



EDUCATION OTHERWISE

**Home Education:  
Learning  
from life**

## Learning from life

Education does not mean set lessons or worksheets, although you can of course, use those methods if you prefer. It can look very different and will vary between children and should be what is right for each individual child.

### Education structure

How a parent home educates is the parent's choice. Home education comes in many forms and can range from highly structured to very child led. Some common approaches are:

**Project learning:** in which the child learns about one subject for as long as they feel the need to do so. Any item can trigger a project, and projects will inherently include literacy and numeracy skills. An example would be learning about the Romans (research online (IT skills), making Roman clothing (design and technology), cooking Roman dishes (nutrition, independence skills), what were the gender differences (social studies), where did they come from (history, geography), how do we know that (archaeology), what science did they use...the learning can take the child in many directions. A project could be researching your family tree or, a GRT child for example, might want to research the history, culture and social structure of Appleby horse fair.

**World schooling:** the family travel to different countries, regions and climates in order to allow the children to learn from first hand experience of other places and cultures. Some families stay for months at each location, others for days and others for varied amounts of time depending upon the educational value in each destination. This can be done on a smaller scale in the UK.

**Structured:** Structured provision can replicate school at home or simply be based on a regular timetable with set lessons from set subjects. The child will often use distance providers and tutors, textbooks and methods more familiar to those from a school background.

**Unschooling or self-directed learning:** Unschooling or self-directed learning is based on trust that parents and children will learn naturally because of an inherent interest in learning. Children follow their interests, are involved in real life experiences and parents expose the child to wide ranging opportunities to learn. Unschooling does not preclude the use of textbooks, or lessons, but the child chooses whether to use these things.

**Autonomous:** a child is learning autonomously if the education is led by the child. The child follows their own interests and the parent facilitates this. It can be very structured or very free form, depending on the child's needs.

**Seasonal:** the child learns according to the season with mainly outdoor provision in the warmer months and primarily home based provision in the colder months. This is particularly common with families who travel around fairs, shows and events in the summer and those who have seasonal work.

## What is education?

Education can be found in many more aspects of a child's life than sitting and doing structured work. The following are some ideas.

### Literacy

Reading and writing happen in stages and children do not necessarily start to read at the same stage as school children. Look at it by stage, not age. Literacy is not just reading and writing and the role of a parent, is to support the child to gain skills, not to measure them against anyone else. Literacy questions to ask yourself:

#### Alphabet Animals



- Is your child read to regularly or, if reading is difficult for you, does the child listen to recorded books or stories. When reading (or listening) does the child stop and talk about the characters or information, if using a book, does the child point to pictures and ask questions. Listening is literacy, does the child listen and let his or her imagination run?

- When out and about, does the child listen when you read signs to them or read them independently. Does the child explain what they see, do and experience?
- Literacy involves using language effectively such as, when talking to your child does he or she ask questions and listen to explanations?
- Does the child manipulate language such as, if told that a tree is coniferous, make up a story about a carnivorous tree or use alliteration (Eli expected elephant explosions) in jokes and conversation?
- Does your child hear stories about their culture, ancestry and why people do what they do. In some cultures, families have a much more oral than written

#### Sharing Memories



tradition and children learn a lot through discussion. If the child is watching you work or doing something in the home, do they listen to you talking about what you are doing and ask questions?

### Sail the High Seas



- Does the child sing songs and recite poetry, listen to an article and describe it in detail, or even present a speech or talk on a subject of interest?
- Can the child argue effectively, which means discussing an issue or opinion in a persuasive way, as this demonstrates use of language for a purpose?
- Can the child negotiate, in some cultures, children work with their families at an early age and use language to bargain?
- Does the child use language games?
- If the child is not yet writing, can they hold small tools effectively, draw, colour or make marks with their fingers in sand or soil?
- Can the child compare books to films or understand the difference between factual material and fiction?
- Can the child adapt their spoken or written language for different audiences, using formal and informal tone and grammar?
- Can the child follow instructions when building things, cooking, watching online instructions or doing family tasks?

### String Telephones



### Animal Charades



- Can the child listen to a lot of information and summarise it?
- Can the child use dictation and read from text applications?
- Can the child type and use technology to access information?

Talking, communicating, listening and absorbing language are all literacy skills.

## Numeracy

Just like literacy, numeracy is found in lots of aspects of life. The following are some examples of questions to ask yourself:

- Is your child playing games which include sorting, sharing or counting. Or, is your child playing shop or restaurants; any role play which involves handling money or tokens?
- Does your child compare sizes of toys, or work out tallest, shortest, widest, thinnest?

### Bake a Cake



- Does your child like to help in the kitchen with weighing, scaling, measuring or setting timers. Can he or she measure in different units?
- Does the child help with gardening, sewing projects or DIY, calculating seeds or planks needed, how long a plant will take to grow, measuring for paint and working out the amount of materials needed?
- Does your child tell the time and can he or she work out 'after' and 'to' in time. Can the child change between digital and analogue or understand the 24 hour clock?
- Does your child recognise shapes and patterns such as tessellation, hexagons in basalt columns and bee hives, flower petals and seashells. Have they looked at snowflake patterns?
- Can your child use three dimensional effects and understand how depth is drawn in two dimensions by using illusion?
- Does your child play computer games which require skills such as calculation?
- Does the child use tally charts, understand statistics, graphs and charts?
- Does the child do any online games or paper games which use numbers?

### Sweet smart



- Does the child have a bank account, save up for special things or go shopping and pay and receive change?
- Can the child understand how to calculate best value between different offers?

## Learning from life covers all subjects

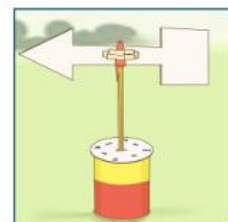
### Science and nature

#### Lift a Log



- What is healthy food, what is a balanced diet and what exercise does to the body.
  - Where does the poo go and learning about plumbing systems both in the body and in waste disposal.
  - How do all of the body's systems and plant systems work; learning about organs in different animals and structures of different plants.
- Hunting, fishing, growing, pond dipping, animal care and health.
  - Baking, cooking and observing physical changes.
  - Growing crystals and studying moulds.
  - Singing the periodic table song.
  - Dropping different objects from the same height and measuring their dropping speed.

#### Wind Watching



#### Cloud Gazing



- Observing how rivers change shape due to erosion and deposition.
  - Observing the clouds and changing seasons.
  - Learning how aircraft fly, submarines sink, cars move or simply playing with vehicles to watch forces in motion.
  - Digging a hole in the sand and studying layering or finding layers in cliffs.
- Navigating and travelling, looking at different environments.

## Not just a day fishing

A child fishing by a familiar river is a child learning and applying skills. Fishing requires understanding of currents, changing riverbanks as a result of erosion and



deposition; knowledge of weather patterns and how they affect fish; understanding of spawning seasons, food supplies and water quality. The child needs to know which fish are good to eat and which are not, the weight at which a fish is worth taking and that good sense requires fish with eggs to be put back in to maintain a supply. The child is observing the environment around them and applying that

knowledge to the task of catching a fish.

In some cultures and homes, the child may take the fish home, prepare them and cook them. This requires good knowledge of the body structure of the fish in order to avoid ruining the meal, independence skills, knowledge of hygiene and many skills related to cooking itself.

## Not just going to work with mum or dad for the day

A child going to his or her parent's place of work is learning far more than what the parent does there. Children observe and see teamwork in practice and how a business runs with all of the employees contributing. They can learn to negotiate or sell a product, what advertising works and how to target an audience. They might observe practical engineering skills, how to apply cosmetics, perform to an audience or dress hair. The child is observing how to be an adult in the adult world of work.

## What is education?

The important message is that education can be found in all aspects of life and that exploiting every learning opportunity can provide a really good education to a child. What we do in our daily lives is a learning opportunity if we use our opportunities.

Education is the gaining of knowledge which allows children to live independent lives as adults, whilst being a contributing member of the community. Education must be suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude and special needs.

## Every child is different and every child has skills to offer.

For lots of hints on learning experiences for children, see the Little Book of Learning here: <https://www.educationotherwise.org/resources/>



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