

CHARLOTTE MASON

your  
way



PRESCHOOL  
KINDERGARTEN  
GUIDE

A CHARLOTTE MASON PLENARY



**CHARLOTTE MASON YOUR WAY  
PRESCHOOL & KINDERGARTEN GUIDE  
FOR CHILDREN AGES 3-5**

**A CHARLOTTE MASON PLENARY**

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# Introduction

## PRESCHOOL & KINDERGARTEN GUIDE

Thank you for choosing A Charlotte Mason Plenary! And welcome to a Charlotte Mason education, a method that truly honors the child as a person and brings ease and joy to homeschooling.

This Guide is divided into two distinct Forms: Preschool and Kindergarten. The difference in what was recommended is significant. When choosing where to place your child, be sure to assess skill development. If you are unsure where to place your child, always start at a lower level and build from there. The guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten come from Charlotte's writing in Volume 1, and various Parents' Review Articles, as well as from the later PNEU Programmes.

Caution is used when reading any PNEU Programmes that were published more than 10 years after Charlotte's death, as we see how the Programmes started to stray from Charlotte's original writings. In this case, I have relied on my many years of experience in reading Charlotte's volumes, PR Articles, and other PNEU source documents, as well as my own experience as a homeschooling parent, to guide me on recommendations.

The information in this Guide roughly correlates with Preschool and Kindergarten:

**Preschool = Ages 3-4**

**Kindergarten = Age 5**

*"Nothing is trivial that concerns a child; his foolish-seeming words and ways are pregnant with meaning for the wise. It is in the infinitely little we must study the infinitely great; and the vast possibilities, and the right direction of education, are indicated in the open book of the little child's thoughts ... The parents need only supply; the child knows well enough how to appropriate. The parents' chief care is, that that which they supply shall be wholesome and nourishing, whether in the way of picture-books, lessons, playmates, bread and milk, or mother's love. This is education as most parents understand it, with more of meat, more of love, more of culture, according to their kind and degree. They let their children alone, allowing human nature to develop on its own lines." Home Education pg 5*

This Guide lists each subject in each Form, books that were used, notes on each subject, and scheduling information. My goal is to help you design a personalized "Charlotte Mason Your Way" curriculum that fits your family.

**There are 3 steps to this guide:**

**STEP #1: OVERVIEW OF FORM 1 SUBJECTS**

**STEP #2: THE CHARLOTTE MASON YOUR WAY QUIZ**

**STEP #3: YOUR CUSTOM SCHEDULE**

**STEP #1: AN OVERVIEW OF FORM SUBJECTS:** This step will give you information on which subjects were taught and which books Charlotte chose for her students. The Preschool and Kindergarten Guides are a bit different in that formal studies were not recommended until age 6. But many parents find that their children ask for and benefit from a gentle introduction to "school" before formal studies begin.

My source information for this guide comes from analyzing many sources, including more than 10 years worth of Charlotte Mason's original PNEU Programmes from 1920-1933. These Programmes list the curriculum used by students in the PNEU Schools. Additional information comes from Charlotte's *Home Education Series*, *Parents' Review Articles*, and later Programmes.

All of Charlotte's Programmes are divided by Forms, which are like grade levels, but they allow for more flexibility in meeting the educational needs of a child. Forms are elastic, allowing the teacher to stretch or contract the amount and difficulty of work based on a child's ability and needs. For more information on Forms, please see [Understanding Forms in a Charlotte Mason Education](#).

In most subjects, I have listed information from Charlotte's *Home Education* series as well as books and other resources that were recommended. Whenever possible, each book will be linked to an in-print edition and/or a public domain version for your convenience.

I have included this information to help you in selecting your own books. Viewing the actual book that was used for a given subject will give you an insight into why the book was chosen, what makes it a living book, what makes it appropriate for this age range, and what to look for in choosing a more modern equivalent. I have also listed a few books that I personally recommend.

To see additional living books recommendations, please see the [CM SUBJECTS](#) page which includes the [Preschool page](#) and the [Kindergarten page](#).

Once you have completed the Form Overview, then move on to Step #2.

**STEP #2: THE CHARLOTTE MASON YOUR WAY QUIZ:** This is a fun exercise that will show you your strengths as a family. We want to identify those strengths and build a solid foundation on them!

You will use your results from the Quiz when you get to Step #3.

**STEP #3: CREATING YOUR CUSTOM SCHEDULE:** Your schedule is the machine that keeps your homeschool going. Once in place, it takes all the decision work out of your day – you simply move to the next thing on your schedule. A simple schedule is easily tweaked and improved. An overly complex schedule can be difficult to change and can become a burden. We want to keep it simple and stress-free! Less stress, more joy!

The entire process of Steps 1-3 will help set you up for ongoing success.

**READING CHARLOTTE'S VOLUMES AND LEARNING THE PRINCIPLES:** One more thing – I also want to encourage you to read Charlotte's original *Home Education Series* for yourself as well as study her 20 Principles. Her words are so inspiring and so helpful for developing the atmosphere of your home, the discipline you'll need each day, and the beauty of the life you want to cultivate. After all, education is "an atmosphere, a discipline, a life."

Start with Volume 1, *Home Education*, especially since you have young children. Volume 1 was written specifically regarding children ages six through nine, but also addresses children under age six. There is a wealth of advice and knowledge in it's pages.

I recommend [THE ANNOTATED HOME EDUCATION SERIES](#) published by A Charlotte Mason Plenary of course! The annotations and additional information really help you better understand Charlotte's words and historical context. You can purchase [HOME EDUCATION: ANNOTATED EDITION](#) as a paperback book or as a downloadable PDF on The Plenary website.

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# *A Quiet Growing Time*

## EDUCATION AND THE YOUNG CHILD AGES 3-5

### SIMPLE, EASY, AND RELAXED

Education is so much more simple and easy than many parents imagine it to be. Providing a good, quality education for your child does not need to be complicated. The Charlotte Mason method of education offers relaxed, joy-filled days for both you and your preschooler. You do not need any formal academics at this age, no matter what society may tell you.

*“In this time of extraordinary pressure, educational and social, **perhaps a mother’s first duty to her children is to secure for them a quiet growing time**, a full six years of passive receptive life, the waking part of it spent for the most part out in the fresh air. And this, not for the gain in bodily health alone – body and soul, heart and mind, are nourished with food convenient for them when the children are let alone, let to live without friction and without stimulus amongst happy influences.”*

*Home Education pg 43*

### THE QUIET GROWTH OF SELF-EDUCATION

**MASTERLY INACTIVITY:** Charlotte believed that self-education is the only true education and she used the phrase “masterly inactivity” to indicate how simple that education can be. Especially today, in an era of ‘helicopter’ parenting and over-scheduling, Charlotte points out that children should be left alone to discover the world around them:

*“For all a child’s running and shouting, as he discovers the wonder of living, these years are essentially a quiet growing-time. The attitude of the parent for much of the time should be ‘masterly inactivity.’ Provide the means for getting to know the material world if his living conditions do not provide them naturally; then leave him in peace – with other children if possible. His questions should be answered but whenever there is the opportunity he should be put in the way of finding out the answer for himself.”*

This is true self-education. Let the child discover for himself. He should be in touch with as many things in his world as possible. Encourage wonder. Remember that your child is seeing and experiencing everything for the first time. *“The flowers are not new, but the children are.”* Remember to see the world from your child’s perspective of awe and wonder.

### HABITS AND DISCIPLINE

Charlotte says that habits are like the rails of a train on which a mother may secure “smooth and easy days” for herself and her children:

*“This relation of habit to human life – as the rails on which it runs to a locomotive – is perhaps the most suggestive and helpful to the educator; for just as it is on the whole easier for the locomotive to pursue its way on the rails than to take a disastrous run off them, so it is easier*

# STEP #1

## OVERVIEW OF SUBJECTS

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## STEP #1: PRESCHOOL

### *Overview of Form Subjects*

Education in the early years can be accomplished through two things: Play and Story. These are the two main categories in a Charlotte Mason Preschool.

Play is the child’s work; let him do it. Much of his time will be occupied in masterly inactivity. At other times he should be occupied by books. Stories help a child relate to the world around him.

A child’s days can be lightly scheduled but should not require any formal studies.

The following “subjects” of Play and Story can be scheduled and prepared by the parent, but the child should not be obligated to “do” any of it. Always watch your child, not the clock, for his attention span and skill level. At this age, a child’s attention span will be very short. Most things will be “learned by-the-way,” that is, they will be learned through the experiences of daily life – if he is put in touch with things.

Please refer to the section in *Home Education*, Part 2, called “Out-of-Door Life for Children” (pages 42-95). This entire section is a wonderful resource of ideas and guidelines for parents of young children.

Books and resources for each subject listed can be found on the [Preschool page](#).

### – THE VALUE OF PLAY –

*“It would be well if all we persons in authority, parents and all who act for parents, could make up our minds that there is no sort of knowledge to be got in these early years so valuable to children as that which they get for themselves of the world they live in.”*

#### PLAY WITH NATURAL MATERIALS

This refers to play with objects from the natural world. Children should have regular contact with items such as earth, clay, and, if you have stones, etc. This not only helps develop both gross and fine motor skills, but it helps a child develop a reverence for the natural world.

*“A child will have taught himself to paint, paste, cut paper, knit, weave, hammer and saw, make lovely things in clay and sand, build castles, dig holes, dig worms; possibly, too, will have taught himself to read, write, and do sums, besides acquiring a vast amount of knowledge and notions about the world he lives in, before time he is six or seven. What I contend for is that he shall do these things because he chooses to do them.”* *Education*, p. 19

Recommendations are:

- a. Water Play – play in and around natural water. A shallow stream is ideal, with adult supervision, of course, but a small tub of water with bubbles and toys can suffice; learning which items sink or float, which items dissolve or stay stable; how water reacts to

# STEP #1: KINDERGARTEN

## *Overview of Form Subjects*

*“Whatever be the advantages of Kindergarten or other schools for little children, the home schoolroom ought to be the best growing-ground for them.” Home Education pg 170*

Charlotte says parents must allow for self-education. After all, the only true education is self-education.

Most subjects listed here were also included in the Form 1 Programmes (ages 6-9). I have included references to further reading in Charlotte’s Volumes. Please note that most references include instructions for Form 1 Students (age 6) that you can adapt for use with Kindergarten Students. Please see the [Kindergarten page](#) for recommended books and resources.

### THE PARENT’S ROLE: PRINCIPLES TO LIVE BY

*Children are born persons.* All the ideas for early education listed here are based on Charlotte Mason’s 20 Principles. Her educational philosophy stresses that a child is born with a distinct personality which must be respected, but her philosophy also affirms that your authority as a parent is natural, necessary, and fundamental.

Unlike other Programmes, all Preparatory Level Programmes (ages 3-5) began with instructions for parents, which included a list of recommended parenting and education books.

Now is the time to familiarize yourself with Charlotte’s 20 Principles of Education and to read her *Home Education* series. Books recommended for parents of young children included:

- [Home Education](#) (Volume 1) by Charlotte Mason
- Chapters 1-3 in Part 5 “Lessons as Instruments of Education” in *Home Education* (Volume 1)
  - Chapter 1: The Matter and Method of Lessons
  - Chapter 2: The Kindergarten as a Place of Education
  - Chapter 3: Further Considerations of the Kindergarten
- *Parents and Children* (Volume 2) by Charlotte Mason
- Articles on Masterly Inactivity – “*most important for children all ages*”
  - *Parents’ Review* article “Masterly Inactivity” by Charlotte Mason – public domain PDF [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)
  - *School Education* (Volume 3) by Charlotte Mason, Chapter 3: “Masterly Inactivity”
  - *Parents’ Review* article “Concerning Children as Persons” – public domain PDF [here](#)

Join our free 20 Principles Study: [Finding Your Way with Charlotte Mason’s 20 Principles](#) on The Plenary website or see the various [CM Courses](#) we offer. A list of Charlotte’s 20 Principles are also included in the Appendix of this Guide.

# STEP #2

## THE CHARLOTTE MASON YOUR WAY QUIZ

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# STEP #3

## CREATING YOUR CUSTOM SCHEDULE

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## STEP #3

# *Your Custom Schedule*

This is where we set you up for success in your Charlotte Mason homeschool!

Please refer to the **PRESCHOOL & KINDERGARTEN FREQUENCY AND LENGTH OF LESSON CHARTS** to complete this step. This is where you will take your highest scoring subjects from the Quiz and build your custom schedule. Your quiz results will be your guide. Your schedule is going to be unique to your family and your circumstances. Embrace this process because it will establish a pattern of success for you. And we will build on that success throughout your school year.

Let me stress that for children ages 3-5, your schedule will look very relaxed. All of the “subjects” are really educational play. Learning “by-the-way,” or incidentally through play is what we want at this stage. The Programmes do not suggest a schedule for the Preschool child, but do include a gentle schedule for Kindergarten. I have included info for both so that you can create a gentle schedule that still honors the child’s personhood.

You will notice that the subjects listed on the **PRESCHOOL & KINDERGARTEN FREQUENCY AND LENGTH OF LESSON CHARTS** are divided into three categories: Essential Subjects, Joy Subjects, and Other Subjects. Let’s look at each one of these categories:

### ESSENTIAL SUBJECTS

Essential Subjects are those subjects that must be scheduled regardless of your total score from the Quiz. Yes, I know, you were hoping to get out of those low scoring subjects! But these subjects are essential to a child’s well-being and growth. Math and reading are essential, but so is play!

The other essential subjects such as History, Tales, and Nature Lore are essential to the Charlotte Mason method. History becomes the core of the curriculum starting in Form I. Tales are meant to be inspiring for children. And Nature Lore opens up a child’s eyes to the wonder for the natural world.

### JOY SUBJECTS

Joy Subjects are those activities which bring peace and relaxation. These activities have been shown to physically increase the level of oxytocin and decrease the level of cortisol in the body.

Cortisol is the stress hormone. Cortisol raises blood pressure, increases anxiety, and produces the “flight or fight” syndrome. Oxytocin, on the other hand, is known as the “love hormone” or the bonding hormone. Oxytocin lowers cortisol levels and helps us to be at ease with our emotions. Joy Subjects in our homeschooling

These are the subjects which will save your homeschool day! They infuse peace and relaxation into us and into our students. And yet these joy subjects are usually the first to get cut from our schedules! We consider them as “extras” and “not necessary.” I’m here to convince you otherwise! They are part of the joy and beauty of this method. Let them work for you!

Choose the highest ranking Joy Subject from the list to include in your schedule. Ideally, though,

# SAMPLE

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## FREQUENCY & LENGTH OF LESSONS

ESSENTIAL SUBJECTS	MAX LENGTH	REPEAT	AM PM	L/R BRAIN	OTHER SUBJECTS	MAX LENGTH	REPEAT	AM PM	L/R BRAIN
HANDWRITING	15 min.	3x week	PM	R	BIBLE / RELIGIOUS STUDY	15 min.	4x week	AM	L
TALES / LITERATURE	15 min.	2x week	AM	L	GEOGRAPHY TALES	15 min.	1x week	AM	L
SCIENCE - NATURE LORE	15 min.	1x week	PM	L	OUTDOOR GEOGRAPHY	15 min.	1x week	AM	L
MATH	15 min.	3x week	AM	L	STORY OF THE COUNTRY	15 min.	1x week	AM	L
PLAY DOUGH	60 min.	5x week	AM	L	MUSIC INSTRUMENT	15 min.	3x week	PM	R
READING INSTRUCTION	15 min.	1x week	AM	R	PICTURE STUDY	15 min.	1x every other week	PM	L
JOY SUBJECTS	MAX LENGTH	REPEAT	AM PM	L/R BRAIN	WORK / HANDICRAFTS	30 min.	4x week	AM	R
POETRY & NURSERY RHYMES	10 min.	5x week	PM	L					
PICTURE STUDY / WALKING	10 min.	1x week	PM	R					
SINGING	15 min.	2x week	AM	L					
DRILL / EXERCISE	15 min.	3x week	AM	L					
DRAWING / PAINTING	15 min.	3x week	PM	R					
GAMES	15 min.	1x week	PM	R					

SAMPLE

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# BONUS STEP #4

## CHOOSING YOUR BOOKS & RESOURCES

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## BONUS STEP #4

### *Choosing Books & Resources*

#### CM SUBJECTS

On The Plenary website, you will see a menu item called “[CM SUBJECTS](#).” This will take you to the LIVING BOOKS AND RESOURCES PAGE where you will be able to browse the recommended books and resources whether by Form or by Subject.

You will be able to click on the appropriate Form for your student and then browse within each Subject for that Form.

Or you can start with a Subject and browse the different Forms within that Subject. This is especially helpful if you need to increase or decrease the difficulty level within a particular subject. For example, your Form 2 student may be ready for Form 3 science or, conversely, may not be ready for Form 2 History just yet. This allows you to further customize your child’s curriculum.

#### MAKE IT CM YOUR WAY

Always make it CM Your Way! Charlotte’s philosophy is a METHOD, not a system, and is highly adaptable. This is one reason why it honors the personhood of every child. You can customize the curriculum without sacrificing the Principles behind it.

I hope this Form Guide has been helpful to you in creating a homeschool that fits your family. Please remember that *Charlotte Mason Your Way* is ultimately about YOU – because your way is always the best way for YOUR family!

With much love,

*Rachel Lebowitz*

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