

GETTING STARTED WITH CM

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Note: This article has many links back to our site (www.livingbookscurriculum.com). If you would like the article with links for study, email me at lbcinfo@livingbookscurriculum.com and I will send it to you.

How do I get started with CM? This is a question we frequently get. Second only to, How do I do multiple grades with CM? (For the answer see online: www.livingbookscurriculum.com > teaching methods)

The need for a method

Charlotte Mason, in *Home Education (HE)*, taught that a parent who does not follow a fully thought out method of education will fail to fulfill the claims his children have upon him. What are those claims? To grow into maturity in *full* possession of his or her innate abilities and able to use those abilities in the service of God, family and community.

Does that seem like a tall order to you? It is, but, with the grace of God, we as parents can accomplish it by consistently looking to the road map laid down for us by Miss Mason.

The method

"Method implies two things, a way to an end, and a step-by-step progress in that way. Further, the following of a method implies an idea, a mental image of the end of object to be arrived at." (*HE*, p. 8.)

A method is based on principles; principles are true statements of *how things are*, and principles applied consistently become a method, a means to an end. Charlotte Mason's [twenty basic principles](#) are the center of the method. Print them out, put them on your refrigerator; better yet, tuck them in your Bible and pray over them asking God to give you full understanding and application.

Charlotte Mason's method is comprehensive, uniquely suited to how children learn, and can be used by anyone no matter their background. Familiarize yourself with the basic ideas of a [Charlotte Mason education](#). LBC expresses Charlotte Mason's philosophy with our [Seven Keys](#) and [Six Tools](#) of learning. We also offer [articles](#) and helpful links to [books](#) on Charlotte Mason education.

An important exercise

Charlotte Mason said that a method implies a mental image of the object. In other words, what you picture and think on tends to come to pass. **Do this: picture in vivid detail what your child is like grown.** What are the qualities, the character traits, the activities you would like to see your child doing? Write all this down in full. Yes, it will take effort, but

you will only need to do this once. When I did it, it produced a radical readjustment of my thinking. Good thing, as I was locked into traditional educational methods and could only imagine my daughter "doing well" in college. When I got the full Technicolor picture of character, life skills, enjoyments, spiritual growth, *and* "doing well" in college; then, Charlotte Mason and her method began to make sense as the only way to achieve such a wonderful goal.

Once you have done this you will be the parent that Charlotte Mason describes: "The parent who *sees his way* (and will) make use of every circumstance of the child's life almost without intention on his own part, so easy and spontaneous is a method of education based upon Natural Law." (*HE*, p. 8, cont.)

Applying the method- "The parent who *sees her way*"

While there are (almost) endless riches to explore in using Charlotte Mason's methods, the basic tools of a CM education are expressed below. They are:

- [Living Books](#) (see August 3rd *Parent's Journal*)
- [Narration](#) ("a way of knowing")
- [Storytelling](#) (oral expression)
- [Nature Study](#) (outdoor activity, study of nature, keeping a nature journal)
- [Short Lessons](#) (20 minutes for younger elementary and 30+ for upper elementary-really!)
- [Local resources](#) ("making use of every circumstance of the child's life")

These tools are predicated on an understanding of the principles that a "child is born a person" and in order respect this God-given mandate to care for the person of the child, "we are limited to three educational instruments: the atmosphere of environment, the discipline of habit, and the presentation of living ideas." (From Charlotte Mason's [twenty basic principles](#).)

Want to go deeper? Find a CM support group in your area. Visit [Ambleside Online](#). Read the books on CM in our [recommended reading list](#). Read the [articles](#) on our website. Purchase some of our *living books* and see for yourself what fun homeschooling can be.

In closing, I encourage you, especially if you have been sitting on the fence doing CM "more or less", that you embrace these ideas with your whole heart. You will NEVER regret it and they will fulfill your desires for your children beyond your dreams.