

Christian Families Home Schooling a Child with Down Syndrome:

Resource Overview:

A Place to Start

This pamphlet gives an overview of the individual pamphlets that are included in this set. The resources that are listed in the individual pamphlets have been used by others that are teaching children with Down Syndrome but this list is not exhaustive. There may be other resources that others have used successfully.



A Letter of Introduction

As you teach your child with Down Syndrome, you will notice that as an infant he may not seem as far behind the development of other infants. As he reaches 2-5 years old, you will notice a widening gap. This is when some parents may get discouraged. Other children are talking up a storm, but the child with Down Syndrome speaks only perhaps in a few words or in short sentences. Other children are learning to read within one or two years, but the child with Down Syndrome may take much longer. Should we feel discouraged? No, I think not. Why? God's way is perfect (James 1:17). God has a timetable for your child as he does each of us. God has a purpose for your child on this earth to serve the God that made him. If you wake up each day and look at your special little one and see him through God's eyes, then you will not be discouraged. This set of pamphlets was designed to help parents just starting to home school a child with Down Syndrome at several levels know what others have used successfully. You may not always agree with what others have used, and you will need to decide for yourself what is best for you and your child. I hope that these pamphlets will be a blessing to you as you teach the special little ones that God has entrusted into your care.

*In His Service,
Diane Brown*



Early Intervention

(Chronological age of about birth-3)

Many Christian families choose to participate in Early Intervention programs. Many have positive experiences. However, if you are not sure if you should participate in the state program for your area, check with **Home School Legal Defense** for guidance. They can tell you the laws for your state, and they can let you know if other families in your state have had difficulties with services. Also check with others home schooling a child with special needs to see if they have had a good experience. Sometimes you need to just try it for a short period of time to see if the teacher that is sent to work with your child is home school friendly and helpful to you and your child. Whether you choose to participate in an early intervention program or not, the resources in the *Early Intervention* pamphlet can be helpful.

If you are involved with early intervention and you are about to end it, try to ask if your early interventionist to give you some extra information to keep you going. They may be able to give you skills checklists, books, and other materials to keep you going on your own.

Early Preschool

(Chronological age of about 3-4)

What happens after Early Intervention? Some families choose to put their child in the public school preschool programs because they know the teacher or they know the teacher is a Christian. Other families choose to teach their child at home. If you have been able to ask your early interventionist for extra materials to keep you going you may be set for another year. But

what if you are empty handed? The resources listed in the *Early Preschool* pamphlet may be helpful. The resources in the *Early Intervention* pamphlet also apply to this age level. You will not find a curriculum as such at this level. Most of the learning at this level involves everyday living and learning through play. Having a skill checklist will help you know where your child is developmentally and what comes next.

Later Preschool

(Chronological age of about 4-5)

Many children with Down Syndrome may be ready to be introduced to the alphabet and numbers. However, their attitude toward learning is more important than the goal of learning all of the alphabet letters. Some children at this stage are ready for workbook type activities to be like big brother or sister but many have delayed fine motor skills and workbooks are out of the question. Even if your child can do workbooks, all children at this stage learn best by doing and you will want to incorporate lots of hands on experiences. The preschool level experiences are important and your child will probably need more time than normally developing children to learn these important foundational skills. Do not be anxious, but learn to relax and enjoy your child. Rejoice over each new skill that he is able to learn. If you want some ideas for this level see the *Preschool* pamphlet for a list of possible resources. The *Early Intervention* pamphlet also has resources that are appropriate for this age group. If your child is ready for handwriting, look in the *Handwriting* Pamphlet for ideas and resources. When you write, you will want to use the same style of handwriting that your child is going to learn. Handwriting is difficult for children who have poor fine motor abilities. You will want to keep practice times short, fun, and

successful. Remember that writing is a developmental skill and you may cause more harm than good if you force handwriting when your child is not physically ready.

Kindergarten

(Chronological age of about 5-8)

Many children with Down Syndrome need two to three years (or more) of kindergarten level materials to learn what normally developing children do in one year. Knowing this will help you not be discouraged when your child has not gone as far as you expected. Remember that each child is unique and has his own rate of learning. He will seem to climb in his skills, and then he may plateau for a while. His brain has been stuffed with enough information and he needs time to sort it all out before you add any more. If you have not previously begun handwriting, you will want to look for a program. Many parents want their children to learn the same program that the other family members in the household use. These next few years will be exciting. Teaching your child can be both a challenge and a delight as you see your child's excitement over learning to read his first words. The list of resources may be of help to you as you seek to teach him.

First Grade

(Chronological age of about 7-12+)

As with kindergarten, many children with Down Syndrome need two to four years (or more) of grade one level materials to learn what normally developing children do in one year. While kindergarten focuses mainly on teaching numbers 1-50, the alphabet, and short vowel

words, first grade has many different skills to acquire and a vast amount of material to learn. While normally developing children have a vast language bank to help them, a child with Down Syndrome may be only about age 3-4 with his speech abilities, yet he can still learn to read. You will need to decide what is important at this level—academics and life skills. You will probably want him to learn to read as much as he is able. You will also want him to learn to add simple numbers and add money. He will need to learn to tell time and understand the calendar. These are all skills that he will need for life. You will want lots of games on this level to help give the repeated practice of skills. You do not need to spend a lot of money on games. If you have a computer, you can make games and stories that center on what interests your child.

A note should be made here about keeping good records. Write down what you do each day with your child in both academics and life skills. Find out what requirements your state has for special needs children by contacting *Home School Legal Defense*.

For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

Proverbs 2:6

While the Bible is the best resource for training our children, there are some other resources that are written by Christian men and hold to biblical principles in child training. See the *Biblical Training* resource pamphlet for a list.



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