



Preschool At Home

Create a Custom Plan in Eight Simple Steps

By Liz Millay





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– Introduction –

So you've decided to do preschool at home. Maybe you've started researching at the library or browsing Pinterest. Maybe you're excited about all the great ideas you've come across. There's only one problem: you're completely overwhelmed! And it's no wonder. While the abundance of ideas and resources available are definitely a blessing, they can also leave you wondering:

“Where do I start?”

“What's important for my child to know?”

“What do I really need to get started?”

“How am I going to organize all this?”

And these may be just some of the questions going through your mind as you discover the seemingly endless world that is preschool. Maybe you've considered buying a pre-made curriculum instead. Indeed, there are many quality options and they can be very handy. However, if you desire a curriculum that is fully customized to your child and your family's specific needs, you've come to the right place.

It's time to take a deep breath and let go of any worry! You are more than capable of designing your own curriculum, and it isn't nearly as time consuming or difficult as you might think. We will go through it step by step and use plenty of examples along the way.

This eBook will help you plan, prepare, and carry out a customized preschool or kindergarden curriculum for your child. It is organized into three sections with a total of eight simple steps. Let's get started!

Stage One
PLAN

– Step One: Philosophy –

In this section you will find basic summaries for some of the more popular philosophies of education. Most are geared toward early childhood education, while a few span all ages. This is, by no means, a comprehensive list, a quick Google search will show more. However, as you do a little research on these different theories, do not be overwhelmed. If you look closely, you will find that in a lot of cases there are more similarities than differences between them. The goal here is not to become an expert in early childhood education theories; but more so to gain a better understanding of which ideas and philosophies you are drawn to for your family. As an in-depth study of each of these philosophies is beyond the scope of this eBook, a link has been included with each topic for further information. Your local library is another great source of information.

Montessori

Via “The American Montessori Society”:

“The Montessori Method of education, developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, is a child-centered educational approach based on scientific observations of children from birth to adulthood. Dr. Montessori’s Method has been time tested, with over 100 years of success in diverse cultures throughout the world.

It is a view of the child as one who is naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initiating learning in a supportive, thoughtfully prepared learning environment. It is an approach that values the human spirit and the development of the whole child—physical, social, emotional, cognitive.”

For more information, go to <https://amshq.org/Montessori-Education/Introduction-to-Montessori.aspx>

Waldorf

Via “Why Waldorf Works”:

“Developed by Rudolf Steiner in 1919, Waldorf Education is based on a profound understanding of human development that addresses the needs of the growing child. Waldorf teachers strive to transform education into an art that educates the whole child—the heart and the hands, as well as the head.... Teachers in Waldorf schools are dedicated to generating an inner enthusiasm for learning within every child. They achieve this in a variety of ways. Even seemingly dry and academic subjects are presented in a pictorial and dynamic manner. This eliminates the need

for competitive testing, academic placement, and behavioristic rewards to motivate learning. It allows motivation to arise from within and helps engender the capacity for joyful lifelong learning.”

For more information, go to http://www.whywaldorfworks.org/02_W_Education/

Charlotte Mason

Via SimplyCharlotteMason.com:

“The Charlotte Mason method is based on Charlotte’s firm belief that the child is a person and we must educate that whole person, not just his mind. So a Charlotte Mason education is three-pronged: in her words, “Education is an Atmosphere, a Discipline, a Life.”

By “Atmosphere,” Charlotte meant the surroundings in which the child grows up. A child absorbs a lot from his home environment. Charlotte believed that the ideas that rule your life as the parent make up one-third of your child’s education.

By “Discipline,” Charlotte meant the discipline of good habits—and specifically habits of character. Cultivating good habits in your child’s life make up another third of his education.

The other third of education, “Life,” applies to academics. Charlotte believed that we should give children living thoughts and ideas, not just dry facts. So all of her methods for teaching the various school subjects are built around that concept.”

For more information, go to <http://simplycharlottemason.com/what-is-the-charlotte-mason-method/>

Reggio Emilia

Via “An Everyday Story”:

“The Reggio Emilia Approach is an innovative and inspiring approach to early childhood education values the child as strong, capable and resilient; rich with wonder and knowledge. Every child brings with them deep curiosity and potential and this innate curiosity drives their interest to understand their world and their place within it.”

For more, go to <http://www.aneverydaystory.com/beginners-guide-to-reggio-emilia/main-principles/>

The Doman Method

Via GD Baby:

“The Gentle Revolution proposes that tiny children have within them the capacity to learn virtually anything while they are tiny and that whatever it is that children learn without any conscious effort at the age of two, three or four years of age can only be learned with greater effort, or may not be learned at all, later in life. The Gentle Revolution aims to give every child — through the parents — a chance to be excellent while giving all parents the knowledge required to make highly intelligent, extremely capable, and delightful children. In turn, this will lead towards the making of a highly humane, sane and decent world.”

For more, go to: <http://www.glenndomanonline.com/about-us/history.html>

Shichida Method

Via ShichidaMethod.com:

“Professor Shichida has a proven system highly regarded as the methodology which will be influential in this century. To develop a high quality child, it is important to examine both character formation and learning abilities as a wholesome approach to child rearing.

The purpose of education is not to teach knowledge and skills but to create a well-balanced child with enormous abilities, rich creativity and the ability to use a huge proportion of the brain. These can only be achieved without stress and a right parent-child relationship.

The main characteristic of The Shichida Method™ is its concentration on its whole-brain education which will build up a big dream in a child to contribute his best to this world.”

For more, go to: <http://www.shichidamethod.com/faq.html>

A Final Word On Methods

Before we end this section I want to explain one final method; which, for lack of a better term, we'll call the “**no-method method**.” You won't find too many detailed works written about this “method,” but I think Connie from *Smockity Frocks* sums it up well: <http://www.smockityfrocks.com/2014/02/homeschooling-preschoolers.html>. This “method” is basically the understanding that young children are natural learners. They absorb information like a sponge. As long as you are interacting, reading, playing, and letting them be creative - they will flourish. Even if you would rather have a more definite and organized plan for your child's preschool, this mindset is good to bear in mind. It reminds you that no matter what your plan is

for early childhood education, there's no need to stress. Your child is going to turn out just fine, growing and developing at their own pace, ready for more formal schooling in kindergarten or first grade.

The after preschool extension of this method would most likely be **unschooling** (although it doesn't *have* to be). You can learn more about unschooling at <http://whyunschool.info>.

– Step Two: Mission –

Now that you've taken some time to familiarize yourself with the basic philosophies of early childhood education, it's time to define *your* philosophy.

Your mission statement

A mission statement is simply a short sentence or two that broadly sums up your mission, or goal, for your child's education. It might help to brainstorm a list of things you found important while doing your research and start from there. Once you've brainstormed your list, try writing at least five mission statements and then picking your favorite one. Here are a couple examples:

- Training my whole child: mind, body, and spirit.
- Sticking to the basics: reading, writing, and arithmetic.
- To recognize and encourage my child's interests and individuality.
- Nurturing my child's intelligence and creativity through art, play, and knowledge.
- Creating an engaging and creative environment in which my child can thrive.
- To encourage my child to enhance their knowledge of a wide variety of subjects.
- Allowing my child to learn and grow at his/her own pace while providing a nurturing environment and a wide variety of educational activities.
- Growing the love of learning in my child.

Goals

Now it's time to get a little more specific with the goals you have for your child. An important factor here is your timeline for accomplishing these goals. You may want to have separate lists for your goals for the year, the semester, and month. Don't forget, these are to be a guideline. One of the benefits of homeschooling is being able to move along at the pace of the child. However, it is beneficial to have a general idea of where you are headed.

These goals should be personal for both your family and your child. They will also vary based on what areas your child finds interesting or needs additional help with. They can come

from a variety of categories, such as: emotional, spiritual, communal, mental, physical, etc. They can also be broken up into sub categories, such as: “Educational: Literary, Sensory, Numbers, etc”.

If you are not planning on following preschool with kindergarten at home, you also may want to reference a list of common requirements for entering traditional kindergarten, such as the following: http://www.libertycommon.org/resources/admissions_form/documents/80SkillsKidsShouldHaveBeforeTheyStartKindergarten.pdf.

Here’s an example for a fictional child, Max:

Child: Max

Age: 4

Goals for 2014 Fall semester:

- Emotional
 - Work on controlling anger
 - Learn about the different types of emotions
 - Practice empathy
- Physical:
 - Practice kicking and throwing a ball
 - Begin a care of self routine (brushing teeth, getting dressed, bathing, etc)
- Spiritual:
 - Genesis Bible study
 - Memorize 3 verses
 - Nighttime prayers with mommy and daddy
- Communal
 - Participate in a “random acts of kindness” project
 - Work on taking turns
 - Make chore chart
- Educational
 - Literary
 - Read two picture books a day
 - Try reading a short chapter book
 - Learn the sounds of 10 letters
 - Science/Sensory
 - Go outside every day to explore
 - Weekly sensory bin
 - Monthly science theme
 - Math
 - Practice numbers 1-10
 - Practice shapes

For the above example, a “whole child” approach was taken. You can adjust your own specific goal list to include whichever categories you want to focus on, whether you only want to plan out academics, or you want to incorporate other topics. This example was also set for the timeline of one semester. It can be further broken down by month or week if desired, like so:

Child: Max

Age: 4

Goals for September 2014:

- Emotional
 - Learn about the different types of emotions
 - Practice empathy
- Physical:
 - Begin a self-care routine (brushing teeth, getting dressed, bathing, etc)
- Spiritual:
 - Creation bible study
 - Memorize Genesis 1:1
 - Nighttime prayers with mommy and daddy
- Communal
 - Make chore chart
- Educational
 - Literary
 - Read two picture books a day
 - Learn the sounds of 3 letters (a, m, s)
 - Science/Sensory
 - Go outside every day to explore
 - Weekly sensory bin
 - Monthly science theme: Magnets
 - Math
 - Practice writing numbers 1-3
 - Practice shapes (triangle, square, rectangle, circle)

Taking the time now to think through your mission statement and your goals will really help later when you plan specific activities.

– Step Three: Course of Action #1 –

Plan

Now that you've figured out your philosophy, mission, and goals, it's time to go a step further. There are two main options for how to go about this planning.

Option #1: Long term planning.

Plan out the specific activities you will do for the entire semester or year. The pro to this method is that you get it all done at once. However, the downside is that you can't foresee how you might want to change your plans when you make them so far in the advance. Therefore, you may end up doing the work for a second time if you have to make a lot of changes.

Option #2: Short term planning.

Plan out your activities on a monthly or weekly basis. The pro here is that you will have maximum flexibility to be able to change your plans. However, it also means you will have to set aside regular time for planning.

My preferred method has always been to use my goals for a general idea of my long-term plans, and then make specific plans on a month-to-month basis. Setting aside one Saturday afternoon a month to plan the upcoming month is not too bad of a time commitment and you get a month's worth of plans from it. However, you will find what system works best for you. Just make sure to set aside that time to finalize your plans!

Schedule

Next, you should consider your scheduling options. Having a set (but of course flexible) schedule will make it easier to plug in the activities you want to do to meet your goals. Here are a couple ideas:

Option #1: Daily Subjects

Use one day a week to cover a specific subject. For example: Mondays=Math, Tuesdays=Reading, Wednesdays=Science, etc.

Option #2: Mixed Subjects

Cover all your subjects every day, or a combination of subjects each day.

Bonus Option: Themes/Unit Studies

A common occurrence in the preschool world, this option uses a set theme and then bases all or most of the activities around this theme. For example, if the theme for the week is "Harvest Time" you might count pumpkins for math, learn about corn for science, read farm themed books for literacy, etc. A Google search will show you more than enough themes to last until your child goes off to college!

Max's Schedule

Fall 2014

TIME	ACTIVITY
8:00 AM	Wake up, Breakfast
8:30 AM	Get dressed, Bible lesson
9:00 AM	Math activity
9:30 AM	Science/sensory activity
10:00 AM	Reading lesson, story time
10:30 AM	Art activity
11:00 AM	Free time
11:30 AM	Lunch
12:00 PM	Free time
12:30 PM	Nap
1:00 PM	Nap
1:30 PM	Nap
2:00 PM	Chores
2:30 PM	Snack
3:00 PM	Outside play
3:30 PM	Outside play
4:00 PM	Free time
4:30 PM	Free time
5:00 PM	Help make dinner
5:30 PM	Dinner
6:00 PM	Dinner/clean up
6:30 PM	Free time
7:00 PM	Get ready for bed
7:30 PM	Wind down time, story, songs
8:00 PM	Lights out

You can use one or a combination of these options or come up with your own schedule. Once you decide what you want to do, it would be a good idea to come up with a rough daily/weekly schedule as well. If you think you're not the "daily schedule" type, I encourage you to give it a try. Schedules allow you to be organized yet be flexible and switch things up when you need to. Kids thrive on routine, and as an added bonus you will never have to wonder what you are supposed to be doing at any time during the day!

Try coming up with a rough outline based off of what you already do in a day and then tweak it to look more like your ideal day. Hang it up on the fridge and give it a week or so of following it to see if it's working for you.

You can also make a simplified child's version of your schedule with pictures so that your child can also know what to expect every day.

Here's some examples of what a schedule might look like. Your personal schedule will reflect your goals and can be as simple or complex as suits you. Microsoft Excel or Apple Numbers are great tools for writing schedules because they make it really easy to keep everything organized. The examples pictured here were made with Numbers using a schedule template.

Max's Schedule

April 10-14

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8:00 AM	Wake up, Breakfast	Wake up, Breakfast	Wake up, Breakfast	Wake up, Breakfast	Wake up, Breakfast
8:30 AM	Get dressed, bible study	Get dressed, bible study	Get dressed, bible study	Get dressed, bible study	Get dressed, bible study
9:00 AM	Science	Math	History	Sensory	Art
9:30 AM	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time
10:00 AM	Reading, story time	Reading lesson, literacy activity	Reading lesson, story time	Reading lesson, literacy activity	Reading lesson, story time
10:30 AM	Outside free play	Outside structured play	Outside free play	Outside structured play	Outside free play
11:00 AM	Chores	Chores	Chores	Chores	Chores
11:30 AM	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12:00 PM	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time
12:30 PM	Nap	Nap	Nap	Nap	Nap

Stage Two

Prepare

– Step Four: Budget –

This step is simple, although it may take a little time. You need to work within your normal household budget to determine a set budget for your preschool plans. Although it may not be the most exciting step, it is necessary if you want to avoid a surprise increase in your normal expenditures.

You can also rest assured if you don't have a lot of money to put towards preschool expenditures. The amount you are able to budget does not need to affect the quality of your child's education. Even if you have little to no money to spare, you can create a rich early childhood experience for your child. Here are five tips for doing preschool on a tight budget:

- 1. Use recyclables.** Dig through your recycling bin for preschool classics such as toilet paper rolls, egg cartons, empty bottles and more. Scrap paper makes for great cutting and pasting practice, flattened cereal boxes can be used for finger painting, and the uses for a humble cardboard box are endless.

- 2. Visit the library.** The library is a great tool for building an early love of reading. There are so many books on every subject available right at your fingertips and all it takes is your signature on a library card! Add to that children's library programming like story time, reading contests, and special events and you've got an invaluable resource!

- 3. Shop the dollar store.** Stickers, craft and sensory supplies, seasonal merchandise and more - all for a dollar! The dollar store and dollar section in many larger retail stores can be a treasure trove of great preschool supplies.

- 4. Get outside.** The great outdoors is possibly one of the best teachers you can find. Science is learned through experiencing the weather, hearing the birds, smelling the flowers, and feeling the ground beneath your toes. You can count stones and draw letters in the dirt. It's nearly impossible to not run and jump and play when you're outside so P.E. is covered, too!

- 5. Be creative.** Find new ways to use what you already have. Count the change in your purse and make bean bags out of an old t-shirt. Use an empty wrapping paper roll for a telescope and pretend the couch cushions are lily pads. Take advantage of every free day at the zoo, farm, aquarium, and museum. Remember the things that spark wonder in the eyes of a little child and you may be surprised to find the best things in life are free.

– Step Five: Course of Action #2 –

If you've already put in the time to follow the above steps, the next part is where it gets fun! Now it is time to take some of the fantastic ideas you've found and match them up with your goals and schedule. For example, let's say your theme is Aquatic Life, and on Monday you want to do a science lesson on fish. Just turn to your saved ideas or do a Google search until you find an idea you want to use, always feeling free to adjust or change it to suit your needs. Then, save the link in your schedule or print out the activity and save it in a binder, ready to use when the day comes. Follow those same steps for every goal on your schedule.

This is also a good time to add in any pre-made curriculums or materials you want to use. For example, if one of your goals is for your child to learn to read, you could insert a pre-made reading program into your schedule, making note of what lessons are to be completed which days.

Here's an example:

Max's Schedule

April 10-14

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8:00 AM	Wake up, Breakfast	Wake up, Breakfast	Wake up, Breakfast	Wake up, Breakfast	Wake up, Breakfast
8:30 AM	Get dressed, Audio devotional from library	Get dressed, Audio devotional from library	Get dressed, Audio devotional from library	Get dressed, Audio devotional from library	Get dressed, Audio devotional from library
9:00 AM	Science activity: Plant a seed in a cup	Math activity: Counting worksheets	History activity: Read Wright Brothers books from library and make paper airplanes	Sensory activity: Water bin with measuring cups and funnels	Art activity: Finger painting
9:30 AM	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time
10:00 AM	Reading lesson (15), story time	Reading lesson (16), literacy activity: write letters in sand	Reading lesson (17), story time	Reading lesson (18), literacy activity: alphabet freeze dance	Reading lesson (review), story time
10:30 AM	Outside free play	Outside play: learn hopscotch	Outside free play	Outside play: build a fort in the trees	Outside free play
11:00 AM	Chores	Chores	Chores	Chores	Chores
11:30 AM	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12:00 PM	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time
12:30 PM	Nap	Nap	Nap	Nap	Nap

If you haven't already, you will want to find a way to save all your favorite ideas for various activities. You can use your internet browser's bookmarking feature, print and save in a binder, use Pinterest, or do whatever works for you. The important part is to have them saved and organized. That way you won't forget them and you can find them when you need them!

– Step Six: Gather –

Now that you've completed your plans, you need to come up with a supply list. Look at each of the activities you have planned and on one list write the things you need to gather together that you already have. On the other list write down the things you will need to purchase. Stick the second list with your grocery list and put the other list with your plans. It's also a good idea to have a running "wish list" of bigger items that you would like to have so you can keep track of what is most important to purchase when the budget allows. You can keep this "wish list" with your plans.

Having all your supplies in an organized location, ready to pull out when it is time to do your activity, is also something that you should consider. Having a designated cabinet, shelf, closet, drawers, or whatever space you have available makes finding what you need quick and easy. Keeping any paper materials (worksheets, plans, activities, etc.) in a binder is also a good idea. If you are planning on going paperless, make sure to have all your documents filed together on your computer as well. The internet is filled with ideas to organize, but remember, the best organizational system is what works for you and your space!

Stage Three

Carry Out

– Step Seven: Get It Done! –

Now it's time for the rubber to meet the road. You've researched, you've planned, you've prepped - you are ready! You know exactly what your plan is. Now it's time to put it into motion. Here are a couple tips to get the ball rolling.

- 1. Inform your child.** Go over a simple version of the daily/weekly schedule and talk about all the fun things you are going to be doing together. Try taking a few pictures during your first week and hanging them up for a visual representation of the schedule.
- 2. Get enough rest.** Although having a schedule can help you push through the day when you are run down, no one likes starting a new routine when they're tired! Make sure you and your little one are getting a good night's rest.
- 3. Have fun.** If you aren't looking forward to completing your plans, there's little chance you will do it. Take a break when you need to, and do activities that you both enjoy.

– Step Eight: Evaluate –

Once you're in the thick of your custom preschool program, how do you evaluate that your brilliant plan is actually working? Here are three surefire tips to confirm that you're a rockin' preschool teacher.

- 1. Your child is having fun.** Preschool and kindergarten should be an exciting and fun introduction to the world of learning. If you are encountering mostly resistance and frustration, something may need to change.
- 2. Your child is learning new things.** One of the best things about homeschooling is that you know your child best and you will be able to tell what areas he is excelling in and what areas he may be struggling in. Whether she is naming off colors everywhere she goes, excited that he finally figured out how to use scissors, or proud of knowing how to tie her shoes, you will see the signs of learning new information and skills. If your child is struggling in a certain area, it may mean you just need to move backward a few steps until he or she is more confident and then revisit that area.
- 3. You are enjoying the process.** While it won't always be fun and giggles, overall you should be enjoying what you are doing. If the plans you have made are causing you a continual amount of stress, you should probably change some things around.

– Conclusion –

This guide is meant to be an easily adjustable framework. You can change it however you need to best suit your family. However, as you follow this plan it will allow you to keep moving forward as your educational philosophy and goals grow and change. For example, you may start out thinking one thing is important and then later change your mind and decided it's not. Easy. Just take that out of your schedule and replace it with something else. Maybe as you go you'll decide to use less work pages and incorporate more hands-on activities. Then again, maybe you'll go through busy season and decide to use more work pages! Maybe you don't normally use themes, but you want to do a Christmas theme at the holidays, or take a week and learn about Fall because you're going to the pumpkin patch. You are in control. It's also easy to continue focusing on areas that are struggles for your child and simultaneously move forward in areas that he or she is thriving. You can change and adjust, all while knowing that you are keeping your goals in mind and staying on track.

Before we end, there is one more thing I'd like to add. You don't have to go at preschool on your own! Homeschool groups are becoming more and more common, so look one up in your area. Or, grab a couple friends and get together for a weekly "preschool play date." Also, be sure to check out my Pinterest boards and the list of my favorite preschool blogs below for even more great ideas.

I hope this eBook has been helpful in your preschool planning adventures. Feel free to contact me with any questions you may have. Happy planning!

Liz Millay

www.simplelifemessylife.com

millay.liz@gmail.com



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Some of My Favorite Additional Resources

www.icanteachmychild.com

www.simplehomeblessing.com

<http://www.learnplayimagine.com>

www.handsonaswegrow.com

<http://www.inlieuofpreschool.com>

<http://www.notimeforflashcards.com>

whatdowedoallday.com

buggyandbuddy.com

growingajeweledrose.com

funathomewithkids.com