

Barefoot Days



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SAMPLE

Introduction to Barefoot Days

Welcome to Barefoot Days and the "Footprints family"! We trust you are excited about starting this story-based learning adventure with your own family.

Joy-filled and Generous Education

Charlotte Mason is a 19th century educator who has influenced both our families' style of homeschooling considerably. She stated that education is a science of relations; a child needs to be introduced to a wide range of subjects and allowed to make their own relations with them. This is the idea behind a generous education and the teacher or parent's role is to help the child to make these relations.

Inspired by Charlotte Mason's gentle approach to learning, this programme gives you everything you need at your fingertips to do the same for your family. You will discover the joy of sharing books and other beautiful and inspiring works of art, music and creation with your children, in a rich, yet relaxed educational programme.

Emilie Buchwald proclaimed **"Children are made readers on the laps of their parents."** By reading aloud together, you will not only share stories, but spend time together making precious memories.



We know how anxious home education parents are to give their children the best possible academic education - and prove to any skeptical grandparents or friends that their children are learning. However, we cannot emphasise enough that the time you invest in training your children's characters, enjoying being with and building relationships with them and between siblings, is as important. It is vital to concentrate on building your children's self-confidence and meeting their emotional needs, which are more important for healthy development than academic activities.

"Education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire!" ~ William Butler Yeats

There is always more you can cram into an academic bucket, especially if you constantly compare your family with other families, who may be pursuing other programmes and doing other things. But we are lighting a fire. We are inspiring a love of learning. We are raising children to develop the character and skills they need for success in life.

We quote many of the quotes which follow often, because we all need to hear them over and over so that their messages sink in and recondition our thinking!

"In this time of extraordinary pressure, educational and social, perhaps a mother's first duty to her children is to secure for them a quiet and growing time, a full six years of passive receptive life, the waking part of it for the most part spent out in the fresh air."
~ Charlotte Mason¹

"...a child needs several hours of physical activity a day. This helps to build the body, purify the blood, promote good digestion and calm the nerves." ~ Raymond Moore²

In the early years, it is important to take a relaxed approach to home education.

The Importance of Free Play³

"Play is the work of childhood." Children only get to be little kids once...and once they start formal learning, they can never get the freedom of those early years back again!

In the UK, David Whitebread⁴, a Cambridge researcher from the Faculty of Education, reported that *"neuroscientific studies have shown that playful activity leads to synaptic growth, particularly in the frontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for all the uniquely human higher mental functions."*

He said that several studies in the fields of anthropology, psychology and education also show that an extended period of playful learning before the start of formal schooling is important for all children.

His studies in developmental psychology have also consistently demonstrated the superior learning and motivation arising from playful, as opposed to instructional, approaches to learning in children. Pretence play supports children's early development of symbolic representational skills, including those of literacy, more powerfully than direct instruction.

"Physical, constructional and social play supports children in developing their skills of intellectual and emotional 'self-regulation', skills which have been shown to be crucial in early learning and development."

A study by psychologists at the University of Colorado⁵ showed an even stronger reason for free play: children who experienced more undirected free play showed signs of stronger executive function, a strong predictor of success in school. ***"The more time that children spent in less-structured activities,"*** wrote the researchers, ***"the better their self-directed executive functioning."***

In The Washington Post⁶, pediatric occupational therapist, Angela Hanscom, explained why so many kids are so fidgety in class and being diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD): they don't have enough core strength and balance to hold their bodies still long enough to learn.

When students were tested, she found that when compared to children from the early 1980s, only one out of twelve children had normal strength and balance. She states that modern children ***"need hours of play outdoors in order to establish a healthy sensory system and to support higher-level attention and learning in the classroom."***

More and more studies are coming to light expressing the same facts: **Play is an essential part of childhood learning.**

Children are naturally curious about the world around them. We need to trust in their ability to learn everything they need to in their own time.

As much as you want to get your children learning from books, be sure to invest in a jungle gym, swing, trampoline, bike or ball and give your kids ample time to play freely.



A Quiet and Growing Time

The question then is how do we, parents and caregivers in the 21st century ensure that our children have a "quiet and growing time...of passive receptive life..." mostly spent out in the fresh air? How do we get our kids away from screens, online games, gadgets and other passive activities that don't give them the all round stimulation that they need?

"Just look at an average stay-at-home-mom's day, there are so many wonderful learning experiences, that you can enjoy with your young child:

Training: politeness, orderliness, attentiveness, kindness, gentleness, obedience etc

Life skills: hygiene, cleaning rooms, shopping, cooking, baking, gardening, library visits.

Spiritual life: praying, reading the Bible, listening or singing gospel songs.

Learning: reading, moms' groups, nature walks, round the block pre-dinner walks.

Gross motor: gardening, jungle gyms or parks, learning to ride a bike.

Exercise: bikes, walks, beaching, swimming, ball games.

Crafts: painting, play dough, recycled models, scrap booking.

Play: imaginative, toys, friends, role playing.

Out and About: communities around them, who the community helpers are e.g. policemen, car guards, postman, rubbish collectors."



Barefoot Days is a tool to help you to implement all of the above into your days, in a relaxed, no-pressure approach.

For this reason, we do NOT give you a daily schedule. We know that no two days are the same and we don't want you feeling that you are behind the schedule. Interruptions often present families with valuable lessons in their own right - and we encourage you not to dismiss them as inconvenient time-wasters because they kept you from doing bookwork

Children can learn first-hand how to deal with the unexpected: they can watch how you handle a crisis, how you tend someone who is ill or injured, how you care for a baby or toddler. They can engage with tradesmen or any unexpected visitors who come to your home and 'interrupt' your day! These are lessons that we can't write into the programme, but they are important life experiences that your children get just by being at home or out in the community with you (and not at school).

How to Use Barefoot Days

1. Read the Theme Introduction

We recommend that you read the introduction to each theme and check that you have the necessary resources, which are listed. Some resources are on the course website and some, like art or craft materials, you may have already or need to buy. The introduction should give you an overview of the topics and areas of focus of that theme. As a rough guide, you should aim to complete a theme in about four weeks, but if it takes longer, that is also just fine! Remember you are lighting a fire!

2. Read the Study

Then read or look through Study 1 (or whichever Study you need to do next) on your own. Once you have an idea of the topics and activities that it includes, you can then begin with the lessons and activities with your children. Display the art print for the week and the Bible memory verse cards, where you will see them often.

3. Read the Stories and Do the Activities

Read one of the stories together and then follow the cues, tips and ideas we have provided.

If you spend an hour to an hour and a half enjoying some of the activities together, that should be enough. This leaves you time to focus on other formal learning activities, if your children are old enough to also be learning the three R's - reading, writing and arithmetic (maths). If not, you can let them play freely, knowing that their play is also developing their brains!

On another day, read another story and pick more of the suggested activities to enjoy.



We realise that for children who are just beginning their formal education, the process of learning to read and do basic maths often takes up all of their limited concentration time, and sometimes their mother's patience too! For this reason you should take a relaxed, fun approach to Barefoot Days. Use it as a tool to lay a foundation on which to build when the children are older. Don't be a slave to the lessons, but use them selectively and explore in more detail any subject that captivates your interest.



References

- (1) Charlotte Mason, Home Education, Volume 1
- (2) Raymond Moore, Homegrown Kids, p.113
- (3) <http://www.shirleys-preschool-activities.com/play.html>
- (4) School Starting Age: The Evidence, <https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/discussion/school-starting-age-the-evidence>, accessed 22 December 2022
- (5) Barker Jane E., Semenov Andrei D., Michaelson Laura, Provan Lindsay S., Snyder Hannah R., Munakata Yuko, Less-structured time in children's daily lives predicts self-directed executive functioning, Frontiers in Psychology, Volume 5, 2014, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00593>, accessed 22 December 2022
- (6) Why So Many Kids Can't Sit Still in School Today, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/07/08/why-so-many-kids-cant-sit-still-in-school-today/>, accessed 22 December 2022
- (7) <https://www.south-african-homeschool-curriculum.com/preschool-ideas>

Theme 1 - Study 1



parenting Tip

Parent your children as God parents you. This means that if the Lord is teaching you self-control, then watch how He gently encourages you along with how you spend your time, what you want to eat, the use of your tongue.

If He is teaching you discipline in spending time in the Word, then see how He does it with nudges towards perfect obedience through the prompting of the Spirit. Is He teaching you to take joy in Him despite the circumstances you are facing? How is He doing this?

Each time it is more than likely through the loving, gentle guidance of the indwelling presence of the Spirit talking to you in your conscience and the conviction that comes from scripture. Use the same method with your children by appealing to their conscience and pointing them to scripture as you model your parenting on our Father who is the perfect parent.

Checklist

- Bible Reading - Genesis 1:1-28
- Scripture Memory Verse - Psalm 139: 13-14
- Reading & Narration
- Poetry - When I Was One by A.A. Milne
- Art Appreciation - Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci
- Music Appreciation - Mozart
- Nature Walk
- Habit Training - Chores and Personal Hygiene
- Action Song - 1,2,3,4,5
- Activity - Child's Name Placemat
- Activity - Sensory Activity
- Activity - Child's Name Placemat
- Activity - Sensory Activity
- Gross Motor Skills - Spatial Awareness
- Fine Motor Skills - Playdough

□ Bible Reading

Throughout this week, read the scripture assigned in your children's story Bible -
Genesis 1:1-28

□ Scripture Memory Verse

Read this aloud to your child every day. Encourage them to repeat it after you in short phrases. At the end of the study, see if they can repeat it in one go. Stick up the postcard provided where you and your child can see it every day - bathroom mirror, fridge, behind a car seat or next to their beds are good spots.

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." - Psalm 139: 13-1

What is Narration?

It is simply the telling back of something learnt. When your young children run inside and tell you about the butterfly they have seen in the garden, they are narrating. When they tell their Dad what they did today, they are narrating. The way to do it with story books for this age range, is to keep it low-key and not make it a school subject.

Casually find a relatable moment and ask: **"Can you tell me all about the picture story/Bible story I read to you this morning?"** As your children get older (10+) you can include longer verbal and written narrations where you would expect them to tell back a portion of a longer book, trying to include the vocabulary as well as the emotion from the text. But for now, you just want to establish the habit of your children "telling back".

□ Reading and Narration

Choose two of the books from the selection for this week. List the titles you read here for your records:

BOOK 1: _____

BOOK 2: _____



Ask your child to narrate each story back to you when you have completed reading it. Your child could also draw a picture of the story, which you can keep for your memories. Alternatively, the pictures in some books might be suitable to photocopy so that you can select a favourite picture to copy for your child to colour in or decorate.

Poetry

Read the article on how to enjoy poetry and tea on the course website. We encourage you to put this into practice and do it once a week, and enjoy the poem we have given you to read together and talk about.

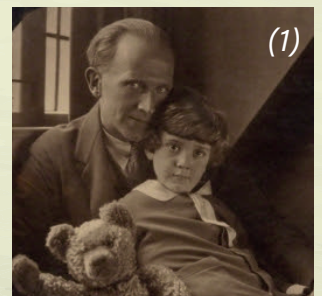
The first poem in this theme is a short one by Alan Alexander Milne better known as A.A. Milne. He was unique as a writer because while others wrote about the harsh realities of life, Milne created a whimsical reality full of friendship and laughter. Writing gentle, funny stories was a way to soothe himself from the combat he had experienced during both world wars. He was a doting father and many of his poems were about aspects of his life with his son. A.A. Milne was a noted poet and writer, primarily as a playwright, before the huge success of Winnie the Pooh overshadowed all his previous work.

When I was One

by A.A. Milne

When I was One,
I had just begun.
When I was Two,
I was nearly new.
When I was Three
I was hardly me.

When I was Four,
I was not much more.
When I was Five,
I was just alive.
But now I am Six,
I'm as clever as clever,
So I think I'll be six now for ever and ever.



(1) Milne with his son Christopher Robin and Pooh Bear, at Cotchford Farm, their home in Sussex, 1926

Some questions to discuss with your child:

- Draw their attention to the rhyming words at the end of each set of two lines.
- This is an easy poem to memorise, little by little, over a week. See how far you get.
- If your children are six and under, ask them which was their favourite age.
- Would they like to be six forever?

Quote to ponder

"...the selection of their first lesson-books is a matter of grave importance, because it rests with these to give children the idea that knowledge is supremely attractive and that reading is delightful." ~ Charlotte Mason

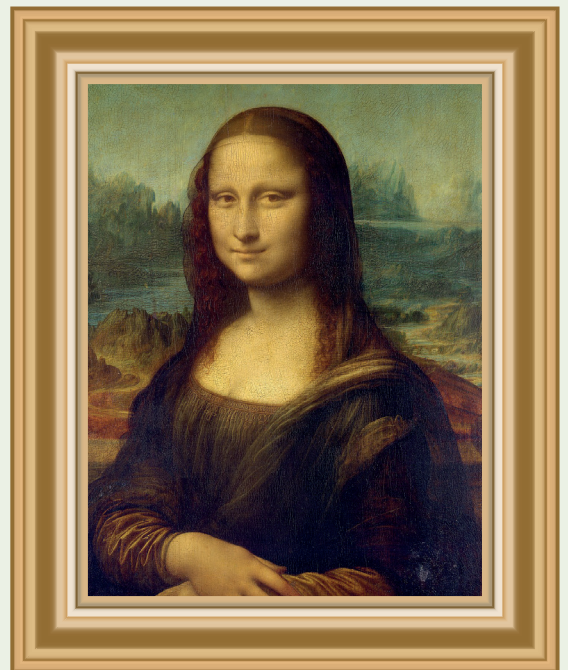
□ Art Appreciation - Mona Lisa

Read the article on art appreciation on the course website.

Place your art print in a visible place for your child.

This could be on a wall next to their bed, on the fridge using a magnet, or even stuck up next to the toilet. You can also use a recipe book holder to stand it up on the kitchen counter or some other spot in the home where you often find yourselves gathering.

You are going to study one of the most famous and most valuable paintings in the world. The Mona Lisa painting by Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci is probably of the Italian noblewoman Lisa Gherardini. It can be seen in the famous museum, the Louvre, in Paris.



This painting is called a portrait which is a painting, drawing, photograph, or engraving of a person, especially one depicting only the face or head and shoulders.

Ask your children if they think this is a priceless painting? No matter what they think, other people regard it as something special and would pay millions to own it if they could. Each of us, no matter how plain or attractive, is also pricelessly valuable.

Here are some other picture prompts to talk about:

- What do you think about her style of clothes compared to today?
- Which colours are used and how do they make you feel?
- What is the background showing?
- Do people wear their hair in this style today?

□ **Music Appreciation - Mozart**

In this theme, you will focus on music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Try to listen to at least two of the compositions every week so that you are familiar with all of them.

Mozart was born a long time ago (1756) and was "fearfully and wonderfully made" with an extra-special gift for music. He became famous as a child prodigy. He composed his first piece of music at age five; he had his first piece published when he was seven, and he wrote his first opera when he was twelve. By the time Mozart was 6, he was an excellent pianist and violinist. He and his sister Maria Anna (known as Nannerl) travelled all over Europe performing for royalty.

This week, listen to one or two of Mozart's compositions. Encourage your child to dance, act, march, sing, hum or enjoy the music in any way they choose.

You could join in!

Piece 1: _____

Piece 2: _____



*Sylvie says: "When my girls were little, we "drew" the classical music we listened to. Makes a nice keepsake!
A few pretty colours, a clean piece of paper, and
let the music guide your hand!"*



Here is a picture of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Can you remember what the correct word is for a head and shoulders painting of one person?

Nature Study

Nature study is the foundation for scientific study. According to Albert Einstein, one of the world's finest scientists of the 20th century, *"All great science begins with a close observation of nature."*

Charlotte Mason said that *"education is a science of relations"*. Our goal is to help our children make their own personal connections with the things they study. It's up to YOU to help your children make those personal connections with things in nature.

The Bible says: *"But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; or the bushes of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind."* - Job 12:7-10

No matter where you live, you can enjoy the richness of nature in your environment, right where you are – even if you live in a concrete jungle!

In addition to making personal connections with nature right where you are, here are more reasons why deliberate nature study benefits children:

- They develop keen observation skills, self-discipline, patience and perseverance.

- They develop an understanding and an appreciation of natural processes and the interconnectivity of all things in nature.

- To sit or stand quietly and observe an animal or plant and then draw it and describe it requires complex focused attention, clear thinking and good communication. These are valuable skills that are also useful in other fields of education.

- To crown it all, being out of doors instead of stuck at a desk or table is a refreshing and joyful change in the daily routine.



☐ Nature Study - Listening Walk

After reading your nature study book, ease into this delightful habit with a simple listening walk. You can choose to simply walk around your neighbourhood and listen to the cars, birds, dogs and the sound of your feet. Or take your child to a safe place where you can walk together and listen to the sounds of birds in the forest and leaves blowing in the wind.

Remember not to walk alone in secluded places, which are unsafe, rather gather a group of moms and tots and enjoy a listening walk together. We would encourage you to make this a daily event.

☐ Habit - Chores

Print out the chore chart on the course website which covers personal hygiene and room care. Stick it in a visible place in your home and go through it with your child daily. Working together is always more fun.



Reflection

While we can get focussed on teaching our children the chore they need to do, we may lose the lesson for ourselves! The lesson? You are raising adults, not children. One day you want to launch them into their own lives and homes and this is why you are teaching them to tidy, cook and clean so that you know they will be able to successfully "adult" one day.

Hands-On Activities

□ Action Song

1-2-3-4-5 Once I Caught a Fish Alive

Counting on each finger and say this rhyme together. If you have two or more children, get the older child to play this action rhyme with their younger siblings.

1-2-3-4-5 Once I caught a fish alive.

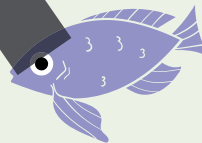
6-7-8-9-10 Then I let him go again.

Why did you let him go?

Because he bit my finger so.

Which finger did he bite?

This little finger on my right.



Nursery Rhymes, Song and Fingerplays

Nursery rhymes and songs will provide your children with opportunities to develop an appreciation for rhyme and rhythm, as well as to develop their auditory skills and memory skills. The golden age for memory is between ages 6-9. At this age children can memorise more quickly and remember for longer than at any other time in life.

Nursery rhymes also help children to appreciate and develop an understanding of humour, and finger play rhymes and clapping songs are a delightful way to help children develop motor skills and coordination.

Children love fingerplay verses and action nursery rhymes as they combine words with actions, expressed by using their fingers and hands. These also provide the opportunity to increase the manual dexterity and coordination of children whilst encouraging them to use their imaginations.

□ Activity - Language development Your Child's Name Placemat

Most parents give much thought to picking a name for their child. Some choose family names, some make up names, others use traditional names that carry a specific meaning. Talk to your child about the excitement you felt when he or she was born and how you chose a name especially for your new baby.

Write their name out on a piece of paper in a big "bubbly" colourful print and then the meaning underneath. Go through old photos that you have printed of your child's early days. Cut and stick them around his/her name to make a collage. You could alternatively go through magazines, or even print clipart off the internet of things that they enjoy doing. Write a word describing each chosen picture. Laminate this and use it as a placemat at dinner times.

□ Activity - Sensory play Hand & Footprints

(This is a fun messy activity so plan time for cleaning up afterwards)

Hand: Prepare a few colours of poster paint in shallow containers.

Cut a nice big square from butcher's paper.

Allow your child to press their flat hand into the paint and then onto the paper, overlapping as they make a colourful collage of handprints.

Feet: You need two basins; one will be made up with warm soapy water, the other with a thin layer of poster paint. We repeated this activity in different colours for a lovely effect, but it is not necessary.

Roll out a length of butcher's paper in an outdoor space. Place the basin of paint at one end and the water and a towel at the other.

Hold your child's hand and lead them barefoot through the paint and then along the paper, then into the soapy water to clean their feet on the other side.

Be careful to support your child and prevent running so that there is no slipping.



Memories Last Forever

Memories are beautiful things to make and before you know it your children will be big and grown up. If you want to extend this activity, cut out the hand and footprints when dry and glue them onto cardboard. Either get it laminated for placemats or get them framed to put on your wall.

□ Activity - Gross Motor Spatial Awareness

Trace around your child's left hand on a piece of card of the same colour and their right on another. Make a few copies of them. If you don't have card, you can do it with pencil on white paper, but be sure to colour in the left all one colour and the right all another colour.

Cut the handprints out together. Using prestik, put all the left hands on a variety of door frames on the left and all the right hands on the right of the same frame.

Every time your child goes through that door, they can put their left hand on the "blue" and say "LEFT" and their right hand on the "red" and say "RIGHT".

□ Activity - Fine Motor Playdough

Make a batch of playdough, using the recipe provided on the course website. Encourage your child to try to model something out of the dough. Discuss how challenging it is to create something that looks real, yet each of us is incredibly designed.

If you have cookie cutters or plastic shapes to use to cut the clay, enjoy making replicas that are all the same.

Discuss how each of us is unique. None of us is a replica, unless we are twins, but even then there are distinct differences in a person's make-up and character, even if the outward appearance is "identical".



Barefoot Days

Barefoot Days is a brand new Charlotte Mason-style home education programme for ages 4-8. It is a story-based learning programme offering age-appropriate themes for young children. It also contains tips, coaching, encouragement and inspiration for new home education parents, as we know how daunting the task of teaching and training young children can be to a mother, alone at home, wondering if she is doing enough!

This beautiful resource takes the hassle out of homeschooling the Charlotte Mason way, by providing the tools you need for art appreciation, music appreciation, nature study, poetry, language, social studies and more - at your fingertips. It's all there for you to dip into whenever it suits you. There are art prints, links to music to enjoy plus a course website with links to useful online resources, so that you don't have to spend hours finding them yourself!

Barefoot Days focuses on the whole child and the family in the home educating household. It's not just about academics. It includes guidance for developing character, routines, habits, emotional intelligence, family relationships and learning about the world and people, together as a family.

Footprints

Established in 2002, Footprints on our Land is an authentic South Africa homeschool curriculum supply enterprise, run by two homeschool moms, Shirley Erwee and Wendy Young. Footprints provides literature-based, multi-subject curriculum packages that give insight into the country's past and present and inspire our children to play a part in building a bright future for our nation.

The range of innovative, customisable educational curricula is based on time-tested principles, which equip children with the skills that are required for educational and career success in the 21st century. The Footprints programmes are powerful tools to strengthen families, to improve educational standards and to make the vision of raising nation-builders a reality.

About the Authors

For over 20 years Shirley Erwee and Wendy Young have home educated their families, of six and four children respectively, some of whom are now university graduates. Shirley and Wendy also offer support, encouragement and advice to homeschooling families via webinars, private consultations and various social media platforms. They are regular speakers at local and global home education events and are often consulted by the media on topics related to home education. Shirley has an Honours degree in English Language Teaching and Wendy has a degree in Geography and Biblical Archaeology & English Literature.

