

Handwriting Made Simple: Why Waiting to Write Works Wonders

Episode 326

Rachel Winchester [00:00:02]:

You're listening to the Homeschool Made simple podcast. This is a podcast to help you homeschool simply, inexpensively and enjoyably. Carol Joy side has been helping families homeschool for several decades now through her literature based approach to education. And I'm Rachel Winchester, a fellow homeschool mom. Using this method with my own three children in this episode, Carol and I take a deep dive into the topic of handwriting. It is one of the parts of the of education that is greatly affected by the better late than early philosophy and one commonly misunderstood among homeschool families. Are you looking for a science podcast your kids will love that is rooted in biblical truth? Nature Lessons Rooted in the Bible helps kids grow in wonder and faith as they explore God's world through the lens of God's Word. It's a simple and fascinating way to enjoy Bible based nature study.

Rachel Winchester [00:00:50]:

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Rachel Winchester [00:01:28]:

As we talked about some different topics we could share about with you guys, we wanted to hit on the topic of handwriting because this is something that easily gets lost in the shuffle or misunderstood or just kind of overcompensated for in the homeschool world. So let's talk about handwriting and maybe what you mean by that. Carol, could you start out with that?

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:50]:

Yeah. Well, so first of all, Rachel, when we're using a Piaget and developmental delayed approach, we also want to delay handwriting. And that very often is something that the curriculum people are selling you, you know, for kindergarten and first grade. And that is kind of over my dead body, I like to say, because I for many reasons. So let's talk about first of all, why we delay formal handwriting. So handwriting requires eye hand coordination and small motor control, both of which in some children can be quite delayed. And that has nothing to do with intelligence. It has to do with maturation or development.

Carole Joy Seid [00:02:36]:

So particularly in boys, this is a very big issue that leads to a lot of shame and frustration and anger. And it doesn't have to. It's that we're forcing something on a child before they are developmentally ready for it. So readiness is the key in everything that we teach. But the curriculum sellers do not explain that or they're, they're just giving you that one size fits all thing. This is what first graders do. Not so, not so at all. And so we want our children's first experience with formal academics to be successful.

Carole Joy Seid [00:03:13]:

We want them to have success experiences every day. And so when you're forcing a child that doesn't have the eye hand coordination or the small motor control to do something, well, what we're doing is we're poisoning that child to that skill or that developmental accomplishment. So if you have a little boy, the research on this is actually quite fascinating. Rachel. The nerve endings in little boys fingertips do not develop at the same time as little girls nerve endings in their fingertips. And so because of that, girls are much more able to push out perfect cursive long before the boys of their same age group. And so this is why so many men tell me that they were hit with a ruler by their teachers and that

they were shamed and embarrassed because they couldn't write. And it just makes me sob, really, in my heart, because of course they can't write.

Carole Joy Seid [00:04:16]:

They're little boys and they should be outside squashing bugs and catching frogs and throwing rocks and shooting bows and arrows at their sisters, but instead they're sitting at a table with these little lines that they're supposed to stay within and push out these, these perfect handwriting. And it's, it's unrealistic, it's unfair. You're asking a child to do something that they can't do. And of course, speaking from personal experience, JJ wrote exactly like a caveman. He had. I can testify that he does not

Rachel Winchester [00:04:50]:

write like a caveman now today.

Carole Joy Seid [00:04:52]:

That's right. But boy, howdy, did he when he was little. And I would take it to seminars and show people because they thought I was exaggerating. I would walk up and down the aisle and show it to them and they would just laugh. That was so. It was so bad. And then every year at Christmas time, I would pray for Christmas to never come because after Christmas comes thank you notes and we were homeschooling. And so you can just imagine the pressure was on to, you know, to get these perfect little thank you notes out the door with no misspelling or improper capitalization or, you know, letter form.

Carole Joy Seid [00:05:35]:

The whole thing content had to be perfect. And we would have these knockdown drag out fights every year. So finally, the first thing that the Lord laid on my heart to do, and this may have been from Dr. Moore. Nothing is original with me. I bet it was from him. I would say, jj, you can dictate to me, to Aunt Matilda. Okay.

Carole Joy Seid [00:05:57]:

Dear Aunt Matilda, I love that red sweater that you knit for me. It fits me perfectly. And I wore it to go skiing up at Mammoth. I can't wait to see you this

summer. Love, Joey. All right, so he dictates. You've done. You've written it perfectly.

Carole Joy Seid [00:06:12]:

Letter form, punctuation, spelling, capitalization. Everything's perfect. Then you hand it to little Joey. Now all Joey has to do is copy. He doesn't have to figure out what to say. Who's Aunt Matilda? What did she give me? I don't know what to say to her. Mom, all that stuff. How do I spell it? How do I.

Carole Joy Seid [00:06:32]:

You know, all that has been done, all your child does now is reproduce it. Because Charlotte Mason said, don't ever let your child see anything that is incorrect. Only let them see things that are correct. Never write. You know, like if a child is up on a blackboard, she would say, don't let them misspell a word, quickly. Cover it with your hand, she'd say, don't let the rest of those children see that misspelling because you're imprinting on the child's brain. So this way, your child is getting a big. A big bang out of writing this thank you note because it's perfect, and then you're sending it off.

Carole Joy Seid [00:07:11]:

And, of course, Aunt Matilda doesn't know the steps that went into it. All they know is they got this lovely thank you note. Right.

Rachel Winchester [00:07:21]:

Yes.

Carole Joy Seid [00:07:21]:

Which is very, very nice. And then, you know, I can remember getting phone calls thanking us for the thank you notes. When JJ changed to this other form of handwriting, the relatives literally called us and said, did JJ really write those? Because they knew what he had written before. And they're like, did the Martians swap him? Because this is not the handwriting we're used to.

Rachel Winchester [00:07:47]:

Oh, my goodness.

Carole Joy Seid [00:07:48]:

And let me tell you my little secret that all of you can find and have. And it's the simplest thing in the world. So I was speaking in Nashville at a state convention, and there was a gentleman there named Chris Davis, and he ran back then a homeschool supply ministry called the Elijah Company. And he was just precious. And so I, in the course of being there all weekend with everybody, all the different folks, I said, oh, my son's handwriting. I just can't describe it to You. And he's like, okay, I've got the solution. And he goes to his table and he gets me this book, Book E, as in Edward, written by these two women, Getty and Dube.

Carole Joy Seid [00:08:33]:

D U B A Y. And he hands it to me, and he says, as JJ had just, I think, turned 12 and still wrote like this. He was in, like, sixth grade, whatever, however old you are. And so he gives me the book as a gift. I take it home, and I say to jj, look, I don't care what type. If you want to write in, you know, Swahili, I don't care what form of handwriting you want to write in, but you have to write in something. And so why don't you try this book? So I gave it to him. Of course.

Carole Joy Seid [00:09:07]:

He's an artist. And he started using this book, and it was like he'd been hit with, like, a, you know, fairy godmother's wand or something. And he was completely transformed. And within a couple months, that. So, I don't know, I was probably in Nashville maybe in September. And by Christmas is when he was getting long distance phone calls, when you had to pay money for long distance phone calls. And they still. They just couldn't believe it.

Carole Joy Seid [00:09:37]:

And then I went to Florida to visit my mom and dad, and my great aunt lived there, and. And my great aunt had gone up and down at the country club or the beach club, showing everybody. Darling, you simply must see this perfectly divine thank you note I received from my great nephew. Isn't it just fabulous? You know? Yeah. And she told me what she did, and I'm like, I could just picture those poor women going, huh, huh? But anyway. But it made a big splash. And people to this day will say to me, how does JJ know how to write like that? I'm like, it's just Getty Dube. It's the simplest thing in the world.

Carole Joy Seid [00:10:20]:

They think I did some, you know, wonderful feat and accomplishment because people will sit next to him at church and they'll see him taking notes if he's not preaching, and they're just like, oh, my. I want to. 1. One young man came up to me and said, I want to write like J.J. and I'm like, oh, Eric, it's so easy. You have no idea. But, you know, it looks so impressive. So let's talk a little bit about the theory behind this type of handwriting.

Carole Joy Seid [00:10:48]:

Okay? So first of all, it's italic handwriting, which is as old as time. And in some of the finest prep schools, for example, like where Jackie Kennedy, when she was a young woman, she went to a school in New York City called the Madams of the Sacred Heart. They have schools around the country, and they had one in Buffalo as well. Very, very excl. Prep schools for girls. And so I played field hockey, varsity field hockey in high school. And when a new girl came from the Madam School that we had in. In Buffalo, she came and was on the hockey team with me.

Carole Joy Seid [00:11:27]:

And she would carry around a fountain pen with her, and she would write in the most exquisite. Like, it looked like calligraphy to me. And being an art major, I was like, oh, my word. How do you know how to write like that? And she said, well, that's just the way we were taught to write at school, you know, so she'd gone to this school, and so that made an imprint on my mind. Then years later, you know, I discovered Getty Dube. And it's. It's the handwriting that this girl, when she came to our school, brought with her. And so you start in italic handwriting.

Carole Joy Seid [00:12:05]:

You learn one Alphabet for life. So in America today, we learn an Alphabet to read, which is a printer's Alphabet. Then we learn how to print, which is a completely different Alphabet. Then we learn cursive, which is a third Alphabet. And we wonder why nobody knows how to read or write in America. So the italic method is very, very streamlined. There's no wasted motion in learning. You learn your.

Carole Joy Seid [00:12:35]:

Your Alphabet, your italics, and the books are very artistic and creative. And then at about third grade, you begin to learn how to join those same letters. You're not learning new letters. You're just learning how to join them with a little connecting dash kind of thing. And then eventually in book E, you're fully writing. Like you. You start out with printing same Alphabet, and then very, very quickly. So if you have older kids, book D as in David, or E, as in Edward, will get the job done where they can make that transition out of what other form of writing that they have been using.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:16]:

And then when they get really old, so the Getty Dube system goes to book. I think it's G or H, if I'm not mistaken. And then after that, then they can move into calligraphy. And they already have their form in place, and they just move it to a little bit higher level. So they wrote a book called Write Now W, R, I, T, E, N, O, W, which is for high school and adults. So you can be doing this with your children at the same time, or you can get book E for everybody in the family. And you can all. And JJ just did one book, and then I think he did.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:54]:

Now he has studied calligraphy where he taught himself with calligraphy books. And you can certainly do that. And you can use a nib and everything, you know, a calligraphy nib. But for this, you don't need. I know that my girlfriend had used a fountain pen, but you do not need a fountain pen for. Yeah, you don't need to.

Rachel Winchester [00:14:11]:

Fancy gear.

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:13]:

That's right.

Rachel Winchester [00:14:14]:

So I have a question about. So what age would you then say if we are waiting for development, though, but then they have these ABC books, you know, And I

guess what would be some of those signs if your child isn't really ready? Can they actually. When they do these.

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:34]:

Yes, they can. So that's a great question. So let me tell you how Dr. Moore taught us to start our children in beginning writing, like writing readiness. Okay. So he said the first thing that we do is that we should take a paintbrush and like a big house paintbrush, you know, a big, wide paintbrush. And we should go outside with our child and put. Give them like a bucket of water and let them dip the paintbrush in water.

Carole Joy Seid [00:15:10]:

And then they. They go up to, like a garage door and they should do circles, as large as they are, straight lines, slanted lines, curved lines. So they're getting all this large motor experience with the building blocks of writing, and they're doing it very successfully. Then you can tell them to get on the ground and make the letter with their body, or you can make bread dough letters with them so they're three dimensional. Or Montessori. Maria Montessori said, cut out sandpaper and let them stroke the sandpiper so that they're tying in the sensory stimulation of what that letter. We go down, then we go around, then we go out. Like, that's an R, you know, and so incorporating the full body and then taking a lasagna pan and putting flour in the lasagna pan or some sort of even like chalk dust and letting them draw in the sand or whatever it is.

Carole Joy Seid [00:16:18]:

The letters, again, quite large, not little bitty. And then eventually what I did is I bought a slate, and the slate had, you know, the. The top and bottom line that are solid with the middle line that are dot, dot, dot, which, you know, used to be in schools. I don't know if they still use those on chalkboards, but you can buy one where it's printed on it and then let your child draw with chalk letters that are larger than they will be drawing, like in a Curriculum product of any kind. And then even with the first Getty Dube book, if you feel like the lines are too small for the book A, because the first book is book A is an Apple. Book B would be like second grade. If you feel like those lines are too small, particularly if you have a little boy, then go ahead and let them write on a slate with a chalk or, or, you know, buy paper with larger lines, which they sell at supply stores for

homeschool kids. And then when they finally are ready to work in the book, keep it short and sweet.

Carole Joy Seid [00:17:26]:

You want them to be begging for more. So with your little boys, maximum two lines a day, they don't have to do a full page. Keep it very, very short. Your girls will want to do the whole thing in two days, but your boys, especially your first born girls, but your boys will not. And it's a dirty little secret that most boys hate handwriting till about the age of 12. So keep it very minimal for your boys. Your girls will beg, excuse me, will beg for more. And I don't think that there's any need to do formal writing in first grade, you know, so say you're using Dr.

Carole Joy Seid [00:18:05]:

Moore's method or the method in the Scandinavian countries where seven is first grade, which I hope you will. That might be a time to just be doing those large motor exercises and getting them used to the idea of writing. Now some children are begging to write their name. Teach them to write their name, but use the Getty Dube Alphabet so that they don't have to unlearn the way that you so don't teach them stick and ball. If you're going to eventually teach them Getty Dube, teach it to them from beginning when they say, how do I write, mama? So you can put the letter strips on a wall. You can buy letter strips from Getty Dube. You can also take those letter strips maybe to Kinkos or something and have them blown up and then have them around the circumference of the ceiling of your playroom or wherever you might be when their kids are working on writing or your dining room. And that way they can keep eyeballing the Alphabet without trying.

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:05]:

And then this is the other thing, Rachel. A lot of families, what I'm finding is a, they're not using the recommended curriculum, so they're using something completely different. And I kind of want to say, why is that like this? This is really important. This is really something that you're going to thank me for. This is a lifelong skill that you're giving Your children, and you're giving them success. And they don't have to keep changing horses midstream when families have already been using something and then they do change the horse, you know, on my recommendation, I say to them, now, keep this Alphabet next to your on. On

the table, maybe taped to the table or along the ceiling, enlarged. Because everything else they do that requires writing, I want them to always use Gety Dube.

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:52]:

A lot of families say to me, well, we do get a Dube in the book. But then when they write in their journal, they're not using, you know, they're doing something else. So that's why in a perfect world, I want everyone to only have used this. But if your children are older, like, JJ obviously was much older, but it just took a month or two. He hated handwriting anyway, so this was not like he was doing lots of handwriting for pleasure anyway.

Rachel Winchester [00:20:22]:

Yeah, he wasn't begging you.

Carole Joy Seid [00:20:25]:

Right.

Rachel Winchester [00:20:26]:

And then I just wanted to clarify. So this is just handwriting by itself. We're not like handwriting and then also doing other grammar activities, or break apart a sentence and then write two words or something like that.

Carole Joy Seid [00:20:42]:

Thank you for asking that question. The word language arts makes me break out in a rash. Because language arts, the true art of language, is reading great books and great authors. And if you want your children to be grammatically accurate, they do not learn that from a textbook or workbook or class. They learn it from reading Charles Dickens and Jane Austen and Henry James and Solzhenitsyn. They learn by reading great books. Great books like the Little House books and the Narnia books and all the way through. So you can fill in workbook pages, or you can spend that time reading out loud to your children by the hour while they're begging you not to stop.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:33]:

So Ruth Bechic, who is one of the. One of the pioneers in the homeschool movement, one of the experts. Let's see what it's on our handouts. But I can't think, is it how to teach your child successfully? Is that what it's called, 4 through 8? Something like that, yeah. So Ruth Bechic, she said, if you give a child a standardized test, like a Stanford test, for example, and in that test, they will say to the child, now, Dr. Moore said, don't ever give standardized testing to children if you can help it. Now, in Minnesota, that you can't help it. You have to.

Carole Joy Seid [00:22:03]:

But. But if you can help it, wait till at least fourth grade to give children standardized tests. He said to us, because your child is like A half baked loaf of bread. And you don't take it out of the oven halfway, let it bake before you evaluate a child or put a label, God forbid, or test them in some, you know, shaming way. And so she said, when you give a child a standardized test, as I said, like the Stanford, and they say they, they will give you a sentence written three different ways or three different sentences, whatever, and then they'll say which sentence is correct. And Ruth be chick said a reader, a child who's a reader who's been read to will know which sentence is correct. And a child who's not been read to will not. And I don't care how many language arts so called hours they've spent, please do not do that.

Carole Joy Seid [00:23:00]:

We teach grammar. Grammar is the most abstract of all subjects and we teach it in eighth grade to mastery. We teach it knowing that your child is going to be brilliant at it and they're going to love it. And we use a manipulative program called. What is it called? Winston. I just did a blank. I don't know, I'm sorry, I, I was thinking I was going to say English from the roots up. But no, it's Winston Grammar.

Carole Joy Seid [00:23:30]:

And I just recommend that you get the basic and you use it in eighth grade and then before your kids take like college boards or you know, high level testing. If you want to do Winston Grammar advanced level, you can do that maybe when they're a junior, but we wait till our children are fully abstract because grammar is the most abstract subject with math and also voted the most unpopular subject in remedial prep schools. When they've interviewed kids, like at the Winston

School in Dallas, which used to be just for boys, now they let girls in as well. But for kids with learning disabilities, they interviewed them. What are your most hated subjects? And every single kid in the school said the same thing. Grammar and math, because they're so abstract and we introduce them to children when their children are concrete and we wonder why they hate those subjects, but it's because of the timing of it. Readiness is key. And that's when we know when a child's ready to read.

Carole Joy Seid [00:24:29]:

Why? Because they're trying to decode, they're trying to read signs as you're driving down the street, you know all these things. So as a parent, you are very attuned to readiness. But the experts so called have told you that you don't know what's best and that your child is ready when they're in the playpen. And so you begin to Doubt your own perceptions of readiness. But readiness is a very common sense thing. And as Piaget said, of course, later is better than early. And the earlier that you teach a child to read and write and do arithmetic, the higher instance of reading failure your child will have. That's just statistics.

Carole Joy Seid [00:25:10]:

So there's no benefit in early education for children, and there's a whole lot of concern about the damage that it does to them and how they see themselves as a student.

Rachel Winchester [00:25:22]:

I think Ruth Bechic's books have been really helpful for me to read. And then you feel you have that confidence in, okay, this isn't just, you know, airy fairy kind of stuff. This is really. And there's a plan, you know, because I think maybe sometimes people hear like, oh, don't do that, and don't worry about that in third grade, or don't worry about that in kindergarten or whatever. But then they feel panicky because they don't know when you're going to worry about it. When, you know, when's. What's the plan. But it's like if you know the plan and you know there's a good reason for it, then you feel better.

Rachel Winchester [00:25:56]:

You're not worrying about, okay, I don't have to worry about grammar right now.

Carole Joy Seid [00:26:00]:
That's right.

Rachel Winchester [00:26:00]:
It's better that I don't worry about it right now.

Carole Joy Seid [00:26:03]:
Absolutely. And the irony is when you. When you take your children out in public and people stop them, which happened to us all the time, and now it's happening with the grandchildren all the time, I'm sure you're experiencing this. And people say, where do you go to school? Why? Because your children are so articulate. How did they learn to be articulate? From workbooks or from being read to and being spoken to by articulate adults. Adults in their home. So these are the things that children are judged on. Nobody walks around, you know, like, I can remember we were checking out at Marshalls and in California when JJ was a little boy.

Carole Joy Seid [00:26:41]:
And back then we really thought we were going to go to prison for homeschooling. So it was a very. It was a tricky situation. Dr. Moore would say, don't take them out during the daytime. And all this, you know, that's. That's not the case anymore, but it could change. But anyway, and so I was checking out, and JJ's talking to the sweet girl that's, you know, ringing up our purchases.

Carole Joy Seid [00:27:05]:
And the unbeknownst to me, there's a woman at the next checkout counter, and she's listening to him Talk. And he was probably seven maybe. So she. Maybe. Maybe younger than that. She. This woman. So I get my package, and we're starting to head to the door, and this woman literally runs and, like, grabs me and says, excuse me, excuse me.

Carole Joy Seid [00:27:28]:
I'm a school principal up the road, and how old is he? And whatever. I told her. And she said, I have never heard a child speak like that. And I'm like. And then the question, of course, comes, and I'm like, sweating bullets now, where does he go to school? And I'm like, oh, no. Because, you know, I'm like, I'm so

nervous about being thrown in jail. And I'm like, we homeschool. And then I just, like, literally buzzed out this door, grabbing JJ and his little yellow.

Carole Joy Seid [00:28:04]:

Exactly in his yellow slicker. I remember what he was wearing. And we ran out the door. And I mean, but you see, that happened all. We would be in restaurants. I remember this. At Good Earth restaurant, this girl was taking our order, and all of a sudden she just stopped. She put the pencil on the pad, and she goes, how old is he? It's because reading makes you smart and it teaches you how to speak and how to use correct grammar.

Carole Joy Seid [00:28:38]:

And a child who's been read to, as Ruth be Chick says, I just love it. Instinctively knows that.

Rachel Winchester [00:28:46]:

Yep. Love it. Well, hopefully we've lifted a burden today.

Carole Joy Seid [00:28:52]:

I will close. I will close with one thing. I. When people say, well, when should we start writing? I would say when your children are moving into being more confident in reading. I think is. I don't think it's. I know that there's different schools of thought. I'm just going to tell you my school of thought.

Carole Joy Seid [00:29:09]:

My personal opinion, particularly with boys, is that they don't need to write when they're learning to read. I know people don't agree with me and that they're free to do that, but that is my opinion. I think you're. Particularly with a boy, writing is so difficult. That don't cloud the water of reading with writing at the same time, because they're going to associate the negativity of writing for them with the joy that they could be having of just learning to read.

Rachel Winchester [00:29:43]:

Yes. Yeah. And actually, when my kids and I were learning colonial history, I just got this random, like, nonfiction book that had different facts about things, and it had something about colonial education. It said the three Rs. Reading, writing,

arithmetic. And it said that it was approached more as that progression. And so it was like the child learned. And I was just like, that Makes sense.

Rachel Winchester [00:30:07]:

You learn to read, read. Then you're able. Like, now you know the words, now you're able to take the words, build something with them, and then now, after you know how to read and write, you can then do math, which involves both of those things.

Carole Joy Seid [00:30:22]:

It does. It involves reading and writing. Rachel, that's brilliant.

Rachel Winchester [00:30:27]:

Yeah.

Carole Joy Seid [00:30:28]:

Wow. Wow. Thank you for sharing that. I've never heard that, but I would say that's exactly what I have practiced, and it makes perfect sense because math is the most abstract. Why do they have to learn math at the same time they're learning to read?

Rachel Winchester [00:30:44]:

Right. And I think that's what ends up causing a lot of frustration and tension with parents and the child, because then they're like, it becomes a reading lesson and a math lesson, and then it's like too much of the brain is trying to fire to do too many things at one time.

Carole Joy Seid [00:31:02]:

Yes. That is really brilliant. I think we're gonna always try and tell that in every seminar going forward because that has really clarified something that I think we do instinctively. But it's great to have an understanding philosophically of why these subjects don't fall at the same moment developmentally. Wow. You're a genius.

Rachel Winchester [00:31:26]:

Well, the colonists.

Carole Joy Seid [00:31:28]:

Well, they were. Yeah. It was as John Adams said, you would be more apt to meet an illiterate man in colonial America and than to be, like, struck by a meteorite. He said, every man is a reader. That's what he said. And his son, John Quincy, was one of the great readers of all time.

Rachel Winchester [00:31:52]:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Carole Joy Seid [00:31:54]:

So I really. I love this. As my mother used to say, you learn something new every day.

Rachel Winchester [00:32:03]:

Yes.

Carole Joy Seid [00:32:04]:

Yeah. So thank you for this.

Rachel Winchester [00:32:06]:

We have, and our listeners have learned a little something today.

Carole Joy Seid [00:32:11]:

Thank you.

Rachel Winchester [00:32:12]:

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