

The “Three R” Approach

Most curriculums today follow a model of read the information, memorize a few facts, and then regurgitate on a test, worksheet, or quiz. Very little emphasis is given to any kind of research and reporting skills. When your child reaches older grades they are completely lost when asked to gather information to write any kind of report. It is vital that your child not only learns, but knows HOW to learn. We recommend following a three 'R' approach of read, research, and record. Even very young children can begin to develop research and reporting skills that are critical to academic success in later grades. Children who follow this methodology at a young age will be very comfortable later on when asked to report on any given topic.



Step 1 - Read

Begin your study by reading a real book. Younger children can be read to while an older child can read independently. There are so many benefits to using real books instead of textbooks. First of all, when we say 'real' book we mean a book that is written about a specific topic. There is usually a wide selection of books available on any given topic, so your child can choose a book that they like based on pictures, reading abilities, etc.

Begin teaching your child to use the library. Even young children can learn to ask the librarian for assistance in locating a book. Older children should learn to use the

library's catalog system. The more your child reads on topics that interest him/her the better they will become at recalling technical detail - an important skill for higher level studies.

Step 2 - Research

Always follow up the initial reading assignment by choosing an additional venue for your child to use to obtain more information. Further investigation on a given topic should be done at least once a week. Web sites, library books, videos, encyclopedias, are all good sources. Our curriculum provides you with a wealth of resources for varying grade levels to choose from for this important step.

Require your children to know how to use the library! Never leave the library without requiring your child to find at least one book on their own. Young children can ask for assistance locating books, while older children should be comfortable with the library's catalog system.



Many children reach the middle school years and beyond and have no idea how to do simple research. This is in large part due to the fact that they have never been taught to use real books as an information source. Children who develop a habit of reading for information at an early age are much more adept at research later on. Simple activities like making note cards, listing new words, and summarizing books in early grades paves the way for an easy transition to upper level academics.

The internet is also a great resource that you don't want to miss! We have provided you with a rich collection of kid friendly sites on a wide variety of topics. Younger children can sit with you while you navigate the available sites for fun pictures, puzzles, games and more.

Step 3 - Record

The recording step is also commonly referred to as narration by classical educators. Narration is a way to measure what your child has retained and understood. It is also useful for developing vocabulary and self expression. A child that has become adept at narration will find written composition in later grades much easier. After you have read together or visited a website, your child should narrate (tell back) to you three or four facts that they remember from the source. Over time, comprehension levels and attention spans will increase because they'll know that reading and research time is going to be followed by narration. Children can begin to develop comprehension and attention span skills even before they are reading well on their own!



During narration, you may find that you have a talker that wants to go on and on. Great! If you have a child that can't seem to get started, ask simple questions and make suggestions:

"Where did you say that animal lives?"

"What was the neatest thing you remember about _____?"

"What does it do?"

"How does it work?"

If they get going after you guide them, great. If not, don't push. It will come with time. Always require complete sentences when your child narrates. For example, let's say you've read a book together about turtles and you ask your child, 'What do you remember about our book today?' If they say something like 'about the eggs in the sand', prompt them until they give you a complete sentence such as 'The turtle lays eggs in the sand.' Repeat this process until they have narrated three or four strong, complete sentences. They will quickly learn to distinguish between a fragment and a complete sentence, even before they are able to read!



Narration should be an easy, enjoyable time that your child looks forward to. Gather a collection of art supplies such as markers, high quality colored pencils, stickers, paints, glitter, glue scissors, or anything else that your child likes to work with. Your unit also includes several fun notebooking pages that you can use for narration time. Make these art supplies available only during narration time, and then only after they have recorded their sentences.

Try to do narration at least three days a week to develop strong comprehension and language skills. The method that you follow for recording the narrations will be determined by your child's age and abilities. We recommend these general guidelines:

❖ PRE-READERS:

OPTION 1:

You write the sentence on a notebook page and let your child color or decorate a border around the text. Often times in very early grades a child's fine motor skills are not fully developed and handwriting may still be difficult. Taking dictation of your child's oral narration is perfectly acceptable at this stage.

OPTION 2:

Type the sentences on the computer and print them out in a large, easy to read font. Then print the page and have your child decorate it for their notebook.

OPTION 3:

If you have a child that is eager to write, put one or two very simple sentences on the white board and let them attempt to copy the sentence on to a notebook page.

❖ BEGINNING READERS AND WRITERS:

Whichever method you choose, try to get three to four strong sentences. Have your child decorate the page and add it to their notebook.

OPTION 1:

You may still need to let your child dictate to you in the beginning depending on their fine motor skills (see the recommendations above for pre-readers).

OPTION 2:

Have your child dictate a sentence to you while you write it on the board. Then have them copy the sentence on their paper or on a notebooking sheet from the unit's activity pages. Sit with them as they copy so you can immediately correct any spelling, punctuation, or penmanship errors. This is a great exercise for developing visual discrimination and early language art skills. They will be gently introduced to rules of punctuation, grammar, spelling, and penmanship as they complete their copy work exercise for narration time.

**OPTION 3:**

Let your child write their own sentences. If you do this, I highly recommend that you work closely with your child while they are writing. First, have them tell you what they plan to write so you can assure that it is a complete sentence. Next, sit with them as they write to assure that each word is spelled correctly and that proper capitalization and punctuation is used.

OPTION 4:

Allow your child to hunt and peck to type out their sentences on the computer with a word processing program. These programs often have built in editors that will automatically flag misspelled words and punctuation errors. My boys always loved doing this.

❖ PROFICIENT READERS AND WRITERS:

These children should be able to record their information independently. If they have been doing narration for a while, then they should be able to write their sentences in paragraph form using four to seven strong, complete sentences. If they are not yet comfortable with narration, then use the process for beginning readers and writers until they are accustomed to writing their own sentences.

Older children may prefer writing their narrations on the computer versus handwriting on a notebooking page, and they can also use more sophisticated embellishments such as cut-and-pasted images from the internet. You decide the level of work you want your child to invest in their narrations. The important thing is that they are learning to research a given topic and then write about what they have learned.

Notebooking

Keeping a notebook is central to the Three-R approach. Your child will be doing a lot of writing as well as several hands on activities. You'll want to showcase all of this hard work.

Purchase a three ring binder. I like the ones with the clear plastic inserts on the front cover that will allow your child to design their own cover. You can choose to arrange the notebook by sections such as projects, vocabulary, narrations, or simply file the work in chronological order as it is completed. I have found that clear plastic page protectors have a strange affect on my children. Something about putting a finished work in a plastic page protector motivates them to work twice as hard on an assignment. I highly recommend having a good supply of these on hand as well as a wide variety of art supplies as we mentioned earlier.



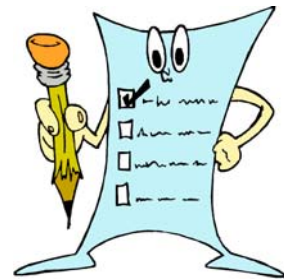
Don't forget photos! It is impossible to keep every hands-on project forever, but you can certainly take pictures and file them in a notebook along with a narration of the activity! We take pictures of everything - cooking activities, butterfly farms, field trips, models, plays, dress up, you name it. If it has something to do with school, we memorialize it with a picture and put it in our notebook.

From time to time let your child show his notebook to others. He will feel a sense of accomplishment when displaying his work for others to see. Grandmas are great for this! At the end of the year it will be fun to look back at all the exciting times you've had studying science!

Before you Begin

Here are a few things that you need to take care of in advance.

1. Print out all the pages from the unit that you want to have readily available.
2. Look over your unit and see if there are any unusual supplies that you need to order or shop for. Plan accordingly, especially if you want to use any living specimens.
3. If you are going to use our suggested reading title, then you need to either order it from us or reserve it at the library if available. Otherwise, you will need to look over alternate resources to try to find one that meets all of the suggested teaching goals for your selected unit(s).



Contacting Us

We welcome your questions, comments and feedback! Please feel free to contact us with any questions or comments that you may have.

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