

HOMESCHOOLING WITH UNIT STUDIES

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Shining Dawn Books
Our Journey Westward



What is a Unit study?

- Any subject you spend time learning about.
- Often integrates many academic subjects.



For instance, if the unit focuses on the Civil War, you might plan reading, writing, science, art, music, spelling, Bible, home economics, and other academic assignments, as well as the obvious history lessons.

A unit study doesn't have to integrate other academic subjects, though. For example, if you plan a math unit around m&m's, you may choose to only do math activities and not add any writing, history, etc. to the unit.

Why do unit studies?

- Multi-age learning
- More learning in less time
- Meet learning styles (hands-on, literature-based, active)
- Encourage differentiation (gifted, learning disabilities)
- Promote self-inspired learning
- Promote research skills
- Can cover any subject
- Fun
- Nice change of pace



Why NOT do unit studies?

- They can take a bit more planning.
- They often require some preparation.
- They will shake up your lesson-per-hour schedule.
- The unit-that-never-ends syndrome can occur.
- They rarely depend on textbooks.



The Good News

There are plenty of prepared studies for you to use.

Lapbooks

- [A Journey Through Learning](#)
- [Hands of a Child](#)
- [Knowledgebox Central](#)

Literature-Based

- [Five in a Row](#)
- [Cadron Creek](#)

Character-Based

- [KONOS](#)
- [Heart of Wisdom](#)

Various

- [Homeschool in the Woods](#)
- [Learning Adventures](#)
- [Brandenburg Studies](#)



Unit Study Freebies

- [Homeschool Share](#)
- [Oklahoma Homeschool](#)



Do a "free unit studies" search on the web for any subject.

Beware: Not all unit studies – free or otherwise – are academically excellent. I'm seeing this quite often in the freebie world.

What Makes a Unit Study Academically Excellent?

YES

- Challenging material
- Allows for learning style and age diversity
- Covers multiple subjects in depth
- Meaningful activity ideas

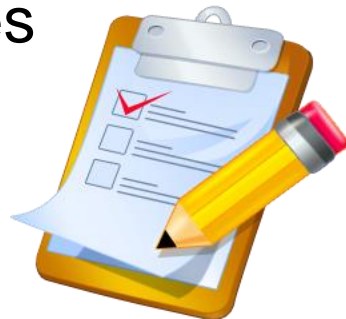
NO

- Little depth
- Claim to be “all you need”, but leave out progressive phonics or math
- Too much activity – crafts, trips, hands-on, etc.

Why do I like science and history-based unit studies the most?

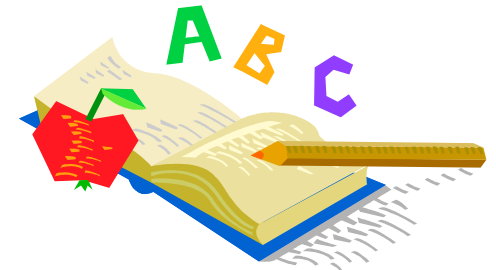
How do I know I'm covering everything?

- Follow a four or six year cycle (Classical model)
- Print off scope and sequence lists
- Use [The Checklist](#) by Cindy Downes



What if I feel really comfortable with our textbooks?

- Use them, but take unit study breaks.
- Turn several chapters into unit studies.
- Consider how your children learn best.



Documentation and Grades

If we're not filling out worksheets and taking tests, how do we document the work?

- Lapbooks
- Notebooks
- Photographs
- Blogging
- Keep a log of activities
- Keep lesson plans

And, if we're not filling out worksheets and taking tests, how do we assign grades?

	3	2	1	
Effort				/3
Technique				/3
Presentation				/3
				/9

A=9, B=8, C=7, Redo Project 6 or below

Planning a Unit Study

- Decide on a topic.

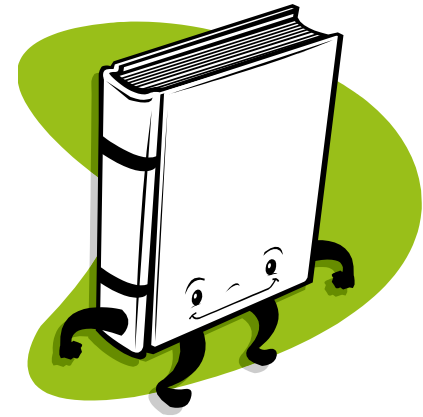
Science, History/Social Studies/Geography, Literature and Bible topics lend themselves well to a comprehensive unit.



Planning a Unit Study

- Write down your major goals for the unit.

You can figure out what you might need to teach by finding a "spine" book (one that you will use as the main teaching book) and using its contents as your goals. Or you can do an internet search. For example: "ocean scope and sequence" will bring up topics about the ocean that your children need to know.



Planning a Unit Study

- Gather your resources
 1. things you already have on your shelves (teaching guides and reading books)
 2. check the internet for already made units to give you ideas
 3. visit the library for teaching and reading books
 4. buy a pre-made unit if you feel like you still don't have enough to make a complete unit



Planning a Unit Study

- Chart out your plan.

I make a little chart with each subject area (science, history/social studies, geography, Bible, writing, vocabulary, other language arts, math, art, music, P.E./health, field trips, cooking) and just start jotting down my ideas.

Most of the time I have way too much, so I start pairing down to the best, most meaningful ideas.

Then I decide about how long the unit will be and write out a rough plan of what I'm going to do each day.

This always changes when we actually get into the unit.

Planning a Unit Study

- Go for it!

Jump into the lessons and be prepared to have lots of fun!!

Beware - if you try to plan too much - your kids WILL get bored and learning WILL stop.

Think about their learning styles and plan accordingly.

ALWAYS end the unit with a bang - a field trip, a family party that goes along with the theme, or a showcase of their work to grandparents. It makes the unit really stick out in their minds.

Planning a Unit Study

- Keep the work well-organized.

Put it all into a notebook, lapbook or colorful folder. They will appreciate looking back through their work.

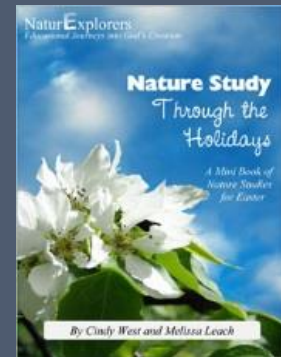
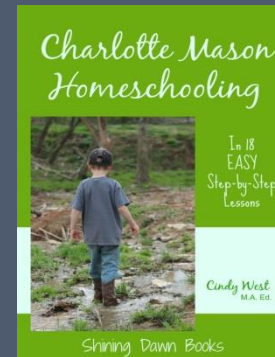
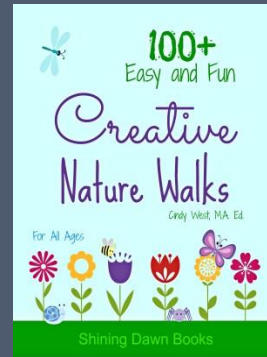
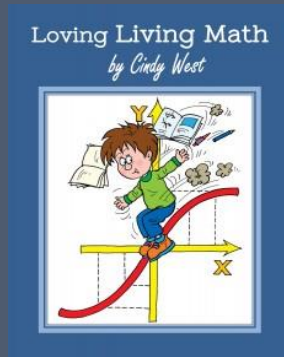
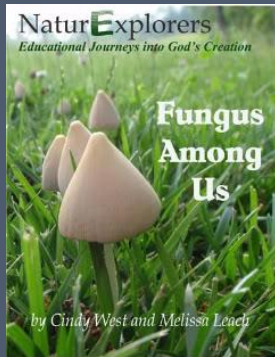
When the work is presented in a meaningful way, they respect it much more!



Quick Tips

- I usually don't include math and grammar into my units.
- I also keep up with our regular Bible time.
- I try to keep the books we check out from the library to a minimum.
- A unit doesn't have to cover every subject every time.

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