

Sample Pages from

A Record of the Learning Lifestyle

by Charlene Notgrass

This sample shows one weekly opening.
The full book has one opening
for each week for a full year.

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The Learning Lifestyle — A Learning Quilt


My husband and I have been on a journey, learning day by day how to be a family and how to rear our precious children. We have always known what our most important goal was. We wanted our whole family to be in heaven together. We also knew that every choice we made in our family's life would affect that ultimate goal. We knew the goal, but we certainly did not know the right choice to make in every decision day by day. We made many mistakes.

In the beginning our homeschooling was a burden we put on our backs like a bag full of rocks. Eventually homeschooling became an integral part of what we did as a family, and we began to pursue a lifestyle of learning.

Here are some examples of how we have pursued that lifestyle. A few months after we began homeschooling, my husband had a business trip in another state. We packed up our textbooks and went with him. On later trips we decided to leave the textbooks at home. The trip itself and its experiences became "school" for a few days. We were blessed to take a trip to England to meet members of Ray's mother's family. Before we went, someone asked us what we were going to do about schoolwork while we were gone. We did not take textbooks to England! The beauty and history of the country and our visits with relatives provided our learning during that time.

God gave us children to train in faithfulness and godly living. In our homeschooling journey, we committed ourselves to finding out from his Word what he wanted us to teach. When the history of the world is considered, the educational systems of today are recent developments. By far the most common form of education throughout the centuries has been parents teaching their own children. But we human beings are often frightened and insecure. Many of us want others to tell us what to do. Through the years educational bureaucrats have developed plans for how they think children ought to be educated. Most homeschooling parents were educated that way themselves. The temptation simply to follow the educational system around us is powerful, but who says that educational bureaucrats know the best way to educate children? They are constantly coming up with new programs and asking for tax dollars to implement them. If their systems are perfect, why are they constantly changing what they are doing?

We met our state graduation requirements for each child; but our schooling did not look like the one public school children receive. Our graduates shared many educational experiences together, and they pursued individual interests. We tried to create a learning "quilt" for them. To illustrate our learning lifestyle, I have highlighted some of our children's shared and individual "quilt pieces" on the next page.



*God gave you your children.
He told us in his Word what he
wants you to teach them.
He trusts you to train them.
May God grant you the confidence
to begin putting together your own
family quilt of a learning lifestyle.*

A Learning Quilt

being a volunteer at a nursing home	teaching self to program computers	writing plays	writing letters to family	traveling to 48 states (on a TIGHT budget)	studying for Bible Bowl
cooking	studying economics and personal finances with Dad	going to plays	reading about health with Mom	family read-alouds	studying the 20th century decade by decade
reading good literature	baby-sitting	visiting art museums	visiting the settings of favorite books	watching educational videos	acting in plays
teaching the Bible to children	writing stories	watching wholesome old movies	studying science in textbooks	teaching self to play guitar	writing songs
taking voice lessons	directing plays	being a Mother's Day Out volunteer	using math textbooks	visiting homes of authors	taking art lessons
collecting historic paper dolls	sharing mission trips with the family in the U.S. and Mexico	being children's librarian at a church library	writing papers	teaching Bible lessons by mail to people in other countries	writing letters to friends of all ages
helping care for an elderly grandparent	learning history from books, traveling, and Dad's teaching	working in the family business	studying grammar in a textbook	writing in a journal	working in political campaigns
going to concerts	doing chores	playing church league basketball	building friendships with children and adults	learning and teaching Sign Language	studying Spanish with a computer program and textbooks

Finding a Way to Keep Homeschool Records

In our twenty years of homeschooling, we tried to keep records in several ways. Each technique was useful in some ways and ineffective in others. It reminds me of a line in one of our favorite old movies, *I Remember Mama*. One of the children asks Mama if she would like to be rich. Mama replies that she would like to be rich like she would like to be seven feet tall: it would be good for some things and bad for others. Our record-keeping methods were like that—good for some things and bad for others.

Our Record-Keeping Methods That Failed

At various times over the years, I used school teacher planning books from a school supply store, my husband and I kept computer records, and I made notes on notebook paper in a binder. The school planners did not have spaces for Sunday worship and fellowship, Saturday chores, field trips, or those all-important “socialization” activities. I could only keep records for nine months, but I wanted to record many activities we did during holidays and over the summer. I found computer records to be too inaccessible, because I needed something in which I could write any time I had a spare moment. Sometimes I did not have time to wait for the computer to be available so that I could enter the information, and at other times I was writing my records while riding down the road. The notebook paper and binder were better, but I still had not found just what I needed.

A Step in the Right Direction

When these record keeping methods failed, we asked our children to keep complete lists of everything they did each day. We had developed more of what we term a learning lifestyle, so in addition to the “schoolwork” we completed in the mornings, we wanted to count their meal-cooking and baby-sitting as home economics, the times we spent reading aloud books such as *A Tale of Two Cities* for world history, a Saturday trip to an art museum for art, and so forth.

We liked this method of the children keeping lists, and we used it for several years. While I am thankful to have these records, it was not easy for me to tell quickly how well-rounded their education was. I always felt that I should take their lists and make some other kind of record from them. I wanted my records to help me know if I was covering everything that I wanted to cover.

A Record of the Learning Lifestyle: Finally A Method That Works!

We finally developed *A Record of the Learning Lifestyle*. It is a simple way to keep a record of what children do all day, 365 days a year. Like you, we have one main goal for our family—that every member of every generation be faithful to the Lord. We also have several specific character attributes that we want our children to possess. The design of *A Record of the Learning Lifestyle* helps parents tell at a glance whether they are consistently spending time working toward that main goal and also giving their children opportunities to develop good character.

A Record of the Learning Lifestyle

Contents of *A Record of the Learning Lifestyle*

1. **What I Did This Week** — 52 sets of two-page openings for each week of the year
2. **Books I Have Read This Year** — a place to list books read by the child
3. **Books Read to Me This Year** — a place to list books read aloud by a parent during the school day and those read during family read-aloud times
4. **My Grades, Test Scores, and Awards for This Year**
5. **Notes** — room for you to record notes about your curriculum choices, educational ideas, and whatever else you want to keep handy

A Record Book for Each Child

I recommend that each child have a record book of his or her own. While many activities involve the whole family or several members of the family, each child also does individual activities. It is ideal to be able to see what each child is accomplishing and what areas need more attention. You could keep records for more than one child in one book by using black ink for activities completed by all of the children and a different color of ink for each child when recording individual activities.

How to Use This Book

The main section of *A Record of the Learning Lifestyle* includes the 52 sets of pages on which you (or your child) record what your child is doing and accomplishing in his or her life each week. The three special features of these pages include:

- Spaces to record the activities of each day, Sunday through Saturday.
- Spaces to record the activities of the whole week in specific training categories. (I used these to see easily if we were covering all the areas we believe are essential in training our children to be godly men and women. I could see if we were doing many math and history activities but hardly any Bible or science.)
- One opening shows a whole week's work. (I much preferred seeing a whole week's work at one time. I did not like flipping through the various sections of my old binder system.)

Keeping the Daily Record

On the left side of each opening is a box entitled **What I Did This Week**. Simply fill in the dates at the beginning of the week.

Under the box is a listing of all seven days of the week. Each day either you or your child makes a list of everything he or she did that day. In addition to what was accomplished during “school time,” list family activities, chores completed, playtime activities, field trips, letters written, lessons taken from piano teachers — anything that your child does that involves direct training or the practice of what you are training him or her to do and, more importantly, who you are training him or her to be.

I recommend that the parent write the list at first. Then, write the list with your child for a while. You will know when your child is responsible enough to make the list on his or her own. Your list might look something like this:

Sunday worshipped with the church; sermon was based on Galatians 5; Joel led a prayer; set table for lunch; played with cousins at Grandma’s house; finished reading The Railway Children; wrote in journal; sang “Amazing Grace” with family before bed

Monday drew picture of train station; wrote book review of Railway Children; began reading Anne of Green Gables; math lesson 59 - subtracting fractions; helped Tim with nouns and pronouns; read about deserts in encyclopedia; wrote letter to Aunt Cindy; built train station with blocks; fixed snack for self & siblings; raked leaves with Dad; read to family about Moses in desert; journal

Tuesday math lesson 60 - multiplying fractions; wrote report about Prince Edward Island; began memorizing Canadian provinces; read Desert Animals at Night; made tuna salad for lunch; played “Olden Days” with Tim & Sara; practiced for homeschool choral concert; visited Miss Clara next door; made card for Grandpa Jim; learned to make cornbread; chose hymn for family before bed; journal

Wednesday practiced Canadian provinces; continued reading Anne of Green Gables; math lesson 61 - dividing fractions; read in encyclopedia about the history of the Canadian Mounted Police; drew picture for Grandma; drew picture of Green Gables; read Canada from Eh to Zed; cleared table after lunch; played soccer with Tim and Sara; read Mark 1:1-5; journal

Keeping A Record of Specific Training Categories

The eleven boxes that cover the rest of the two-page opening help you record the heart of your homeschooling. They will show the activities your child has done *all week* in each subject category. To fill in these spaces, take the information you have written down in your daily record and decide in which box you should record each of these entries. Some activities from the daily record will go in one certain box and others will go in more than one box. For example, a letter to Aunt Cindy could go in “Relating to Others” and “Learning to Communicate.” Reading *Anne of Green Gables* could go in “Learning About People and Places,” “Learning About Events and People of the Past,” and “Learning About the Thoughts of Others.” By filling in these eleven boxes, you will be able to tell how well you are doing at having a balanced approach to your homeschooling. I suggest that you update the boxes every day, while you remember what your child has done. Look over your record at the end of the week. You will be amazed at all your family is accomplishing. You will feel like a homeschooling Supermom! Rejoice about the areas you are covering well. If you find gaps, you can spend more time on those next week.

Here are descriptions of the eleven specific training categories with examples of activities that you might put in that category.

1. **Spiritual Life: Bible Study, Worship, and Christian Fellowship.** *And Jesus kept increasing . . . in favor with God and men. Luke 2:52 NASB.* Jesus grew in these ways, and I am responsible to see that my children grow in these ways also. Our main goal for our children is that they live forever in heaven with God. As parents we must consistently pray about and work toward that goal. Our weekly activities must include study of God's Word, worship of our Creator, and time with fellow believers. An entry in this space might look like this:

worshipped with the church on Sunday; sermon based on Galatians 5; led prayer for the church; read Bible to family (about Moses in the desert), sang "Amazing Grace;" chose family hymn; read Mark 1:1-5

2. **Learning to Work: Chores, Service, and Life Skills.** *Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine . . . you did it to Me. Matthew 25:40 NASB.* Our children must learn to serve others, to work for the good of their families, and to have the skills necessary to take care of themselves and their own families. An entry in this space might look like this:

served church by leading a prayer; served family by setting table, helping with meals, raking leaves, cleaning table, reading Bible, and choosing hymn; served siblings by helping Tim with grammar, fixing snack; served extended family with letter to Aunt Cindy and card for Grandpa Jim; served elderly neighbor by visiting; helped Dad with plumbing repair

3. **Relating to Others: Characters and Relationships.** . . . *add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 2 Peter 1:5-7 KJV.* If my children accumulate knowledge of math, grammar, history, and science, but cannot be trusted to tell the truth or treat others with respect, I will certainly not feel like a successful homeschooler. An entry in this space might look like this:

fellowshipped with church on Sunday; played with cousins at Grandma's house (no fighting!); treated siblings nicely by helping Tim with grammar, making them a snack, and playing "Olden Days" and soccer with them; related well to Aunt Cindy, Grandpa Jim, and Miss Clara; Joel is trying hard to obey immediately

4. **Learning About God's Creation: Science and Technology.** *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities . . . have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made. . . . Romans 1:20 NIV.* Science is the study of what God created during the six days when he created the world, and technology is the study of what the people God created in his image have done with the things God created. Studying the things God made teaches us about the God who made them. An entry in this space might look like this:

read about deserts in an encyclopedia; read Desert Animals at Night; read about the time Moses spent in the desert; made a desert scene by painting with sand; visited a pet store and looked at animals that live in dry climates; read about Bible Land deserts in a Bible encyclopedia; built train station with blocks

5. **Learning About People and Places: Geography, Government, and Foreign Language.** *From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth. . . . Acts 17:26a NIV.* All people on earth came from Adam, and God wants us to take the Gospel to each one. Our children must learn about the lands, peoples, and nations that God has made. They must learn to love and to understand people who are different from themselves. An entry in this space might look like this:

learned about England by completing *The Railway Children*; learned about Canada by beginning *Anne of Green Gables*, writing report about Prince Edward Island, memorizing the Canadian provinces, reading about the Canadian Mounted Police, reading *Canada from Eh to Zed*

6. **Learning About the Events and People of the Past: History and Biography.** . . . *and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. Acts 17:26b NIV.* History is the story of God's work from Creation to the present. On the sixth day God created people. From one man he has built us into nations and tribes and ethnic groups. By studying history we can learn how he has worked in these groups, and we can also learn the results of their obedience or disobedience. By reading biographies we can learn about the opportunities, blessings, and challenges he gives individuals, as well as how their lives are affected by their blessings and by their personal choices. In the Old Testament, God gave the Israelites festivals that helped them remember what he had done for them in the past. In the New Testament, Jesus gave us the Lord's Supper to help us remember him. God's Word, the Bible, is a message of love for people and a book of history. An entry in this space might look like this:

ancient history - learned about Moses' time in the desert and the church in Galatia (Gal. 5); learned about life at turn of the century in England from *The Railway Children* and Canada in *Anne of Green Gables*; learned about history of Canadian Mounted Police

7. **Learning About the Thoughts of Others: Reading and Literature.** . . . *whatever is true . . . noble . . . right . . . pure . . . lovely . . . admirable . . . excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things. Philippians 4:8 NIV.* When a child learns to read well, a wealth of wisdom and information is opened up to him. He can read God's Word; and he can also read the true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy things that men and women have created because of their being made in God's image. David said in Psalm 101:3 that he would set no vile thing before his eyes. Choose carefully what your children read so that their reading contains no vile things. Good books teach values, character, and history. Help your children enjoy many wonderful books. In this entry, record your phonics instruction and the books your child is currently reading. Your main list of books read will be in the back of the record book. Your notes in this section can be brief, but they still need to be included so that each week you can see how you are doing in your overall training of your children. An entry in this space might look like this:

Bible reading; finished *The Railway Children*; reading *Anne of Green Gables*; reading about deserts and Canada in books and encyclopedias

8. **Being Creative: Art, Crafts, Music, Drama, and Other Creative Activities.** *He has filled them with skill to perform every work of an engraver . . . a designer . . . an embroiderer. . . . Exodus 35:35 NASB.* The people God created in his image are creative, too. We believe that each of our children should be able to enjoy all of the wholesome arts either by being creative themselves or by enjoying the creations of others. Sometimes we have had to be resourceful to find wholesome ways to teach these, but it has been worth the effort. An entry in this space might look like this:

sang hymns at church; sang "Amazing Grace;" drew picture of train station; practiced for choral concert; card for Grandpa Jim; chose hymn for family; picture for Grandma; picture of *Green Gables*

9. **Learning to Communicate: Letter Writing, Grammar, Handwriting, Creative Writing, and Journaling.** *Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification. . . . Ephesians 4:29 NASB.* One way to connect to the people around us is through communication. We want our children to be truthful and effective communicators, both verbally and in written form. We want their grammar never to embarrass them (or us!). We want people to be able to read their handwriting. Requiring children to keep journals is a gift to them — a written record of their growing up years in their own words. Forming the habit of letter writing so they can keep in touch with godly people in other places is also a gift to our children. An entry in this space might look like this:

journaling; book review of *The Railway Children*; helped Tim with nouns & pronouns; letter to Aunt Cindy; wrote Thanksgiving poem; led prayer for church; read Bible aloud to family; report about Prince Edward Island

10. **Caring for My Body: Exercise, Sports, and Health.** . . . *present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. . . . Romans 12:1 KJV.* We want our children to care for their bodies with a balanced, healthy lifestyle. Their bodies are tools to serve God, not tools to gain personal glory. Sports are one way to gain health and learn some life skills, but take care that sports are servants and not masters of your family life and schedule. An entry in this space might look like this:

fixed healthy snacks; raked leaves with Dad; played soccer; walked with Mom

11. **Learning Math, Problem Solving, and Thinking Skills.** *A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight. Proverbs 11:1 KJV.* Some children will pursue work in which math plays an integral part. All children will need to use math in daily life. Give each child the training he or she needs and give him opportunities to use it in everyday experiences. An entry in this space might look like this:

math lessons 59-63; built train station with blocks; helped Dad with plumbing repair; used measurement to make cornbread

Records of Books Read and Grades

In the back of the record book are these four sections: *Books I Have Read This Year*; *Books Read to Me This Year*; *My Grades, Test Scores, and Awards for This Year*; and *Notes*. Each time a book is finished, record it on the appropriate book list. We have also included pages for you to record grades and other information in the manner that you see fit. We have required our children to do the work we expect of them. If a child meets all the requirements of an assignment and does it according to my expectations, I consider that “A” work. Record grades for your child the way you feel is most suitable. You can record achievement test results and any awards that your child receives here as well. Any other notes and plans you wish to keep track of can go in the final section.



*What I Did
This Week*



What I Did This Week

Sunday, _____ through Saturday, _____

Sunday _____

Monday _____

Tuesday _____

Wednesday _____

Thursday _____

Friday _____

Saturday _____

*Spiritual Life: Bible Study,
Worship, and Christian Fellowship*

*Learning to Work:
Chores, Service, and Life Skills*

*Relating to Others:
Character and Relationships*

*Learning About God's Creation:
Science and Technology*

*Learning About the Thoughts of
Others: Reading and Literature*

*Learning to Communicate: Letter
Writing, Grammar, Handwriting,
Creative Writing, and Journaling*

*Learning About People and Places:
Geography, Government, and
Foreign Language*



*For since the creation of the world
God's invisible qualities . . . have been
clearly seen, being understood from
what has been made. . . .
Romans 1:20 NIV*

*Caring for My Body:
Exercise, Sports, and Health*

*Learning About the Events
and People of the Past:
History and Biography*

*Being Creative:
Art, Crafts, Music, Drama,
and Other Creative Activities*

*Learning Math, Problem Solving,
and Thinking Skills*

*My Grades, Test Scores,
and Awards for This Year*

*My Grades, Test Scores,
and Awards for This Year*

Notes

Notes