

HABITS

FOR THE EARLY YEARS

A Mother's Journal

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Introduction

What a blessing it is to learn about and use habit training when our children are young! As parents, helping our children form positive habits is one of our most important jobs. Habits, whether they're positive or negative, will stay with our children through life.

Charlotte Mason said that teaching positive habits is one of the few effective tools that we can use in the education of our children. Loving parents are prone to think that children will grow out of bad habits because they're just going through a phase, Charlotte Mason said that this is a dangerous trap to fall into. We need to train children in positive habits from a very early age.

“What you would have the man become, that you must train the child to be.” *Parents and Children*, page 15

This book gives you advice to train your child in habits that are important to develop in the early years (ages 0-6). Look for the robin's egg blue boxes for direct quotes from Charlotte Mason.

Why Habit Training?

1. It's Biblical

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”
Proverbs 22:6

Training a child in habits when he's young can help guard him from sin. If he is used to automatically choosing the right, he'll avoid sin without much effort.

" The training of the will, the instruction of the conscience, and, so far as it lies with us, the development of the divine life in the child, are carried on simultaneously with this training in the habits of a good life..." *Parents and Children*, page 90

Before beginning the challenging and worthy work of habit training, be sure that you are positively modeling the habits you want your child to work on.

How to Use This Journal

“Every mother, especially, should keep a diary in which to note the successive phases of her child’s physical, mental, and moral growth, with particular attention to the moral; so that parents may be enabled to make a timely forecast of their children’s character, to foster in them every germ of good, and by prompt precautions to suppress, or at least restrain, what is bad.” *Parents and Children*, page 105

If you'd like, print out the journal pages, either habit by habit or all at once, and organize them into a binder. If printing isn't practical, record your observations in a blank journal or notebook.

Organization

The habits in this book are organized by type, but as you put your binder together, you might want to organize them by the order in which you'll approach them. Charlotte Mason referred to both the habits of obedience and attention as having the utmost importance, so begin with these two. Establishing the habit of obedience first will make the rest of habit training run easily!

Timing

“The mother devotes herself to the formation of one habit at a time, doing no more than keep watch over those already formed.” *Home Education*, page 136

Ms. Mason suggested working on just one habit at a time. It could take 30 days to form a new habit, (or longer, if your routine or watchfulness is interrupted). Be patient with yourself, and your child!

It may seem tempting to set-up a habit training schedule, but that could cause some problems. New, undesirable habits might pop up throughout the course of the year. Leave some margin so that you can work on the habits that are the most pressing.

Pray for your child

Use this section to pray scripture over your child, and to write out your own prayers for them as you set out to begin teaching a new habit.

Observations

Use the observations section to write down what you notice about your child during this habit training time. Are there certain times of the day that are more difficult? Is there friction between you and your child? Taking notes allows you to see if you need to adapt your approach, and will also help you to notice growth and celebrate victories, however small they are!

A Final Note

The approaches to each habit are not all set up the same way in this book. That's because every habit is different, and requires a different strategy. Really think through how you'll work on each habit.

I would love to support you in your habit training journey, so feel free to email me at Leah@mylittlerobins.com with any questions.

Moral Habits

Truthfulness

Habit of Truthfulness

Truthfulness can be a challenging habit to train a child in. There are a couple of reasons for this: we want to believe our children; and sometimes it's hard to know when we are being lied to, so we don't follow up with consequences. Charlotte Mason described three causes for lying:

“The vice of lying arises from three causes: carelessness in ascertaining the truth, carelessness in stating the truth, and a deliberate intention to deceive.” Home Education, page 164

Ascertaining the Truth

- Stating things he isn't sure of
- Making claims he can't possibly know

Carelessness in Stating the Truth

- Exaggeration
- Omission

Deliberate Intention to Deceive

- Lying to avoid consequences or discipline
- Lying to preserve personal integrity

“Now, of the three kinds of lying, it is only, as a matter of fact, the third which is severely visited upon the child; the first and the second he is allowed in.” Home Education, page 165

“The girl who has been carefully trained to speak the exact truth simply does not think of a lie as a ready means of getting out of a scrape, coward as she may be.” Home Education, page 110

- Encourage your child to tell all the details of an account. Ask questions like, “Is there anything else you ought to tell me?” Avoid using the word “want” in this case!
- Work on phrasing your questions so that it makes it more difficult for your child to lie.

Pray for Your Child

“These are the things you are to do: speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgment in your courts; do not plot evil against each other, and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this,” declares the Lord.” Zechariah 8:16

Inspiration for Your Child

- Tell your child the story, "The Boy Who Cried Wolf"
- Help your child memorize 1 John 3:18: "Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

Living Books About Honesty

- The Children's Book of Virtues by William J. Bennett (select stories)
- The Children's Book of Heroes by William J. Bennett (Honest Abe)

Watchfulness

First Week: Date _____

Second Week: Date _____

Third Week: Date _____

Fourth Week: Date _____
