

Introduction

In Charlotte Mason's lifetime, and for many years after, a child's formal education in the Parents Union School began at age six. In the early 1950s the PUS added a "Preparatory Class" for five to six year olds, and we have used the programs issued for this age group as a starting point for our "Prep Level".

Today most children in the US start school at age five and in the UK at age four. Many also attend preschools or nursery classes. In view of this we are putting forward suggestions for ages four to six. Some of these ideas are divided into Preschool and Kindergarten. It is *not* necessary to do the Preschool sections before the Kindergarten ones.

Note for UK Families:

Preschool = Reception (for age 4 to 5)

Kindergarten = Year 1 (for age 5 to 6)

IMPORTANT NOTES

(1) **PRESCHOOL IS NOT COMPULSORY.** In both the US and the UK formal education before age five is optional. Many families like to have some kind of educational plan for their preschoolers, and we are making suggestions on this basis. Please do not feel that because the suggestions are there you must follow them. Readiness varies widely between children - one four year old may be ready to read, another may not yet be ready to learn the alphabet; some children may want to "do school" like older brothers and sisters, whereas others may have no interest in doing anything structured.

(2) **READ TO YOUR CHILD.** If you do nothing else with a four or five year old, a short time reading to your child each day will lay important foundations. It helps to cultivate the habit of attention, build vocabulary and general knowledge, and - best of all - gives both mother and child some enjoyable one-on-one time. If you have a wriggly four year old, just a few minutes at a time is fine. Don't put your child off the reading experience by forcing him to sit past the point where it is enjoyable.

(3) **IF IN DOUBT - DO LESS.** Trying to do too much with a young child is worse than doing too little. It is better to start from scratch with a six year old than to find yourself dealing with one who doesn't want to do schoolwork anymore. Be sensitive to your child's needs and readiness. If he or she isn't ready, then holding off for a year or so is fine.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

Extract from the Parents' Union School Preparatory Class Program, July 1965

Children of five still need plenty of quiet growing-time and as much out-of-door life as possible. Daily lessons should be regular but informal and the time-table regarded only as a flexible guide to a well-assorted arrangement of free play occupations, activities and quiet story times.

The periods on the time-table must be spaced to allow time to move around, put things away and get them out, change position and so forth between periods, so that there shall be no pressure of hustle and no lack of opportunity for movement: concentrated attention should never be required of this class for more than ten minutes on reading, writing or number, or for more than fifteen minutes on stories.

With these considerations in mind the following plan is suggested: it offers a suitable variety of organized occupations for each morning; particular attention should be paid to the arrangement: reading, writing and number should not be taken consecutively

- Monday** - Bible, Reading, Painting, Break, Number, Handwork, Geography, Writing
- Tuesday** - Tales, Number, Handwork, Break, Reading, Singing Games, Writing, Nature Study
- Wednesday** - Poetry, Reading, Nature Study, Break, Number, Handwork, History, Writing
- Thursday** - Bible, Number, Handwork, Break, Reading, Singing Games, Writing, Tales
- Friday** - Tales, Reading, Picture Study, Break, Number, Handwork, Nature Study, Writing

A break for free play must be included as shown above.

There should also be activities in the afternoon such as physical exercise, outdoor nature observation, gardening, outdoor geography, as well as more listening to stories. The arrangement of these must depend largely on weather and climate. Children should be allowed to help in the house and in the care of animals.

Lessons

The understanding of five-year-old children varies greatly; those who are already used to being read to will be able to cover the greater part of the syllabus during a year, others will only make a beginning and may need to be **told** the stories at first; in either case a foundation will have been laid for the more formal lessons required of a child of six. **No narration, as such, should be required at this age**, though there will be many who will enjoy "telling back," and there could be plenty of talking about stories heard. Important proper names could be pointed out and repeated aloud beforehand, so that the story may be as uninterrupted as possible. **There should be no examinations or tests.**

At this age children usually have a fine dramatic sense, and acting stories or setting tableaux to illustrate them is both enjoyable and valuable. Some have also considerable ability to learn by heart and this can be put to good use by learning verse of good quality; however, learning by heart should not be considered compulsory at this age.

Our Recommendations

(1) **Kindergarten** (1 to 1.5 hours daily)

Religion - four times weekly, for 10 to 15 minutes

History and geography - twice weekly, for 10 to 15 minutes

Music appreciation and picture study - weekly, for around 10 minutes

Poetry - twice weekly, for 5 to 10 minutes

Story time - daily, for 10 to 15 minutes

(2) **Preschool** (up to 1 hour daily)

Number and literacy activities - daily, 20 to 30 minutes total

Religion - daily, up to 10 minutes

Story time - daily, up to 20 minutes

In addition to this more structured time, aim to include nature study and art and craft activities each week.

Remember, these are just guidelines. Please adapt them to suit your child and family.

Sample Schedule (Kindergarten)

Monday to Thursday

Session 1 (45 mins):

Religion (10 mins), Reading (10 mins), Picture study, Music Appreciation or Poetry (10 mins)
History or Geography (10 mins), Handwriting (5 mins)

Session 2 (25 mins):

Maths (10 mins), Story time (15 mins)

Friday

Session 1 (45 minutes):

Reading (10 mins), Art or craft activity (30 mins), Handwriting (5 mins)

Session 2 (25 mins):

Maths (10 mins), Story time (15 mins)

RELIGION

Catholic Mosaic by Cay Gibson - gives suggestions for picture books to read during each month of the year, along with a selection of activities to go with each book. This book can be used for both Preschool and Kindergarten. Take care to go at your child's pace - no need to rush through at this age!

Kindergarten

My Bible: the Story of God's Love by Melissa Wright (two stories each week)

Ordinary Time Only (20 weeks)

Speak, Lord, I Am Listening: A Rosary Book by Christine Haapala (one mystery each week)

Little Book of Saints: vol.1;

Little Book of Saints, vol.2 (Kathleen M.Muldoon) - 10 saints in each book (one saint story each week)

Advent, Lent and Easter

Books of your choice from the Catholic Mosaic list.

Preschool

The Children's Bible (Juan Surinach).

[UK Alternative: The Lion Storyteller Bible \(Bob Hartman\)](#)

Little Acts of Grace (Rosemary Gortler and Donna Piscitelli)

Suggested Resources for Living the Liturgical Year:

Advent, Christmas and Epiphany in the Domestic Church (Catherine and Peter Fournier)

Lent and Easter in the Domestic Church (Catherine and Peter Fournier)

Marian Devotions in the Domestic Church (Catherine and Peter Fournier)

Celebrating the Church Year With Young Children (Joan Halmo) - hands-on approach to faith formation for 3 to 6 year olds

Around the Year With the Trapp Family (Maria Augusta Trapp).

Optional Reading

Catholic Children's Treasure Box (Maryknoll Sisters)

MATHEMATICS

There are many resources you can use to begin number work with your Prep Level child. A formal curriculum is not necessary, but if you choose to use one, do be sure to fit the curriculum to the child and not the other way round. At this age readiness varies widely; the most important thing is to go at your child's pace. Some will race ahead in this area, others will struggle. Trying to force a young child into doing what a curriculum provider says they "ought" to be doing at this age can result in a child who hates numbers for years to come.

Some Suggested Activities and Topics

Counting songs

Number games (dominoes, number lotto)

Board games with dice

Make and copy sequences and patterns

Time (clock with movable hands)

Measuring (ruler, weight scale)

Cooking (measurement)

Money (learn different coins, count pennies)

Math(s), reading and writing - daily, for 10 minutes each (less for handwriting)

Optional Resource

The Oxford First Book of Maths (Rose Griffiths)

READING & WRITING

See Language Arts page

STORY TIME**Kindergarten**

Term 1: The Complete Tales of Beatrix Potter (Beatrix Potter)

Term 2: Charlotte's Web (E.B.White)

Term 3: Winnie-the-Pooh (A.A.Milne)

Optional Extra Reading (Chapter Books):

Happy Little Family (Rebecca Caudill)

Happy Times in Noisy Village (Astrid Lindgren)

Little Old Mrs Pepperpot (Alf Proysen)

The Milly-Molly-Mandy Storybook (Joyce Lankaster Brisley)

My Father's Dragon (Ruth Stiles Gannett)

My Naughty Little Sister (Dorothy Edwards)

A Bear Called Paddington (Michael Bond)

The Children's Book of Virtues (William Bennet)

Optional Extra Reading (Picture Books)

See preschool list below for suggestions

Preschool

Read aloud picture books and stories of your choice. Some suggestions are given below:

Story Collections

The Orchard Book of Nursery Stories (Sophie Windham) - simple tellings of traditional tales

My First Oxford Book of Stories (Geraldine MacCaughrean)

Picture Books

Alfie and Annie Rose, Dogger and others by Shirley Hughes

Angus Lost (Marjorie Flack)

Blueberries for Sal (Robert McCloskey)

Brambly Hedge books (Jill Barklem)

Caps for Sale (Esphyr Slobodkina)

Corduroy (Don Freeman)

Dandelion (Don Freeman)

Goodnight Moon (Margaret Wise Brown)

Harry the Dirty Dog (Gene Zion)

Harry and the Lady Next Door (Gene Zion)

James Herriot Treasury (James Herriot)

Katy and the Big Snow (Virginia Lee Burton)

Little Bear (Else Minarik)

Little Grey Rabbit books (Alison Uttley)

Make Way for Ducklings (Robert McCloskey)

Mike Mulligan and his Steam Shovel (Virginia Lee Burton)

Millions of Cats (Wanda Gag)

One Morning in Maine (Robert McCloskey)

Petunia (Roger Duvoisin)

Stone Soup (Marcia Brown)

Swimmy (Leo Lionni)

The Little House (Virginia Lee Burton)

The Runaway Bunny (Margaret Wise Brown)

The Story of Ferdinand (Munro Leaf)

The Velveteen Rabbit (Margery Williams)

Thomas the Tank Engine books (Rev.W.Awtrey)

Wheel on the Chimney (Margaret Wise Brown)

HISTORY

Kindergarten

Stories of Great Americans for Little Americans by Edward Eggleston

Turn of the Century: Eleven Centuries of Children and Change by Ellen Jackson

[UK Alternative: How Children Lived by Chris and Melanie Rice \(Dorling Kindersley\)](#)

GEOGRAPHY**Kindergarten**

The Oxford First Book of Children of the World (Rebecca Treays)
or

Children Just Like Me (Annabel and Barnabas Kindersley) *Note: A small donation is made to UNICEF for each book sold. As the Catholic Church has withdrawn its financial contribution to UNICEF due to its population control policies, we recommend that you either buy this book used or borrow it from the library.*

Picture Books

There are many picture books set in different parts of the world suitable for children of this age. Depending on the quality of your local library you could read book each week. If you have trouble getting books from the library then you might prefer to buy just two or three for each continent. If you would like a non-fiction introduction to life in other countries the "Child's Day" series published by Frances Lincoln is good (though not all the books are still in print). Listed below are some books we can recommend, divided by continent.

Round the World

How to Make an Apple Pie and See the World (Marion Priceman)

W is for World: A Round the World ABC (Kathryn Cave)

Africa

Bongani's Day: From Dawn to Dusk in a South African City (Gisele Wulfsohn)

Boushra's Day: From Dawn to Dusk in an Egyptian City (Khaled Eldash)

Nii Kwei's Day: From Dawn to Dusk in a Ghanaian City (Francis Provençal)

Chidi Only Likes Blue (Ifeoma Onyefulu) - central Africa

A is for Africa (Ifeoma Onyefulu) - Africa

Ebele's Favourite: a Book of African Games (Ifeoma Onyefulu) - Nigeria (10 traditional children's games are described)

Jambo Means Hello: Swahili Alphabet Book (Muriel L. Feelings) - southern Africa

Jamela books (Niki Daly) - South Africa

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters (John Steptoe) - Zimbabwe

The Day of Ahmed's Secret (Florence H. Parry) - Egypt

Honey . . . Honey . . . Lion! (Jan Brett) - Africa

Asia

Geeta's Day: From Dawn to Dusk in an Indian Village (Prodeepta Das) - India

Huy and Vinh's Day: From Dawn to Dusk in a Vietnamese Village (Jim Holmes) - Vietnam

Yikang's Day: From Dawn to Dusk in a Chinese Village (Sungwan So) - China

The Five Chinese Brothers (Claire H.Bishop) - China

The Story About Ping (Marjorie Flack) - China

I is for India (Prodeepta Das) - India

The Story of Little Babaji (Helen Bannerman) - India

Grandfather's Journey (Allen Say) - Japan

Europe

Polina's Day: From Dawn to Dusk in a Russian Village (Andrey Ilyin) - Russia

Iina Marja's Day: From Dawn to Dusk in a Lapp Village (Jaako Alatalo) - Lapland

Madeline (Ludwig Bemelmans) - France

Papa Piccolo (Carol Talley) - Italy

The Mitten (Jan Brett) - Ukraine

Berlioz the Bear (Jan Brett) - Germany

The Hat (Jan Brett) - Scandinavia

South and Central America

Cassio's Day: From Dawn to Dusk in a Brazilian Village (Maria de Fatima Campos)

Enrique's Day: From Dawn to Dusk in a Peruvian Village (Sara Andrea Fajardo)

B is for Brazil (Maria de Fatima Campos)

NATURE STUDY

Optional Reading

The Oxford First Book of Animals (Barbara Taylor)

US Options:

The Year at Maple Hill Farm (Alice and Martin Provensen)

Crinkleroot books (Jim Arnosky)

One Small Square series

[UK Option: Usborne Book of the Seasons](#)

PICTURE STUDY

An Alphabet in Art (Lucy Micklethwait)

Numbers in Art (Lucy Micklethwait)

Animals in Art (Lucy Micklethwait)

POETRY

Prayers From the Ark: Selected Poems (Carmen De Gasztold; translated by Rumer Godden)

My First Oxford Book of Poems (John Foster)

MUSIC

Making Music Praying Twice Homeschool Edition (Kate Daneluk)
