphere of for each beat of His heart! Let Him pull you influence. Cry out to Him to help you guard back from that "stuff." Let Him show you how your time so moments do not slip away leaving to let go of those GOOD things and grab onto a hole in this vital area of life!

the very best! Give Him a chance to restore balance and set us on the path to leaving a legacy!

So...What Do You Think???

Ready to get out of this rat race? Ready to



About Cindy Rushton...



Cindy and Vivian

Cindy Rushton is the wife of Harold Rushton and the mother of Matthew (16) and Elisabeth (almost 13) who have always been homeschooled. Cindy lives in the beautiful mountains of North Alabama in her dream cedar cabin, built by her husband.

Cindy is the author of over 75 books, Bible studies and homeschool resources. She edits and publishes two magazines, *Time for Tea* and *Homeschooling The Easy Way* and *Scrap-A-Latte* Newsletter. She has become a beloved and favored speaker for homeschool conventions and retreats across our country.

Cindy began homeschooling Matthew and Elisabeth over twelve years ago. Her homeschooling journey, tips, and ideas that she has learned along the journey are recorded in the following pages in our humble effort of sharing an EASY way to homeschool.

As you pour yourself a cup of tea and pour through the following pages, you will find a dear, dear friend to give you a great big hug, loving smile, and take you by the hand into a journey of homeschooling the EASY WAY! Get ready...you are definitely in for a treat!

Notice the precious TEA pictures? Our pictures throughout this section were taken in Slidell, LA at the *Tea and Scones Tea Party*. At that tea party, Cindy shared this message. Want your own copy of the teaching? We have this tea party on audio! See our price listing to get your own copy!

OH! This article is an excerpt from Cindy's upcoming book *Organization 101: HELP! For the MESSY Mom!* Look for it in the near future!
We think you will love it!

67 Ways To Reduce Stress

(not an exhaustive list!)
By Christie Berry



Many of these ideas may help you reduce stress!

- ♥ Sit on a swing/porch swing and swing with a vengeance.
- ♥ Take a long bubble bath with candles and a good book.
- ♥ Get a massage.
- ♥ Chat on the phone with a friend.
- ♥ Write, keep a journal, poetry, email a friend.
- ♥ Go to a pool and swim laps.
- ♥ Read something funny—laughter is full of endorphins.
- ♥ Rock a child or baby.
- ♥ Tell the dog all about your stress! He listens intently and will lick you to make it better.
- ♥ Go to yard/garage sales, thrift stores, ebay!
- ♥ Make a gum wrapper chain (the kids usually have lots of wrappers).
- ♥ Do handwork: embroidery, crochet, tat, knit, hem something, etc.
- ♥ Clean your house with all your energy!
- ♥ Do laundry.
- ♥ Eat jello with your toddler—or with a teen only you have to feed each other with LARGE bites!
- ♥ Bake bread (kneading helps relieve stress)
- ♥ Work in the garden, pull weeds, talk to your plants (they don't talk back!!).
- ♥ Sit in the quiet of your garden.
- ♥ Sort papers, email, socks...
- ♥ Play music or a musical instrument—match your mood to your music, if you want to change your mood, change the music.
- ♥ Read email from friends, lists, message boards.
- ♥ Sing—LOUDLY!
- ♥ Strive for alone time.
- ♥ Put yourself in 'time-out' (lock yourself in your room for a few minutes or have your husband send you to your room if you need a break when he gets home).
- ♥ Any physical exercise: swim, jog, run, walk, hike, roller blade, yoga, join a gym, lift weights, aerobics, bike ride, running to the fridge!
- ♥ Eat stress food: chocolate, chewy (tootsie rolls), more chocolate!
- ♥ Go to the library.
- ♥ Relax after everyone else is in bed—cup of cocoa or tea, private stash of chocolate! (have a required bedtime no matter what our children's age...quiet time!)
- ♥ Go to the card section of the store and read the funny ones.
- ♥ Burn candles.
- ♥ Learn about and use aromatherapy.
- ♥ Play, be silly with the kids, or a friend!

- ♥ Find a hobby—painting, pottery, photography, scrap-booking, writing, cooking, refinishing furniture, ceramics, sewing quilting, making jewelry, candles, soap—the art of creation relieves stress and gives the feeling of accomplishment.
- ♥ Take a drive in the country—a Sunday drive (not necessarily on Sunday!).
- ♥ Scream!!! (best to do this outside, or askd the kids to join you inside)
- ♥ List all of the stressors in your life—see if there are any you can change or eliminate.
- ♥ Declutter and organize your home—www.flylady.com
- ♥ Go to the movies—a comedy or escape theme, popcorn, and chocolate!
- ♥ Reconnect with old friends, family—write a letter, call or send an email.
- ♥ Lay on floor and throw a temper tantrum with the kids!
- ♥ Schedule in 'ME' time everyday at least for $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour—and a couple of times a month with a friend.
- ♥ Go to Walmart at night by yourself when there are no crowds and walk through all the aisles window shopping (wear comfortable shoes).
- ♥ Take time away from house to do something you enjoy.
- ♥ Deep breathing.
- ♥ Stimulate your mind: take a class, attend a discussion, do some research.
- ♥ Do something with likeminded friends "When I really need to distress, I have to talk with someone who 'gets' what I'm going through" Emotional support.
- ♥ Go on a date with hubby, get a sitter, and work on 'adults only relationships.'
- ♥ Get enough sleep: declare a quiet time in the afternoon and take a short nap with toddlers (everyone else can read quietly in bed or watch a quiet movie on TV).
- ♥ Watch mindless TV.
- ♥ Find a support group (real life or on the internet).
- ♥ Surf the web, look up things of interest or learn something new.
- ♥ Hire help. Can't afford it?? Check again! Cleaning help once a week or share child care with another mom to get a break!
- ♥ Start a girl's night out (or lunch).
- ♥ Take a few days by yourself, a vacation, retreat, visit



Stress Balls! YES! They were yo-yo's too!



Nothing better than a walk with a friend...to LUNCH!!



Woman-to-Woman fun and fellowship!



Fitting Walks Into Your Busy Lifestyle...

(excerpted from Cindy's upcoming
Healthy Lifestyle Manual—CAN YOU BELIEVE IT???)

Walking can be added into your schedule anytime, anywhere. Think through your life to find when and where you can fit walking into your schedule...

- ♥ Get up 10 minutes earlier and fit in a quick walk before beginning your day.
- ♥ Walk while doing your quiet time—listen to Bible Teaching, Bible Memory Tapes, Bible Reading Tapes, or Praise Music.
- ♥ Take 10-minute walking breaks during your day.
- ♥ Take your family for a 10 minute walk before or after your meals.
- ♥ Arrive at work early and walk or climb the stairs
- ♥ Take a 10-minute walk around the mall before shopping or stopping for lunch.
- ♥ Walk your dog.
- ♥ Walk around the house during commercials or between shows.
- ♥ Go for a walk with your children.

a friend.

- ♥ Do something with one of your children that is fun for both of you and doesn't take much planning (ice cream parlor, do a puzzle, play a game, chase each other around the house).
- ♥ Find the family activities—parks, lake, camping, zoo, (away from the daily busy-ness).
- ♥ Have a spa day with friends, do facials, foot soaks, manicures, (remember being a teen?).
- ♥ Move, leave no forwarding address, become a hermit, join the convent, never return!
- ♥ Think about choosing to have/adopt your children all over again, take comfort in knowing God makes NO MISTAKES!
- ♥ Look for opportunities for respite care—churches, mom's day out, UCP clinic.
- ♥ Find a marriage retreat weekend and a sitter!
- ♥ Don't stress over the house cleaning, take time to lay on the floor and play with the kids.
- ♥ Find a high school student that can come once a week and work with your special needs child or a mom whose children are in public school that wouldn't mind earning a little extra or helping out a few hours a week.
- ♥ Create a loose schedule so that when things get off track you have something to look at and try to get back on track so you don't lose the whole day and feel that nothing got done.
- ♥ Break problems into small manageable and solvable pieces.
- ♥ Improve your nutrition.
- ♥ Last, and of course not least, give it to God and let Him carry it. Have a quiet time each day. Include prayer, Scripture, and meditation.



About Christie Berry...

Christie is the wife of Richard, her very best friend, and the mother of some of the most tremendous children in the world (Yep! I am extremely partial!!). Christie stays busy homeschooling, administrating the Vast Network homeschool covering and ministry, writing for her own newsletter and others around the world, and speaking at conventions and conferences.

We are thrilled to have Christie join us in the pages of our magazine with her great articles, tips, and encouragement! Of course, if you want to read more of Christie's great encouragement, stick with us! We plan to have MORE of her great ideas in future issues. If you cannot wait, contact her by email at christie@vastnetwork.org or see her website at www.vastnetwork.org!

Quick Tips For Setting Up Your Daily Schedule!

By Cindy Rushton



Getting all of the details smoothed out for another BIG Homeschool year...BUT, need just a little bit of help with that schedule? The following are some quick tips to keep in mind when setting up that daily schedule! Hope you have the best year yet!

Wrap the Schedule Around Your Husband!

Look at what YOUR family is all about! You do not have to set your Homeschool up like a "school." You can set up your day around your own family, your own husband and children!

As I have prayed over my role as a Biblical woman, one thing is more prominent (based on Scripture) than any other of my roles in my life...being a helpmeet. In Scripture, we find that the first role of the woman was as a helpmeet for her husband. We "help" our husbands by teaching their children, keeping their homes, and bringing glory to them as we mentor others, but God never intends for any of these things to take priority over our chief role as a helpmeet.

I don't know about you, but this is far too often the area in which I struggle the most! Want to create more balance in your home? Is your day wrapped around your husband?

Give this one a try! It is amazing! You will have less struggle with getting things done. You will appreciate your husband much, much more. You will find your own lifestyle that is just right for your family. Things will begin to fit together.

For our family, this has been the anchor as we have traveled...as we have gone through constant schedule changes

with Harold's job...and as we have the constant hindrances, delays, distractions, and disturbances that ALWAYS occur in the home (or REAL WORLD!).

Take time to look at your day. In what ways can you wrap your day around your husband? How can you set a priority on those family moments and family memories? Think through what you is REALLY important. Think through what you would really like to cover (make a list in your planning journal) and incorporate into every day. Decide when you could best cover each thing you would like covered. Then, set up your very own way to teach and train your children!

Set Up Your OWN Lifestyle of Learning!

Talk about crucial! Want to get more things of value accomplished this year? Want to be sure to beyond the basic academics? Want more time for those things that you never get

around to? Nature Study? Reading Alouds? Writing and making homemade books? On and on.

Why not look at your day to see how you can most naturally include all areas you would like to cover? If you are struggling with one-on-one teaching time, why not consider teaching ALL of your children at the same time. Get the little ones going with "their" Copywork...then while they work on their daily Copywork pages, work with each of them individually on areas of need. It helped more than I

can express to teach my children to stay busy working on their pages while I taught the other one their individual lessons.

Now, I KNOW how demanding and very difficult it can be when the children are very young and constantly getting into things and interrupting while you are trying to take those few moments to teach. I had to STAY creative with ideas for seizing moments along the way! I cannot tell you the number of times I taught Phonics to Matthew while Elisabeth splashed in the bath tub... finished out a nap... or played

with dad after he came home from work.

It really helped me to teach Matthew Phonics when Harold came home from work and could play with Elisabeth. When I realized that we did



Nature Walking on the Beach—January 2003!

not have to stick to any set time or place, that learning could be part of our lifestyle, in OUR own way, things finally began to fit together.

As they have gotten older, I have found that both of my children tend to enjoy lots of free time late at night to read, study, and pursue "extras!" There is that old battle that rages in my gut saying, "That is NOT how you are SUPPOSED to do it!" However, I love that we can truly wrap learning around OUR LIFESTYLE! If learning is taking place, then indeed, it is certainly acceptable for our children to devour those

quiet hours late into the night! Funny...that seems to be the time that I get MOST of my writing done...hummm... could this be preparation for a REAL lifestyle of learning for all of life???

Remember! ONE Thing is Needful!

This is probably one of the most important things that we can remember! Unlike that big push of our culture, we will never be able to DO it all, much less all at once!

Christians mistakenly believe that once

we are saved that we can do ALL THINGS in Christ Jesus. However, Scripture is very clear that God does not anoint and bless EVERYTHING that we decide to do! In fact, we can be assured that He will not anoint and bless anything that is not OF HIM in the beginning. His path is narrow...very specific!

Want to keep it all together in this journey? Then, we must ask the Lord for His plan. His Way. We must ask Him to show us and keep before our faces that "one thing is needful" for each child!

Each year that we have

Homeschooled, we have found that there was ONE thing per child to focus on. This is Biblical. Remember Mary and Martha?? "One thing is needful."

Each year, we need to sit down before the Lord and seek His face to see what IS the ONE thing that is needful for each child? Obedience? Learning to read? Ministering to their heart? Writing his first essay? PLAY? Learn to cook? U n d e r s t a n d Multiplication? Learn to write? Learn to build? Attentiveness? Read more?

I have found through the years that God tends to place those real needs on my heart long before it becomes part of my schedule. I KNOW those weaknesses need a special place on the program. I know those needs that need special emphasis. How about you? Is there a need that appears to be blaring? What comes to your mind?

My friend, that is the ONE thing that is "needful." Let that be the focus each and every day! Keep that as your focus for this season. Then, listen to the Lord for the next thing that is needful for each child. As we keep

ourselves restrained toward the vision that God has given us for our children and do the thing that is needful, we will simplify our schedule and lifestyle and as a result, we



Elisabeth and her BRAND NEW buddy—Tooty!
Too CUTE!

will get MUCH, MUCH more accomplished.

Center EVERYTHING Around The Family!

One of the greatest things about homeschooling is that homeschooling gives us the opportunity to get back to God's perfect design for the godly home. One thing that is simply incredible about God's design is that He planned for the family life to constantly be a learning environment with every single member of the family part of the body! From the youngest to the older generations, God wants for every person in the family to be a vital part of

the life inside of the home! Every person in the family enriches and completes the education in the home.

For this reason, be sure to include your WHOLE family in everything that you do! Bring your little ones into your Homeschool!

The first year we homeschooled, my daughter was only 2. That was the year that she decided it was time for her to potty train! She also began BIG experiments with Vaseline... Baby Powder... Toilet

Tissue... and MOLD! I was always on the run to keep up with her!! AND I was trying to Homeschool also!

The second year was soooo much better. BUT, I did many things different! First, I *read aloud* more! The children would cuddle up with me on the couch to listen to story after story. I read aloud on Matthew's level, but I am still amazed at how much Elisabeth understood. Sure, there were times that I did not think she was learning, but she STILL remembers details from those read alouds. It is simply astonishing!

Elisabeth was a busy, busy little girl. There were times that she wanted to "DO" something, evident by our first year homeschooling! I solved many of the problems, frustrations and unnecessary interruptions by bringing her little toys into the floor in our living room for her to play with while we read aloud. I gave her play-doh, legos, dishes to "cook" in, little action figures, sketch pad and paints/colors/colored pencils, etc. This did two things...she made LESS mess AND she began to learn! Less stress! More accomplished!

As time has gone on, we have learned how valuable the FAMILY lessons are. I really do not think that we would still be homeschooling if I had continued teaching my children the way that I first began teaching them! So much was dependent upon me! There was such a demand for me to keep things going and to plan out almost all of our day. I was wore out from the demands!

I know that much of the demands resulted from the children being so young. Yet, there were many demands that we a result of learning how to BE A FAMILY! By God's design, He plans for

families to learn TOGETHER...FROM one another...all along the way!

Studies have determined that we remember 5% of what we hear...10% of what we see...and a whopping 95%



Elisabeth on Christmas Morning 2002!

of what we teach!

Looking at what happens in the family as we talk to each other and share in each other's lives and interests, we find that as we listen to what Matthew is interested in and learning through his personal studies, we get at least 5%—AND I do NOT have to plan out the lesson, stuff it down their throats, or test them on the information! Rather, Matthew has such a passion about his topic that his interest become the lessons for the moment. We KNOW that HE "gets it." Plus, I may not

remember as many details as he does, but my mind is stretched and growing! Then, simply by BEING A FAMILY, when Elisabeth joins the conversation, she shares with the family about HER interests. Not only is she *reviewing* what she has been studying and learning, but her passion pours forth over her topic, stretching us and growing us...teaching us even more! By the time that Harold and I share what we are learning, our conversation teaches lessons that books cannot hold!

One of the blessings of homeschooling is that we have been able to instill a strong commitment in our children to dig deep into areas of interest so they KNOW topics to the depth and breadth. This hunger for knowledge and ideas has encouraged all of us to become REALLY GOOD and knowledgeable in the areas of interest and study. As a result, we can learn so much from one another—just like God originally planned! So, not only are we walking out true LOVE for one another as we take interest in the passions and interests of one another, but lessons are being taught naturally! Just like God designed from creation! Too cute!

Balance ALL Areas of Life...

I think that this is my greatest struggle...BALANCE! There are so many things vying for my constant attention! Years ago, I read an interesting quote that has helped me in this area. Charlotte Mason wrote about the necessity of keeping all the areas of the study in proportion. She said that any area that takes up too much time does so at the expense of all of the others.

Take this into our homelife as we consider and plan out our schedule... If there is any area that grows out of proportion, the others will suffer. For this reason, we have to constantly be on the look out as keepers of our homes. I made a list of things (areas of our life) that were important aspects of each and every day.

I constantly look at all we do to make sure that every thing we do fits into those aspects of our day. For a few, I had to look to see if they were important enough to become an aspect of each and every day OR if they should be eliminated completely. This simplifies our day AND helps me to get the most important things accomplished.

When setting up your yearly schedule, take a look at what you really want to accomplish in your day. Make a commitment to stick to the priorities that you value the



Matthew with Our Country
Bookstore in Jacksonville, FL—
July 2003!

most! In the early years, you may want to have a simple plan for every day. A simple plan that you can REALLY get done! Getting Daddy to work while the children watch Sesame Street (I REALLY have no idea what is on now—this was one of our favorites when my children were little!); plenty of play outside (brings in that Nature Study while meeting their need for play!); special time reading aloud through picture books; nap-time; SHORT table-time to practice handwriting/color; then get ready for dad to come in from work! Oh, this is just a brainstorm.

Now that my children are older, our days are a balance of Quiet Times/Chores/Table Time/Family Time/Productive Free Time/Ministry and Business Responsibilities/Read Alouds. This helps us to accomplish our goals for our family AND to offer balance to each and every day. We all know the basic framework of every day, so we know what is needed and expected of us for each day. Plus! It is easier for us to stay balanced if we make sure that we keep each area of our life balanced out.

Think about what is important to you and your husband. Think about your abilities. Then, balance your day so it is JUST right for your family!

PLAN!

Whether children are little or about to begin their own lives on their own, we ALL need a basic plan for each day/month/year. Then, with the plan as a framework, we can remain flexible!

A plan helps us to have a vision for what needs to be done each day while it keeps us restrained to our purpose.

You can use anything for planning...a journal, planner, Day Timer, a calendar, etc.

You can be as detailed or as simple as you prefer. Just take a look at your year by going through your entire yearly calendar marking in all events, field trips, studies, etc. (easier to keep the schedule DOABLE). Then, take a look again each month for any updates or additional plans. Then, each evening take your calendar and plans before the Father, asking Him to order your day!

As a very Choleric personality, I like order and the certainty of knowing what to expect. The only problem is that I have had to learn how to take that part of my personality before the Lord each and every day to surrender my plans to the leading of His Holy Spirit. I have learned that God wants for us to be orderly, but it is also very important to him that we remain flexible.

Having order helps me to have more margin in my life for the spontaneity of motherhood, the fun that often gets us off schedule, and the REAL teachable moments that are NEVER on schedule!

Work Your Help!

This is a KEY for the Mommy at home with children! I had NO idea how

much my children could REALLY do until I began to surrender my incredibly HIGH standards, my pride, and my time in training them!

Oh, I am not just talking about them keeping up the



Elisabeth working hard, but taking a break to SMILE!
February 2003!

messes they make. I am talking about training them to help manage the entire home.

This is very foreign to many of us who were brought up in public schools. Our mothers had ALL day with us tucked away in schools to clean...not to mention that we were not at home to make messes AND most of us were not as creative (with creativity comes MESS, MESS and MORE MESS!) because we were taught in public schools.

As a result, many of us try to bear the weight of our homes on our own shoulders (my children lovingly call this

being a "Mommy Martyr!") until we find ourselves completely exhausted! With the little bit of strength that you do have, allow your children to work alongside of you. Let the 2 year-olds fold and put away the laundry...let your daughter load the dishwasher and put away the dishes...let the children dust the furniture...let the children sweep, vacuum, and mop (talk about adventures!) ...let them clean the windows and mirrors...so on! I usually do two major clean-outs each year (the last year I didn't and you can TELL!) which takes care of the scum and brings order to our home so that we can easily

manage quick clean-ups each day during our chore time. Over the years, I slowly but surely trained my children in more and more of the homemaking skills. Not only has this given me relief, but this has helped to use the natural gifts and abilities that my children have. Our children have learned that they are PART of the family. Everyone pitches in. No one carries the load for everyone else! This is truly God's perfect plan!

Re-evaluate Your Standards...

Now, this may not be YOUR struggle, but it was one

of my high places! I tried to keep up with everyone...my mom (who in my eyes was and IS the perfect homemaker!), my mother-in-law (who's house is always perfectly clean, clean enough that I never cared if my toddler's ate off her floor!), my friends (who were not only keeping beautiful homes, but ALSO homeschooled!), and even the ladies at the church. I found myself absolutely exhausted! Not to mention, I had very little joy in my calling!

All it took was a good look at my standards, my actual abilities, my priorities in comparison to what was truly needful! Oh, the house could be a little more cluttered so my child could learn to read. Although the very BEST food was home-made from organically grown foods—BUT, for sanity's sake, frozen pizzas, waffles, and cereal CAN be a reassuring reality when balancing the demands of homemaking, homeschooling, and running a busy home-business!

Sure, I am fully able to take care of my house, homeschool, and help at church...but the BIG QUESTION IS: AM I NICE doing it all? Absolutely NOT!

Asking my family and loved

ones, you would soon find that the thing that was needful was a SLOOOWwww pace so I could balance being a responsive wife, fun Mommy, energetic homemaker, and



Me and MY Daddy—July 2003!

wise mentor! I have to let the things go that would steal away my time, energy, and relaxed life!

PLAN Time for Fun!

FUN! Yet, another thing that I have to PLAN into my schedule! I am amazed how much MORE we get done each day in our lessons as we take time to have fun...to laugh...to enjoy the little things...and to enjoy one another. Yes, this is a vital element of the Homeschool that endures.

Humor is all around. There are delights at our fingertips ready for us to seize! All we have to do is take the time necessary to have fun! It may mean rolling on the floor giggling...chasing

each other down for tickles... laughing at CORNY jokes... getting away for the day to just WATCH the children play. Whatever you do, be sure to leave lots of time for laughs, giggles, and fun!

Finally, Let the Holy Spirit Lead Each Day!

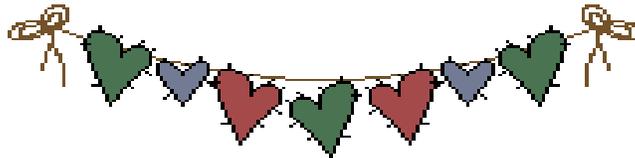
We have before us children, precious children. Motherhood is a tremendous calling. We are shaping the lives of people, real people. This load is simply too much for a mother to bear alone! For this reason, commit your whole way to the Lord. Ask Him to lead you each and every day. If you are confused, ask Him for direction. If you are tired and weary, check your burden to be sure that you are carrying His Yoke and His burden, then ask Him to give you the strength to press IN to Him and press on toward the mark!!

God will come alongside of you, engulf you, comfort you, and direct you. So! The year is right here before you... what will it be? Ready to make this THE BEST YEAR YET?? Take a break to pray... seek God...and plan out a schedule so each day will count! Make this the best year yet!

Dry Spells, Holding Patterns

WHEN IS IT GOING TO RAIN????

By Janet Birkey



• Fall brings a time of beautiful change. The leaves, the colors, the cooler air...the feeling about life in general. It just doesn't last long enough for me, because I tell you that I am NOT, I repeat, am NOT a winter person. I know that after this feeling of cool cozy comfort, some days come that can bring some sadness in it's shorter days and less light pattern. I know that the cold keeps us indoors to the point of feeling that we are part of the very walls that surround us. I know that we love the holiday season, but it can bring it's own problem with post-holiday let down.

• It seems that after the "seasons in life" we truly enjoy, the season following is not only uncomfortable, but down-right hard! After times of being able to stay tuned in to God and His will, we often go into a dry spell. When we find ourselves in those dry spells, we tend to lose sight of the Living Water. We plead with God..."WHEN IS IT GOING TO RAIN???"

• I am becoming more and more inclined to believe that God allows those dry spells for many different reasons, but the main one is for the purpose of making us search out Him and making Him the priority in our life.

• When we go through rough, dry patches, we will try many things to bring some sense of thirst quenching to our raggedy, dry bones, but we are only satisfied when we quench that thirst with the Living Water and let it plump up our spiritual selves.

• Do you ever go through times in your life where you feel everything is changing, and yet, you are stuck in a holding pattern? Those are dry spells. I once told a friend that I was going to write a book and call it *Holding Patterns: Going Through Life With Your Car In Neutral and Your Foot On The Accelerator!* Okay, so much for my ability to title a book, but the thought was about things going haywire around you

and you feel like you can't move. It's a whole lot of "hurry up and wait."

• Sometimes we are so stuck in a such a holding/waiting pattern that we don't feel we can even breathe. We need to have a plan to fall back on when things are not clear and we can't breathe or find our way. This is when we do what we KNOW to do, not what we FEEL like doing. Sometimes we need to just sit until God shows us what to do.

• Do you remember when Naomi told Ruth (3:18) to "sit still my daughter until you know how the matter will fall?" The Hebrew word for "know" used here is "yada" (yaw-dah') which means to "ascertain by seeing".

• Wow! How many times to we determine our actions/reactions by judging circumstances, feeling, or reasoning? God gives us these emotions, but they ~must~ be used in compatibility and agreement with other Scripture. I know

that I am all too quick to jump to conclusions because I "just know" that a certain matter will turn out a certain way. I "just know" that people will react in a certain way. I don't sit still. I don't wait until I know...until I can ascertain, determine, pin point by seeing the matter for what it is.

We see Ruth in this point of the story as a young woman whose heart has been broken by the death of her husband, but it appears that Boaz will redeem her and her widowed estate. The conflict in this little part of the story comes when Boaz tells Ruth that while yes, he is a relative, there is a relative closer to her than Boaz who could

marry her if he wanted (kinsman redeemer). Can you picture this young woman who has for all purposes given up her own desires to care for her mother-in-law and now finds out that the man she really wants might not be the one that she will wed?

But Naomi, bless her soul, tells Ruth to wait... don't rush around and try to manipulate the circumstances yourself... be still...wait until you can see the truth.

Are we willing to wait? When life rocks and rolls and all we can do is sit there, be very careful to do just that...sit there. We tend to forget that the Lover of our Soul will not rest until the matter

is settled. While it may appear that God is not taking aggressive steps on our behalf, He works behind the scenes of our life so that when the curtain is pulled back, all of the players are in place, and our life becomes a masterpiece from the Author of The Book of Life.

How hard it is to wait. It hurts and it challenges our faith. Remember though that if we are not challenged, it can be very difficult to get to the bottom of Truth...finding out that Truth for ourselves. It's all in the waiting.

When you find yourself in a holding pattern...hold on to Him...the One who will not let you go!



About Janet Birkey...

We welcome Janet Birkey to another year with our magazines! Her writing continues to bless us in the pages of our magazine AND she also writes for our other magazine, Time for Tea!

Janet is the wife to one, homeschooling mother of two, and a gal who usually can not find it after she finally gets it together! Bonded already? Janet not only balances her calling as a wife and mother, but she also ministers encouragement through her writing and dynamic speaking ministry. She is finishing up the last touches on her first book, which will be introduced in the near future in our magazine. Oh, and we plan to have many, many articles by Janet in future issues. I guess you can tell why!

If you are interested in contacting Janet, you may e-mail her at johnbirkey@arn.net or phone her at (806) 447-9945 or find her at home on the web at: <http://members.truepath.com/jbirkey/index.html>

F... FUN!!!

By Catherine Jaime

Excerpted from her BRAND NEW BOOK, *Organized Ramblings: Home Education From A to Z!* Check out this LONG-AWAITED treasure! More information after this excerpt! ENJOY!

"We firmly believe learning can and SHOULD be fun. We do make our kids do some things they don't want to, or that they don't enjoy—but that is the exception not the rule. Education does not have to be boring, or routine. It should not be a chore."

Catherine Jaime

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

It's a shame to think how many people might be surprised to have a chapter on FUN in a home education book!

I had confiscated a water gun from one of my children recently. Instead of dumping the water out like I usually do, I started squirting all the kids that came close to me. (It was amazing how many I got wet before I rant out of water!) When I finished my squirting frenzy, we were all laughing. My 9-year-old looked at me with great surprise afterwards and remarked, "I thought grownups were boring." And recently, when I was discussing a new game we had with my 8-year-old, she expressed frustration to me, "Adults don't learn (games) as fast as kids."

I'm not against having fun; I just want my children to understand that entertaining themselves should not be their first priority in life. And that wasting time is indeed a terrible waste.

Educational activities can be fun, fun can be educational, and those are my preferences. Why waste time watching an "entertaining" show—when there is something educational and enjoyable on the History Channel? Why play a game that teaches little, when I have shelves full of games that are fun and educational? Why play a mindless video game, when we can put together a 1000-piece puzzle together?

"I think the man who above all others should be pitied is the man who has never learned how to amuse himself without me-

chanical assistance when he is alone...an uneducated man, shrinks from quiet. An educated man longs for it" (from *Education, Christianity, and the State*)...since he knows he can always read or meditate. Quiet, unscheduled time, for ourselves and our children should be seen as a blessing, not a curse.

My kids are not even supposed to use the word "bored"... After all, being bored is really a choice, a state of mind. To admit to being bored is to admit to making the choice of not doing anything productive. At my house there is no shortage of readily available materials with which to "do something"—games, puzzles, craft materials, etc., so I have little patience with someone who chooses to be bored. My primary solution for a "bored" child is to give him extra chores to occupy his time. That cures the problem

very quickly!

There is another side to the "fun issue": Can school be fun? Can learning be fun? Or do we look at fun as something we do after school? How much of what our students need to learn can they be working on through games, songs, or other "creative connections" to the brain?

Is the "fun learning" something we hold over our student's heads—"after you finish your assignment, you can play that game, or put together that puzzle?"

Maybe we need to re-evaluate what we consider is "real school." My proposition: If learning is taking place—education is in effect. And education counts as 'real school,' even if it's outside the scope of the packaged curriculum. If learning is fun, we have less resistance, they want to continue it longer, and they will retain more of it.

Some of our favorite "educational-fun" activities include:

Legos

Toys with small pieces are such a problem in a big family with many small children. We have banned many games and

toys over the years just because of the mess and problems that the small pieces pose. But Legos and Duplos fit in a special category. They have such an educational value that we put up with the aggravations they cause. Building with Legos can occupy any



Elisabeth at the beach in Florida!

number of children (and adults) from ages three and above, for hours at a time. And real thinking goes into many of the models that are built. On their own initiative, some of my middle sons recently built a model of the ironside, the *USS Monitor*. They researched their project carefully to make sure they were as accurate as possible. Now mind you, this was not from a kit, it was something they came up with on their own, and spent hours working on. These types of projects strengthen their thinking skills—and they don't even realize they are learning!

Playing Cards

I know that some Christians don't consider cards acceptable. But, we don't have a problem with the idea of playing cards in our home.

Cards are such an inexpensive, portable, versatile activity. The youngest to the oldest can be occupied with them. Younger children can match colors and numbers, even with a partial deck of cards. Memory games are wonderful, and put various ages on an equal footing; my 6-year-old usually beats me in these games.

We enjoy various card games with anywhere from one to twelve players. Most of the games we play build thinking skills and the ability to strategize. We would be lost without multiple decks of playing cards around our home.

Chess

Chess is a wonderful tool to develop thinking skills. It is inexpensive, fairly easy to learn, but difficult to master. It will occupy one or two students for great lengths of time. And it also builds thinking skills.

Puzzles

Puzzles are great builders of both visual skills and thinking skills. Ravensburger Puzzles

have been our all-time favorites with 24 to 5,000 pieces. Beautiful pictures and quality pieces make them a real joy to put together by all ages. Larger puzzles can be put together as a cooperative effort by many family members.

More about Games

Games can be store-bought or home-made. When you are considering games to purchase, look for games that are

- * Educational
- * Versatile
- * Long lasting (enjoyable for years to come)
- * Economical (good investment)

Some of the best games in the world are coming out of

Germany. I was reading an article in a recent *U.S. News and World Report* (December 9, 2002 issue) that discussed this phenomenon. German games topped 7 out of 10 of *Game Magazine's* 2002 categories. German games are often more expensive—because they are so well built—but they are worth the investment. Our current game collection (over 100 games) includes a number of games that we bought when we were in Germany over a dozen years ago. German games tend to include more strategy than their American counterparts, and are generally fast-paced.

Educational games can be considered part of our "curriculum package." Retention is aided when the stu-

dents are having fun while learning. Games can introduce a concept, or help reinforce an existing lesson. They do not have to be saved until "after school." They can be part of school. Buy good games to supplement your other materials—or make your own! Or better yet, have your students make them! What a great way to reinforce learning.

Summary

These are just a "few of our favorite things," and the time they take all qualifies as "school time!" Don't feel like "fun learning" is an oxymoron. They "fun learning" is what kids are more likely to enjoy and remember.

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

About Catherine Jaime...

We are SO thrilled to welcome Catherine to *Homeschooling The Easy Way!* Catherine is a veteran in this generation of home educators. She and her husband began educating their first of 12 children over 21 years ago. Now, we are blessed to sit at Catherine's feet and glean from her wisdom and balanced approach to not just teaching our children, but ministering to their hearts along the way!

Love her? OH! You will want her NEW book, *Organized Ramblings: Home Education from A to Z!* It is HOT off the press! My copy is in my book basket at this time, going EVERYWHERE I go! See our description on the next page AND also see all of her great games that are sure to make your homeschool FUN and teaching EASY all along the way!

Live in North Alabama? Catherine, and her sister Cheryl, JUST opened the most fantastic Homeschool Resource Center I have EVER seen! Need new resources, she has the best! Need used curriculum (or need to sale yours!), she has "Used Curriculum" shelves! There is more! She has an ever-growing lending library...equipment for making and binding your own books, games, and other homeschool projects...and awesome classes that you will definitely want to attend! Don't live in North Alabama? Well, you can make plans NOW to attend conferences that *Creative Learning Connection* offers! WE WILL BE THERE! Just contact Catherine for more information on their conferences at cmmjaime@alum.mit.edu and let her know we sent you!

HOT off the Press!!!

Organized Ramblings: Home Education from A to Z!

Catherine Jaime has done it again! BUT! This time it is JUST what we have all been waiting for: her very own book written from mom-to-mom!

I have known Cathy for as long as I can remember! (no offense Cathy!) Our philosophy of education is SO parallel! We have gone down many of the same paths and arrived at many of the same ideas and approaches to teaching our children. This is just ONE reason that I am thrilled to see *Organized Ramblings: Home Education from A to Z* rolling off of the press!

Organized Ramblings: Home Education from A to Z is FILLED to overflowing with how-to's for making homeschooling FUN and EASY...encouragement from a mom who is now not only a homeschooling mom, but now a Spiritual MOM to the homeschool moms of this generation...and, most of all, REAL fellowship with a dear, dear friend!

Chapters are a wonderful mix of topics based on letters of the alphabet, but full of great wisdom. Here are the titles:

A-Art and Music

- B-Bible and Discipleship
- C-Computers and Other Modern Technology
- D-Drama, Including Shakespeare (DO SEE HER NEW SHAKESPEARE RESOURCES LISTED IN OUR PRICE LIST!)
- E-Encyclopedias and Other References
- F-Fun
- G-Government
- H-History and Geography
- I-Indispensable Homeschooling Books, Catalogs, Etc.
- J-Jumping Jacks and Fitness
- K-Kids (The 4-Legged Kind)
- L-"Littles"
- M-Multi-Level Teaching
- N-Nature and Other Sciences
- O- Ourselves or With Others?
- P-Philosophy of Education
- Q-Questions and Answers
- R-"3-R's"—Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic
- S-Saving Money
- T-Teaching Teens
- U-Unit Studies/Topical Studies
- V-Vacations
- W-Writing It All Up (Lesson Plans, Record-Keeping
- X-X-mas, Thanksgiving, and Other Holidays
- Y-Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow
- Z-Zoos, Museums, Other Memberships

Need a bit of encouragement? Want ideas that WILL REALLY work? Looking for a Homeschool-How-To Book that will really WORK? Well, this is MY PICK! We think you will find this to be one resource that you will go back to over and over again!

PRICE: \$18.00

Alphabet Fun!

Alphabet Fun! Brought to you from Cathy Jaime and Cheryl Holle, fellow Alabama homeschooling moms, this book definitely matches the motto of their business, "Beyond the Box." This book is designed to get you started with your younger student (s). It is not meant to be an end, but rather a beginning. It is meant to encourage your pre-schoolers (and early elementary—even though my 12 year old has LOVED the word searches and color pages!) to have fun with the alphabet while they play and find learning to be fun! Included in both versions are 26 letter pages, 26 picture sets for them to color and 2 word searches for each letter. As with all of the books produced by Cathy and Cheryl (you will see more listed in our Notebook Section), you are welcome to freely reproduce these books for your children. Available in comb-bound book or a 3-ring notebook binder version so you can freely expand the notebook. **PRICE: \$16.00**

Books of the Bible Game... Designed for up to 10 players, this game is great for recognition of the books of the Bible AND learning the sequence of the books. FUN! Learns the books of the Bible while making great memories!
Kit: \$8.00

Math Facts Fun! A Math Game for All Ages... Talk about an answer to MY prayers! This game is it! Math must be practiced to be remembered. Practice takes time and patience, and can wear on both the teachers and the stu-

dents! But games take practice to another dimension. This game is designed to help with practice at all levels of math ability. Students practice adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing at their own level. They also practice logic and strategy. This packet is perfect for all ages. Just look at levels of challenge:

- ♥ Level 1: Counting/Number recognition
- ♥ Level 2: Pre-addition
- ♥ Level 3: Basic Addition and Subtraction
- ♥ Level 4-6: Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication, Division from simple to complex operations!
- ♥ Also Includes: Skip Counting, a list of prime numbers, the "sieve of Eratosthenes, a Hundred Chart, Addition and Multiplication Tables.

ALL IN ONE PACKET!!! See why I was so excited?? And best yet! The price! Includes everything you need for your family to learn Math Facts while having fun!

PRICE:
Math Facts Fun Game... \$10.00
Supplemental Pack (includes 12 sided dice and additional activities!): \$3.00

Timeline Games! Introducing Games With A Difference!

We are SO excited to introduce this new line (and our beloved friends, Cathy Jaime and Cheryl Holle) to you! If you want to teach your children facts AND a general flow through History in a fun way, I think you will find these games to be your answer. Also, if you are looking for a great "skeleton" to

outline your studies, you can't beat these games! Plus, Cathy and Cheryl have designed a Timeline Journal (see below OR you can use any of the other Timeline Notebook Options that we offer.) to use along side of these games. Oh, I want to tell you all about them! Well, instead I will turn this over to Cathy and Cheryl so they can tell you about their AWESOME games:

"We believe time spent studying and learning about people and key events is more important than memorizing a long list of historic dates. Over time, most of the key dates will come without effort. In history, the flow of events is more critical than the exact dates. To that end, we have created several timeline games. These help students see the flow of history. The games are fun to play (important to kids), and they are also very educational (important to parents!) In addition to being fun, these games can be used to introduce a new topic, to reinforce one you're currently working on, or to review one you've already completed. They can be played by just about any age and number of players. The objective of each game is for a player to get 8 cards in chronological order in their personal time-line on the table in front of them. All of the games include blank cards, so you can personalize your game and include any important dates we may have left out. Each game also contains printed time-line sheets listing all the dates chronologically that are used in that game. Great for preview and review. The games are packaged in two different ways each including the game directions, timeline pages, and the cards: 1) Notebook: This game is bound in a 3-ring binder with a zippered holder for the pre-cut cards. There is plenty of room for related, supplemental materials. 2) Kit: This is more of a do-it-yourself option packaged in a heavy duty resealable bag. The cards are printed on 8 1/2" by 11" sheets of cardstock, 9 to a page. The cards can easily be cut with scissors or a paper cutter before using the game (there are cutting guides on the pages)." Cheryl and Cathy

We also have SUPPLEMENTAL PACKAGES for each game.

These include Crossword Puzzles, Word Searches, Matching, and much more. These sheets are a great addition to the games, as an introduction to the subject, or to compliment a unit study.

Civil War Time-Line Game... 152 dates with the key dates/events leading up to and during the Civil War.

Notebook: \$18.00
Kit: \$10.00
Supplemental Package \$8.00

History of Astronomy Time-Line Game... 83 dates relating to astronomy -- important discoveries, discoverers, etc.

Notebook: \$15.00
Kit: \$8.00
Supplemental Package \$4.00

History of Space Exploration Time-Line Game... Another great timeline game that you won't want to miss!

Notebook: \$18.00
Kit: \$10.00

Presidents Time-Line Game... 85 dates including the election of each president, the deaths of those who died in office.

Notebook: \$15.00
Kit: \$8.00
Supplemental Package \$4.00

Statehood Time-Line Game... 74 dates dealing with the expansion of our country.

Notebook: \$14.00
Kit: \$7.00
Supplemental Package \$6.00

Sharing Shakespeare with Children!

Sharing Shakespeare with Children by Catherine Jaime... Have no idea where to begin teaching Shakespeare with your children? Have no idea what to teach? Just wish you had someone to take your hand and walk you through some studies? Well, Catherine Jaime brings you a whole series of great resources that you will love! From basic how-to's to recommendations for specific ages to brief history on Shakespeare and his plays to famous quotes perfect for your notebooks to specific notes on the plays to recommendations for bringing the studies to life (videos, events, games to play, food from Shakespeare's time, Bingo, "Who Am I?" character sketches...plus much, MUCH more!

Volume 1 (Special Notes on 14 major plays: Comedy of Errors, Hamlet, Julius Caesar, King Henry IV-Parts 1/2, King Henry V, King Lear, King Richard II, Midsummer Night's Dream, Much Ado About Nothing, Othello, Taming of the Shrew, The Tempest, Twelfth Night)...**PRICE: \$15.00**

Volume 2... (Special Notes on 8 Classic Plays: Antony and Cleopatra, As You Like It, Julius Caesar, King John, Macbeth, Merchant of Venice, Richard III, Romeo and Juliet)
PRICE: \$12.00

Ready-To-Go Shakespeare Play Kits!

These kits are simply fantastic! Each set includes a Dover Thrift Edition of the Play, special notes, 2-line count charts, play reports, performance reports, card sets.

Want an easy, friendly introduction to Shakespeare? Everything you need is included in these reasonable kits!

Introduction to Comedy of Errors...\$10.00
Introduction to Hamlet... \$10.00
Introduction to Julius Caesar...\$10.00

Shakespearean Card Sets By Cathy Jaime and Cheryl Holle... Each of these card sets contains 8 character cards, 8 matching quote cards, 8 sequence cards (the play "in brief"), 2 setting cards, and 1 main theme card for a particular play. They are currently available for Hamlet and Julius Caesar, and will soon be available for Much Ado About Nothing and Midsummer Night's Dream. Ideas for using these cards: Before starting a play, read over them to introduce the characters, setting, and plot of each play. During the study of a play -- work on matching characters with their quote. Can the student explain the context of the quotes? After reading or watching a play: Can the student put the 8 sequence cards in proper order? The name of the play is not written on the cards, so you can mix and match card sets. (It is an added challenge to figure out which cards go with which play.) Don't worry, "answer cards" are provided!

PRICE: \$5.00 each set

Ready for a Nature Walk???

By Cindy Rushton



Fall! Every day has a special new treat for you as you look outside the window! Why not take a break in the midst of your busy to-do's to take a nature walk? The lessons are awaiting you, so why not give it a try? Here are some things you may want to try out as you grab your backpacks, nature journals, you are in for a treat!

- **Find a spot to observe Nature that all of your family will enjoy...** Special goodies are waiting all around you! Your neighborhood, a biking trail, a local zoo, botanical garden, a canyon, a mountain trail, the local park, the river, a planetarium, an aquarium, a wild life refuge, an arboretum, your favorite vacation spot, a living history museum, a friend's neighborhood, Grandma's back yard... Just start small...**SO YOU WILL DO IT!**
- **Plan a scavenger hunt.** Make a list of "fall" treasures to hunt for. Give the children a list and turn them loose. You **CAN** allow swaps for the treasures that they find. Watch them have a blast while they are learning!
- **Start a collection!** Collections teach much informally. They teach how to organize, label, display, and date materials gathered! You may like to collect rocks, leaves, seeds, butterflies, flowers, pictures of the sunset or sunrise, feathers, nature poetry...the list is unlimited! You can also swap or sell extras from your collection to friends or family long distance! They may not have the same treasures in their back yard that you have!
- **Go for a LONGER Hike and Campout!** Make this a family outing! Assign the little ones to research all of the how-to's and essential information needed to prepare for a long hike. Let them learn the basics of camping. Then, dig in for a **FUN** family adventure. Need help? The best information we have found has been available through the Scouting materials. We found ours at a local department store that

carried all of the scouting uniforms and books. Those books are **VERY** reasonable and filled to overflowing with great ideas and tips for making your hikes and camping trips great!

- **Keep lists!** As you go along, you will see many things only once. Keep lists of animals, birds, life cycles, observations of animals, times for the rising and setting of the sun, temperatures, weather, records of experiments. Just keep each list in the back of your Nature Notebook.
- **Set up a Seasonal Table.** Just set up a table or a shelf in your home that is just for the display of treasures found outside throughout the various seasons, books that are favored read alouds each year during that particular season, or special crafts made especially during that season! Decorate the table in different colors to go along with the seasons. Let this be a project for the children to keep up.

throughout the year!

- **Keep a Nature bag/backpack/basket ready to go!** Essentials are your nature notebooks, field guides, paints, pencils, camera, and snacks!
- **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! Develop a place for those Nature goodies while developing a nice product for displaying all that knowledge and keeping memorabilia!
- **Do a tree study!** This is the PERFECT time for a tree study! Trees are easy to begin with. Pick a tree and sketch the tree, its leaves, and its blooms into your Nature Note-

book. If you are like me and not so good at sketching, just take a picture! In your notebook add special details like the date, where you found it, common name and Latin name for the tree, and a description of the tree. You may want to describe the branches, bark, birds/insects living in the tree, and the purpose of the tree. Having a gorgeous fall? Why not take pictures of all of the different trees in your yard (or neighborhood) at the same time. The colors are usually SO spectacular! Take pictures as changes take place.

- **Make Your OWN Field Guide!** Why not begin a notebook or homemade sketch book keeping your information/photos so you can **MAKE YOUR OWN FIELD GUIDE!** Share with your friends!

• **Why not go for a picnic?** Nothing is any more fun than a picnic! Just pack a basket full of lunch or a simple afternoon tea to go! Head out to your favorite spot with just your own sweet family! Of course... you should also think of your dear friends occasionally. (Yes, this is a hint! I am always up for a picnic!). Picnics can also be outside your very own door. We LOVE picnics on our deck! We usually curl up on our great big swing afterwards and enjoy the beauty of nature while enjoying great conversation or our favorite books!

So...ready? Today is the PERFECT day! Don't let it slip away! Grab those backpacks... sketch books...watercolors... AND the children! There is an adventure outside!

Want MORE Help???



We have THE BEST resources that are written JUST FOR YOU! Cindy's classic book *Nature Study...The Easy Way* is FULL of great information, ideas, and help! We also have great reproducible pages designed JUST for your Nature Notebooks AND workshop tapes sharing all of the ins and outs of teaching Science through real books, real people, and real life! Just take a peek in OUR COUNTRY BOOKSTORE pricelist for descriptions and a full listing of great helps!

Fall Nature Study Ideas...

By Cindy Rushton



Ready for the new school year, but have NO idea what to do for your Nature and Science studies? Give these ideas a try. They are excerpted from *Nature Study...The Easy Way*. There are TONS more ideas in the book, but these should get you on the right track!



Fall

*Weekly Nature Walk! Work in Nature Notebook.
NO pressure...just with atmosphere of fun and delight!*

Trees...

- Take a Nature Walk to collect Fall leaves. Classify leaves by color and form. Press for Nature Notebook. Jot down date, name, and where found.
- Select and draw a leaf for your Nature Notebook! Include date, name, and where found!
- Collect, describe or draw the fruit or seeds from your tree!
- Record the date that the first leaves begin to fall!
- Cut a chosen leaf out of similar colored paper.
- Make cards with pressed leaves and special Poetry or Scripture!
- Sketch your tree in watercolor or crayon for your Nature Notebook.
- Sketch a tree and label the parts!
- Write a description of the roots of the tree.
- Hunt for Fall Poetry about trees! Copy into your Nature Notebook.
- Look up Scripture verses about trees. Copy into your Nature Notebook.



Flowers...

- Each week take a walk to collect new Fall wildflowers around your neighborhood. Press into a Scrapbook/Nature Notebook.
- Sketch and label flower parts.
- Hunt for Poetry about the flowers that are blooming each

week.

- Find Scripture verses to copy into your Nature Notebook about all flowers.
- Plant some flowers outside in your yard!

Birds...

- Time for bird migration. Read about it with the children. Go to any area that birds gather... observe!
- Take in any feeders for migratory birds.
- Don't forget to feed any birds that stay around your home. Put one right outside of a big window so the children can watch the birds up close!
- Look for bird feathers. Keep in your Nature Notebook. Be sure to note where found, what kind of bird, and the date found!



Insects...

- Work on your bug collection!
- Hunt for insect homes. Under rocks and fallen logs...In the bark of a tree...in corners of your home...anthills...under leaves...on plants...so on!
- Watch for flying ants!
- Go to a pond to collect water insects.
- Look for masses of ladybugs. They hibernate in large groups, nestled in the roots of grass.

Animals...

- Keep an amphibian or reptile overnight!
- Make a home for a new pet! Study all about what they eat and how they live most comfortably!
- Preserve a spider web. (see ideas section for details)

Plants...

- Experiment with seeds...hitchhiking seeds, germination, growth rate...so on!
- Collect wildflower seeds!
- Make a seed chart!
- Research to find which plants in your area have edible roots. Dig up some and give it a try!
- Hunt for fall mushrooms!
- Go gather pecans! Make a pecan pie!
- Go pick apples at an orchard! Make homemade applesauce or apple pies.

Astronomy...

- Keep a chart of the moon phases for a month...try October!
- Take an evening to spend stargazing!
- Watch a Fall sunset!

Weather...

- Keep weather chart for the first two weeks of the season...begin October.

Collections...

- Take a day for each of your collections to maintain! (Rocks...shells...feathers...so on!)

Seasonal Table Ideas...

- Pumpkins
- Indian Corn
- String of apple rings
- Mums
- Nut people
- Spatter leaf prints
- Autumn lanterns
- Autumn wreath
- Apples
- Colors: Warm Autumn golds/muted reds/orange/earthy greens



Want MORE Help???

This article is excerpted from Cindy's classic book *Nature Study...The Easy Way*. Find this tidbit to be a big help? Ya ain't seen nothing yet! If you find Nature Study and Science to be subjects that seem far too complicated to teach at home, you will LOVE this book! Have no idea where to begin?? Check out Nature Study...The EASY Way!

Chapter Titles include...Nature Study...The Easy Way; Nature Study in OUR Backyard; On TOP of Huckleberry Hill; Nature Studies Indoors by Mary Woodis; Whole Books EVEN for Nature Studies; Nature Study and Family Day; Binderized!; How-to's for EASY Nature Notebooks; What About Teaching Older Children; 101+ EASY Ideas for Nature Studies...Just to Get You Going; Seasonal Work for Nature Studies; The NEVER Ending List of Field Trips; Bringing Scripture into the Study of Nature; A Touch of Nature Poetry; The Special Touch of Prayers; Hymns and Songs; Neat Quotes for Your Nature Notebooks; Great Read Alouds; Great Resources for Nature Studies; Great Resources on the Internet; Addresses for Getting Great Resources and Information; Our Favorite Companies; About Us. **PRICE: \$25.00** Tapes are ALSO available!

For other resources designed JUST to help you teach Nature Studies and Science the EASY WAY, just see our full pricelist in *Our Country Store!*