

A Quiet Growing Time: Ages 6 and Under

“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 growing time, a full six years of passive receptive life, the waking part of it spent for the most part out in the fresh air.” Home Education, page 43

Formal education did not begin in the Charlotte Mason method until 6 years or older. Before that, while learning takes place, it is not formal. Miss Mason believed that any academic work took vital resources away from the more important growth of the muscles, body, and organs.

This is prime time for you as the parent to further your own research. If you haven’t already, read Home Education by Charlotte Mason as well as the other parenting books towards the end of this article. Simplicity Parenting is especially recommended. This is also an excellent time for handwork. If you don’t already know how, teach yourself to knit, crochet, draw, and sew.

For the children, plenty of time outside to run, play, stretch, sing, and shout was advised every day. This was not an hour or two that the children were sent outside, but 4, 5, or 6 hours every suitable day, and preferably the parent went out with the children.

What should be done if not academics? Play in the mud and sand. Run and jump and leap and shout. Build sand castles, watch ants, chase butterflies. Make fairy villages with sticks and rocks, have sword fights, rescue the prince or princess from the castle. Stalk birds. Examine spider webs and bring cocoons inside in a jar to watch their change to butterflies or moths. Plant fast growing seeds like radish or sunflowers.

Watch the clouds and look at the stars. Go on adventures in several different directions from your house. Find a local park or nature preserve and spend copious amounts of time there. Learn to ride a bike without training wheels, cut with scissors, throw and kick balls, walk a balance beam, and climb trees.

Most of all, enjoy this time! It really does go by fast.

Following we have several resources for you to draw on or incorporate into your days.

Sample Day/ Week

Find and set anchors around eating, rest, and play and connecting. Songs, wonder, habits, elements and sights of beauty, and experiences of nature can all be found and woven into a template of these constants. This looks like a lot — don't let it overwhelm you. Play can and should be independent, with mother keeping a watchful but unobtrusive eye.

Rest~ Morning routine. Waking/Dressing, greeting the day and checking weather with song

Eat~ Breakfast. Make, eat and clean together

Connect~ chores, a story, or a nature walk/nature play

Play~

Eat~ snack or tea. This can also be a moment to read poems aloud, or display a beautiful piece of art

Connect~ a tale or activity or housework

Play~

Eat~ Lunch. Make, eat and clean together

Rest and connect~ nap routine with lullabies, hair brushing, simple hand massage, a lovely read aloud or quiet time for gentle activities like drawing, nesting dolls, play dough, handwork, cuddles

Eat~ tea or snack. Perhaps a nature or fairy story, or occasional napkin or paper folding

Play~

Connect~ activity or chore or handwork with folk songs

Eat~ Dinner. Make and eat and clean together

Play~ Family Time. Cards, boardgames, read alouds, play-wrestling or obstacle courses, going to the park or playing in the yard together, gardening or star-gazing.

Rest~ Bedtime Routine. Tidying and washing up, pajamas. Sing your way through □ Story and lullaby.

Be out of doors for as much of the day as you can. Miss Mason recommended six hours per day when the weather is at all suitable. This is not what is always possible, but rather what she felt was best. Do the best you can, and remember that in general there is not unsuitable weather, just unsuitable clothing. Dress for the weather, use layers, and natural fabrics when possible. Natural fabrics breathe better than synthetics.

You can rotate schedules to suit climates. For hot places, spend full mornings outside and do activities/chores inside in the afternoons; for cooler areas, mornings inside for activities/chores and spend afternoons outside; for temperate places, play and meals and activities outside throughout the day.

Be sure to read the Out-of-Door Life chapter in Home Education by Charlotte Mason.

Keeping a weekly rhythm is also good for both children and adults. Little kids might have trouble grasping the abstract concept of “Monday” but they will quickly internalize “painting day” or “baking day”.

Sample Week:

Monday-

chore: laundry (children help hand wash cloths and napkins and hang to dry, then fold/ iron in the afternoon)

activity: paint

Tuesday-

chore: window washing/ dusting

activity: soup making, and modeling with clay, beeswax or playdough

Wednesday-

chore: mending/ polishing toys

activity: baking

Thursday-

chore: sweeping/mopping

activity: craft or coloring

Friday-

chore: yard work or gardening

activity: nature journaling

Saturday-

chore: clean car/ travel bags

activity: errands/ grocery shopping/ library visit

Sunday-

chore: household straightening/ rest

activity: baking day

Here is a lovely chart you might find useful: [Age Appropriate Chores for Children](#)

Tales

Hearing stories is a wonderful part of childhood.

If possible, tell these stories to children rather than read them. Choose one story every few weeks, or one a month. Read it yourself one day, picturing the story line in your head. Tell it to yourself that evening before you go to bed. The next morning when you get up, read it one more time to yourself. Then you are ready to tell it to your children.

It is ok to forget and change bits and pieces, to make it your own. Put in your children's names as characters. Tell the same story a few times in the week, or during the month. Little ones love and need repetition. (side note from Marjorie: Often, around the third time I retell the story, my little one will want to change all the characters to fairies. My husband was rather surprised to hear about Goldilocks and the Three Fairy Bears)

Use stuffed animals to help tell the story, or make paper bag or popsicle stick puppets. Use playdough or beeswax modeling clay to create a portion of a scene.

Extend the story by doing a small activity associated with it. For The Gingerbread Man, make gingerbread men cookies. For Goldilocks, make porridge one morning.

Do not try to shorten the repetitious stories by taking out some of the repetition. That is one of the most important parts for our young children. Many if not all of these tales can be found at mainlesson.com or [The Grimm Brothers' Children's and Household Tales](#). And most of all, don't try to find the 'educational value' of each and enhance it. Let them be experienced for what they are: stories that have been passed down for generations upon generations, and make up a part of our collective culture. There is plenty of time for academics when the child is older.

If your children's culture of origin is not European, we encourage you to use or mix in traditional tales from your family's culture.

Suggestions for tales to tell to your children (activity ideas in parentheses):

4-5 year olds

- The Mitten (make simple sweater mittens)
- Goldilocks (make porridge)
- Little Red Hen (bake bread)
- Three Little Pigs

- The Turnip
- Stone Soup (make soup)
- Three Little Kittens (sock or knit kittens)
- Ugly Duckling
- Shoemaker and the Elves (make elf pegs)
- The Pancake (old Norse version of Gingerbread Man) (pancakes)
- Gingerbread Man (gingerbread cookies)
- How She kept her Geese Warm
- Apple Star (alternatively The Little Red House) (apples)
- Magic Porridge Pot (porridge)
- Billy Goats Gruff (knitted square or washcloth goats)

5-6 year olds

- Mashenka (pie)
- Red Riding Hood (playsilk cloak)
- Peter and the Wolf
- Princess and the Pea
- City Mouse and Country Mouse
- Jack and the Beanstalk (plant beans)
- Frog prince (make golden balls out of playdough or beeswax modeling clay, or sew golden balls)
- Hansel and Gretel (leave a breadcrumb trail while exploring)
- Mother Holle
- Wolf and Seven Kids
- Rumpelstiltskin
- Puss in Boots (felt or knit booties)
- Rapunzel (finger knit hair chains)
- Little Briar Rose (flowerpot garden with wheat seed grass planted to grow around as vines)
- Nutcracker (candy mice or paint nutcracker clothespins)
- Bremen Musicians (paint rocks as animals and stack)

For help in choosing age appropriate fairy tales, including for younger children, [here is a good blog post](#) from Fairy Dust Teaching. [Here is another good page](#) from the Online Waldorf Library on choosing fairy tales for different ages.

For stories that have been 'gentled', try [this page](#) at byGosh.com

A beautiful, extensively illustrated book of ten fairy tales is [Classic Fairy Tales](#) by Scott Gustafson. The stories have been toned down but not Disney-fied.

Singing

Sing through your day. Sing nursery rhymes in particular, but also traditional children's songs, action songs, and songs that are specific to daily activities.

A few ideas:

- Teddy Bear's Picnic
- Over in the Meadow
- If you are Happy and You Know It
- Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star
- Skidamarink
- Old MacDonald
- Hole in the Middle of the Pond
- The Wheels on the Bus
- There's a hole in the bucket
- Six Little Ducks
- The Eentsy Weentsy Spider
- Baa Baa Black Sheep

Also, look at Form 1B for song suggestions. There is no harm in singing these for several years, so don't feel like you won't have anything to do once you get to that level. We have suggested several music CDs for children under resources. They are all delightful.

Resources

Parenting

- Home Education by Charlotte Mason

- [A Quiet Growing Time: Charlotte Mason with Your 3 to 6 Year Old](#) by Marjorie Lang (*co-creator of Wildwood Curriculum*)
- [Simplicity Parenting](#) by Kim John Payne (simplifying)
- [Seven Times the Sun](#) by Shea Darian (rhythm - this is a Waldorf resource)
- [Rhythm of Family](#) by Amanda Soule (seasonal connection)
- [Storytelling books](#) by Susan Perrow (storytelling)

Crafts

- [A Child's Seasonal Treasury](#) (nature/ seasonal)
- [The Children's Year](#) (toys and things for children to play with and wear)
- [Festivals Together](#) by Judy Large
- [Festivals Family and Food](#) (celebration/holidays) (Christian oriented celebrations, but extra sections for birthdays, sweet-making, tea times, and rainy days)
- [Earthways](#) (nature/seasonal, but out of print)
- books by [Salley Mavor](#) (felt) and [Margaret Bloom](#) (peg dolls)
- [99 Fine Motor Ideas for Ages 1-5](#) by Nicolette Roux

Rhymes and Poetry

- [Poems Every Child Should Know](#) by Mary E. Burt
- [Tomie dePaola's Mother Goose](#) or [The Real Mother Goose](#) by Blanche Fisher Wright
- [A Child's Garden of Verses](#) by Robert Louis Stevenson
- [When We Were Very Young](#) by A. A. Milne

(note: The Real Mother Goose has no multi-cultural illustrations, if that's important to you, but is a more complete collection of verses. Tomie dePaola's Mother Goose has a few multi-cultural drawings. Both are fine choices.)

Music

- Books and CDs from naturallyyoucansing.com
- [The Singing Day](#) and [The Singing Year](#) by Candy Verney
- [Goodnight Songs](#) by Margaret Wise Brown
- Helen Gene Purdy, Elizabeth Mitchell and Ella Jenkins from Smithsonian Folkways
- [Brighten the Day](#) by [Marty Layne](#)

- [Maria Sangiolo](#)
- [Kira Willey](#)
- [Laurie Berkner](#)
- [The Magic Garden](#) by Diane Tatum
- [Come Follow Me](#) cds by Lorraine Nelson Wolf
- [Annie Bryant](#) (songs and stories) [also available on Amazon under Digital Music]
- [Raffi](#)
- [Lisa Loeb Nursery Rhyme Parade](#) (Amazon exclusive)

Art

For beautiful art work, we recommend just putting pictures around. They do not need in depth discussion, but can just be out for viewing. Old calendars, used books, etc. can be used.

- [Come Look with Me series](#) by Gladys S. Blizzard
- [Oxford First Book of Art](#) (out of print)
- Usborne First Book of Art

Nature

- [Handbook of Nature Study](#) by Anna Comstock
- [Sharing Nature With Children](#) by Joseph Cornell
- [The Curious Nature Guide](#) and [Keeping a Nature Journal](#) by Claire Walker Leslie
- [The Curious Naturalist](#) by Sy Montgomery
- [Fifteen Minutes Outside](#) by Rebecca Cohen
- [Sense of Wonder](#) by Rachel Carson
- [I Love Dirt!: 52 Activities to Help You and Your Kids Discover the Wonders of Nature](#) by Jennifer Ward

Fingerplays and Action Songs

- [A Child's Seasonal Treasury](#), Dany Rosevear on YouTube
- [Sing with Me! Action Songs Every Child Should Know](#) by Naoko Stoop

Gentle Intro to Letters for the 5-6 year olds

- Fairy Mail by Jennifer Compton on Etsy

- [Flower Fairy Alphabet](#) book and cd by Cicely Barker
- [Chicka Chicka Boom Boom](#) by Bill Martin, jr.
- [LMNOP](#) by Howard Schrager and Bruce Bischof
- [The Alphabet](#) by Reg Down (Tiptoes Lightly)
- [The Wise Enchanter](#) by Shelley Davidow

Beautiful Read Alouds (a mix of classics and lovely newer ones)

- [Winnie the Pooh series](#)
- [The Runaway Bunny](#)
- [The Very Quiet Cricket](#)
- [Madeline](#)
- [Corduroy](#)
- [Curious George](#)
- [Margaret Wise Brown](#), [Elsa Beskow](#), [Patricia Polacco](#), and [Sybille von Olfers](#) books
- [Stellaluna](#)
- [Caps For Sale](#) by Esphyr Slobodkina
- [Inch by Inch](#) by Leo Lionni
- [Fairy Went-a-Marketing](#) by Rose Fyleman
- [The Whisper](#) by Pamela Zagarenski
- [Extra Yarn](#) by Mac Barnett and Jon Klassen
- [Uni the Unicorn](#) by Amy Krouse Rosenthal
- [Love Is](#) by Diane Adams
- [The Secret Life of Fairies](#) by Penelope Larkspur
- [Five Little Monkeys series](#) by Eileen Christelow
- [The Tomten](#) by Astrid Lindgren
- [Miss Maple's Seeds](#) by Eliza Wheeler
- [The Tiptoe Guide to Tracking Mermaids](#) by Ammi-Joan Paquette
- [Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain](#) by Verna Aardema
- [The Snowy Day](#) by Ezra Jack Keats
- [Dream Animals](#) by Emily Martin
- [The Weaver](#) by Thacher Hurd
- [Hush Little Baby](#) by Sylvia Long
- [Sunbelievable](#) by Jo Ann Kairys
- [Come On, Rain](#) by Karen Hesse
- anything by [Miroslav Sasek](#) (This Is New York, This Is Ireland, etc)

*Note — books go in and out of print. Find what you can, use your library, and haunt used bookstores. And never feel like what we've suggested here are the be-all-end-all of suggestions, and nothing else will work. If a book is hard to find, it's ok to skip it and use ones that speak to your family.

A few excellent books are better than large amounts of lower quality books. Books should be savored rather than gulped.

You may also have noticed that fairies appear in the alphabet intro and some of the read-alouds. The poetry books that are assigned in the PNEU programmes for Form 1 are *The Fairy Flute*, *The Fairy Green*, and *Fairies and Chimneys* by Rose Fyleman. These are no longer available in print, so we instead brought the fairy theme down to the 6 and Unders.