

Introduction to Charlotte Mason Notes

The Early Years

This is an area of confusion for many, because CM didn't want formal lessons or narration from children under aged 6, and many waited until age 7, but that didn't mean that CM thought they were vegetables waiting to be ripe for us to educate. She felt that the education of the early years should have a different form. We should have outdoors as much as possible, weather permitting. We should be careful to only have them do things of which they are fully capable of doing well. We should insure that what they did, they did well. We should habit train diligently. We should tell them stories-not read them lots of books-although reading is allowed, teach them about God, introduce them to foreign languages, music, art and handicrafts. We should have a rhythm to our day, but not a hard fast schedule. We should follow their lead with what we study. We have taught them to walk, to talk, and to comport in civilized society without a curriculum, so we can teach them their interests in these other areas as well. Although I have linked to curriculum if that is helpful for you. If the student is interested in an area where we aren't knowledgeable, we can read books to them if they are interested in that, or read books for ourselves and show or tell them about their interest. Doing and seeing are always better than reading in the early years. While prodigies are out there-I had a reader very early-we should insure that the child is exposed to things that aren't easy for them or natural to them. Not allowing them to spend all their time on their strengths. If you have an older student, then allowing the younger to tag a long is perfectly fine, just spend a bit of time specifically with that younger student addressing their interests as well. Allow your children to be bored. You will not allow creativity to develop if it doesn't have the time and inclination. Listen to your child and build a relationship, but don't use that relationship to control, but rather to be a model. Be aware that you don't want to make the child's work equated to his worth, but rather the child is praised for creating, persevering, being diligent in his work. As a general rule do not compare your student to others. Your student is growing and developing in the way God made him, but if you feel there is a problem, Moms are usually right about these things. Early Intervention is encouraged if you feel there is a problem. Try to avoid screens in the early years.

Resources

[Simply Charlotte Mason Early Years](#)

[Our Preschool Life](#)

[Around the Thicket Blog](#)

[Link to article about Kindergarten](#), not CM, but supportive

Charlotte Mason's Students Motto, "I Am, I Can, I Ought, I Will."

I am . . . a child of God, a gift to my parents and my country. I'm a person of great value because God made me.

I can . . . do all things through Christ who strengthens me. God has made me able to do everything required of me.

I ought . . . to do my duty to obey God, to submit to my parents and everyone in authority over me, to be of service to others, and to keep myself healthy with proper food and rest so my body is ready to serve.

I will . . . resolve to keep a watch over my thoughts and choose what's right even if it's not what I want.

~I don't remember where I found this, but it is not original

Beginning Charlotte Mason

In the beginning, YOU are the key, because you will model the CM lifestyle as you begin to transition. Play beautiful music as you go about your day, but plan to spend a short time actively listening. Types of music that we usually recommend are composers, hymns, folk songs, and songs in your foreign language. Look at beautiful art. Prints are fine, or a large art book. Just a few minutes once a week or so, and then keep it on display a couple of weeks. Choose a poet or anthology and read at least one poem each day. No analysis, just enjoy. Choose a meaty book-perhaps CM's volumes, and a light book-something entertaining, and a medium book-perhaps classical literature. Read something every day-you don't have to read them all. Make entries into your commonplace book from your readings, and narrate the readings either orally to the kids or hubby, or in a written form for yourself. Do not speed through the entire book, but read short sessions with complete attention. (I started with about 10 mins) Spend time outdoors-weather permitting. Yes, try for every day-you can do a lot in just 10 mins, but try for more. Choose a place to study over the year like a view or choose a thing like a flower or tree or stream. Also choose a topic to study in depth, like weather, bugs, or birds. Get a book or two in your area of interest. Journal about your experience. Writing is the most important part of the journal, although we see well meaning folks focus on the art often. The art should be included when needed, as secondary. If the art is intimidating, begin studying how to paint and draw. 20 mins to study and 10 mins to practice, not every day, but more often means more improvement. Begin to learn a handicraft, or practice one you already know. Limit screens. Work diligently on homekeeping, because your students will need to help with that later. Work diligently on building good habits for you and your family. Lessons you should remember: don't try to do the most difficult of things, start where you can enjoy and be interested in what you are doing. Your tastes and abilities will change as you all learn. Commit to learning with your student, and not being the all knowing imparter of knowledge. Catch them narrating and name it.

Now is the time to begin to bring your kids into CM. Begin with a family read aloud that they will enjoy, read for 10-30 minutes depending on the age of the students, then model narration. First you can allow them to begin to narrate with the previous reading before you begin today's reading. If that goes well, you can allow them to narrate the reading in various ways-you assign. Welcome them into activities that you're doing, if they show interest. Begin to narrate what school will look like to the students,

as you gather appropriate books and supplies. Display your schedule. If you haven't started school until now, begin with Morning Meeting. If you have already started school, don't try to change everything at once, but put a time to everyday academics as it exists today. Do it on a looping schedule if needed, but keep the time within CM's parameters for the age of the student. I add a morning meeting first, because that is important to me. I spend that time with God, but other folks have other ideas. It is a time for everyone to study together with you. At my house we did Bible, hymns, recitation, another character building book, perhaps another book on God. We don't do every book every day, but we do one or two books every day.

I add nature study second, because it sets a precedent of getting outdoors, observing and doing. Observing and doing are huge with CM. (It is much more than books) At my house, this has Mom led and child led areas. We go out and observe what or where Mom says. Part of the time we just enjoy the outdoors as the child likes. Some days there will be outdoor work that needs doing, and that may cut into the "enjoy as the child likes" time, because we do expect them to do work. We also expect activity at this time. Playground games, Physical Education, Swedish Drill, Folk Dance, Geography walks, and most weeks a long nature walk of 30 minutes to two hours.

Then I add in the riches or the feast or the beauty loop, this is the stuff that we tend to forget, but that is probably the most important. Picture study once a week, poetry daily, Shakespeare if they are old enough, handicraft, composer study, Folk song, Sol-fa or singing, music study. You don't do all this in a day, poetry is daily, but everything else isn't. You can do this as part of your morning time, or you can do this at another time to break up your day. AMCM does this as a snack time, and calls it Tea Time, although sometimes we do a fancy tea, most are typical snacks cocoa, cheese, nuts, and fruit. Other curriculum do this a bit differently.

If you are just starting school, add the academics now. If you are transitioning from another philosophy, look at that Charlotte Mason schedule, and choose the first two subjects of the day and drop your existing work in those subjects as you begin to do them CM. The following week do the same with the next two, and continue until your day becomes completely CM schedule.

Special Considerations

Elementary

Elementary students beginning school with CM do not usually need special considerations. Students that have had traditional school, should deschool before beginning CM and do well with a gradual introduction to the CM schedule. The biggest complaint we usually see is that they don't think CM is real school.

Middle School

Students that have had traditional school, should deschool before beginning CM and do well with a gradual introduction to the CM schedule. The special consideration most usually is here, as you will need to begin as if they are elementary as far as things that are specifically CM. Language Arts, foreign language, Shakespeare, studied dictation. The students usually catch on quickly and begin to do what is appropriate to their age. Sometimes one area is difficult and takes a bit of time to develop. Thinking usually isn't well developed at this age nor attention. Worksheets and public school instruction looks huge, but CM requires the student to do most of the work with mental effort, which is minimal with spoon feeding and fact memorization.

High School

Students that have had traditional school, should deschool before beginning CM and do well with a gradual introduction to the CM schedule. These students will need to do some compromising. You don't have a long lead in to make sure they catch the CM bus, so we modify. CM from the beginning students will have 2 to 4 foreign languages they are studying. You can choose one or add one, but you aren't going to be as far along as a student with 10 years of foreign language study. Narration may be difficult, as they haven't learned to focus on a single reading. Read alouds, and independent reads are both utilized since both forms of learning are important. Thinking might be difficult, as there isn't much explanation or breaking down into smaller bits. The new breadth of subjects, and tight time management must be accomplished. More than at other levels, this is the level where a consultation is most helpful, to insure that you cover what you like, what you need, prepare for graduation, and have a beautiful homeschool.

Off to College

Depending on the college you choose, college can be an easy or difficult transition. If you are going to a state university, then you might want to learn some of the institutional behaviors you might need. You will have learned test taking from college boards, but learning from lectures, readings, notes and teaching assistants are skills you can practice. Learning to learn in CM transfers easily, so that you can teach yourself what they don't teach you, but learning to understand a prof's tests might take a bit more practice. The good news is that most tests in large universities are multiple choice.

Small colleges often teach and test in a way that is very CM, often skipping texts for living books. Grading on class participation, assimilation of information, and speaking (oral narration, thinking, creativity)

Either way, I find that most students that excel with CM also excel with college.

A Day in the Life

CM days can look very different depending on how completely you follow the philosophy. SO if you are all Charlotte Mason (purists or whole hog) or if you are eclectic (combining multiple methods) or if you are Charlotte Mason Inspired (doing CM as it works best for your family) your day is different. If you have children ages 5 and 7, or if you have grades 5 and 7, or if you have a high school student, your days are different. So I am going to share my day with a 14 and 15 year old girls, I am pretty close to whole hog, but not quite. Then I'll link you with some other resources for day in the life, if I can find them. I use a schedule, a timer, but I am not afraid to go off course, nor am I usually on an exact schedule. The timers prevent individual lessons from dragging, and each student is equipped with a timer. But requiring a bit longer for prayers, or biology experiments, or if we get wrapped up in handicraft or art, we aren't going to sweat those things.

Winter mornings-kids are up at 5:30, and I drive them to the barn to care for their horses. By 6:30 we are headed home, they shower each going first on alternating days. They do morning chores at this time-make beds, wipe bathroom, do a load of laundry, neaten bedrooms. Then at 8:00, I serve breakfast. Then together we begin Morning Meeting. We do a gratitude and prayer journal, pray, read the Bible (taking turns) and narrate. Depending on the day of the week we study bible passage, or hymn, or poem, or history speech for recitation. Then depending on the day we read another character book or Bible history or commentary or missionary biography followed by a narration. I usually do a sketched narration for Bible, and oral for the second reading, unless it is a commentary, where I do a notes narration. (Individual readings may determine exactly what type of narration) Then they scatter for independent work at 9:00-9:30 or so.

Independent work in AMCM is Food for the Mind. Each student has at least one book that I do with them-we call them growth books. Most books though are done independently. Readings are divided with other types of work like math, foreign language, art, map drawing, studied dictation, grammar. I move between the students helping with math, or studied dictation as needed. I schedule so that we end up at the kitchen table again. We usually complete this portion of our day with a reading done together. Then we would have lunch together. On some days we might need to complete our academics together after lunch. This is usually another single subject. (20 mins)

Nature study. This is winter in the south, so it is warmest at this time of day. We all go out, although the day of the week tells if we are doing biology experiments or looking for birds or taking a hike to see if we can find true north. Some sort of physical activity takes place now, IF the footing isn't suitable for equestrian pursuits later. They usually continue in this vein until they are ready for a snack. That means it is Tea Time! Time is usually from around 1 til 2 or 2:30 unless there will be no riding in which case, add at least another hour.

Tea Time is usually cocoa or hot tea this time of year. We may have fruit, or one of the girls might have baked cookies or brownies, or we can do cheese trays, or veggie trays. Or finger sandwiches. The importance for us is that this is a small pick me up where we appreciate the beauty that God inspires. I have one student prepare Tea Time, the other student does a quick pick up of the house. I bounce between the two to help. Then we sit down and relax and read a poem or two, or part of an epic poem. Then it might be a biography of an artist after picture study, or a biography of a composer after composer study, or Shakespeare and singing, or handicraft and folksongs. Usually takes about an hour. I clean up while the children dress for riding at the barn.

Then the students are off to the barn to ride and to play. I go home clean a bit of house, and prep dinner, driving to pick them up when they are done. (usually from 3-3:30 until good and dark 5 or 6)

While they shower, I finish dinner. We might do something together like a game or a puzzle or baking, or they might do something individual like drawing, handicrafts or reading. They might hang with friends or do an online internship. They don't have a bedtime, but are required to be in their rooms at 9. They can read or handicraft, or draw, or sleep. Once a week I try to spend individual time with each child as kind of a situational check to see how things are going with school.

A Day in the Life Links

[Afterthoughts](#)

[Wildflower Ramblings](#)

[Rooted Childhood](#)

[Sea Homeschoolers](#)

[Hide the Chocolate](#)

[Our Journey Westward](#)

[Charlotte Mason Soiree](#)

Books for Quick and Dirty Charlotte Mason

I recommend these books by Levison for “how to”

[A Charlotte Mason Education](#)

[More Charlotte Mason Education](#)

For philosophy

[Start Here](#)

Books to read as you grow

Charlotte Mason’s own words

[Living Book Press editions](#)

[Simply Charlotte Mason's edition](#)

Other fantastic resources

[For the Children's Sake](#)

[Know and Tell](#)

[The Living Page](#)

[Newbie Tuesday Volumes](#)

[Pocketful of Pinecones](#)

Charlotte Mason Lifestyle

Things don’t have to be different than the way you live now, but we don’t know how you live now...Everyone will assimilate and utilize CM in their own ways in their own family cultures. Typically these are things you see in CM families, limited or no screens, lots of time outdoors, appreciation for beauty and truth, time together, deep discussions of current events, literature, spiritual ideas. Living an intentional life with continual learning of living ideas by all family members. Appreciation for everyone’s strength. Also your house might change: dead things-bugs and such, skulls and feathers and shells, books-lots of them, music and art are present. Things you do for fun: trips to the botanical gardens and the museum and the orchestra and local Shakespeare productions are common. Quotes become common in your family discussions or arguments. And there seems to be lots more dirt-LOL! These are things that tend to happen, not things that have to happen, or should happen. So instead of worrying if your husband will begin to read for pleasure or will go to the museum, just wait and see. You can still utilize CM if he does or if he doesn’t.

Short Disclaimer

Some of the terms used here are specific to AMCM. Morning Meeting, Food for the Mind, Shared Wonder, and Tea Time are not Charlotte Mason terms, but rather A Modern Charlotte Mason terms

Charlotte Mason Math Resources

[How to do Math the Charlotte Mason way-without buying a special text](#)

[Charlotte Mason Math Texts](#)-these are the only ones that follow CM as written

[Math Notebooks](#)