

Homeschool Teacher

Summer 2010



5 Tips to Avoid Burnout Games for Critical Thinking
Spelling Strategies Before You Buy a Telescope!
Book Review: Homeschooling Your Struggling Learner



Summer 2010

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*Knowledge is of two kinds: we know a subject ourselves, or
we know where we can find information upon it.*

~Samuel Johnson

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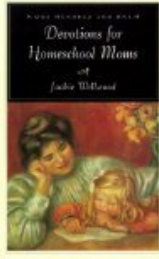
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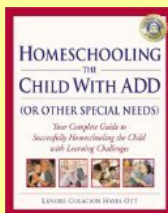
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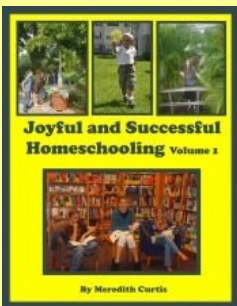
Homeschooling – 5 Ways to Avoid Burnout



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[Joyful Homeschooling!](#)

Homeschooling for the long run makes a homeschool mom consider the question: “What about me?” While homeschooling pros far outweigh the cons, it is important for a mom to consider how she will homeschool victoriously for approximately 14 years per child.

We all know that it is a delight to spend time with our children and that we are doing what we feel is right for them, by homeschooling, but a wise mom will make sure that she safeguards herself from homeschool burnout.

Many well intending people will say that it is a curriculum or the want of curriculum that causes burnout, and while this may be a contributing factor, it is not the only reason for a mom to feel stretched or close to collapse after a season of homeschooling.

Here are 5 ways to avoid homeschool burnout:

Tip #1 – PLAN

Things that need to be planned:

Schooling disciplines

Weekly Menus

Extra classes and sports

Housekeeping

Time for herself – craft, hobby, exercise and time with her spouse

Tip #2 – FUN

We all know the old adage “All work and no play...” A homeschool mom needs to “go out and play” too. Doubling up on family sporting activities (for example, buying bikes for the whole family and visiting different places to ride) or taking the odd weekend away from home, are always good. This is not only for mom, but for the whole family. Weekly visits to safe botanical gardens for a picnic, or for a walk on the beach are also wonderful breathing spaces in an otherwise busy schedule.

Tip #3 – TIME OUT

No matter how old the children are in a homeschooling home, it is important that mom seeks to have timeout each day. When children are little, this time can be while they are

napping or resting. As they get older they can be trained to quietly read for an hour or play with Legos in their room so mom can catch up on what needs to be done, to enjoy a cup of tea without interruption.

Tip #4 – READ

Reading a good homeschooling book each year is a highly recommended pursuit for a homeschooling mom. This book needs to be chosen carefully so as to stretch a mom in her thinking and inspire her as she goes about her homeschooling tasks.

Other reading should also be undertaken as it is important that not only homeschooling books that should be read. Novels are escapism and a mom should be careful about the time she spends on this type of reading. Christian biographies always inspire the best in us as we ponder the works of God in others lives.

Reading stretches out minds and feeds our thought life. A wise homeschooling mom cares for her own intellectual growth as well as that of her children.

Tip #5 – PRAY

Tip # 5 is the most important tip and should be part of any wise homeschooling mom's day. Prayer lifts your eyes from the day to day grind of getting housework, schoolwork and errands done. It helps us to see our purpose as builders of a future generation. Prayer strengthens us in our task as mothers, educators and wives. Prayer lifts us up and helps us to see a future hope in difficult circumstances and yes, prayer is the thing that will help us prevent homeschool burnout as we will be reminded to "never grow weary in doing good."

Wendy Young is the homeschooling mom to 4 children aged 7 – 14 years. They have always been at home. She has been married for 19 years. Wendy's website, Homeschool-Curriculum-For-Life, is dedicated to helping moms choose curriculum, get organized, and enjoy the homeschool journey by equipping them as their roles as wives, women, and moms.

Source: <http://www.homeschool-articles.com/homeschooling-%e2%80%93-5-ways-to-avoid-burnout/>



[This project creates a one-folder unit to give to a friend.](#)



[National Best Seller](#)

Strategy Games That Assist Children to Think Clearly

By Andrew Low

Thinking skills are necessary in today's society to make good decisions yet most people, myself included, tend to make decisions based on feelings rather than thought. While I know that vegetables are healthier for me than chocolate, I still prefer chocolate. What about you?

Children who learn to develop good thinking skills while they are young have a head start in life. That's where homeschoolers have an advantage, since we can focus on these skills every day. Four particular thinking skills that are important are:

Logic - using your mind rather than your heart

Brainstorming - investigating all possible choices, beyond the obvious ones

Consequences - looking carefully to see where each choice may lead

Linear Planning - breaking down a complex task into a series of manageable steps

Logic is the best way to decide between choices. A logical approach bypasses your emotions and all their associated problems. You can still choose to follow your feelings if you prefer, but at least now you know the reasoned and wisest choice. Children who play Checkers (also known as Draughts) soon discover that someone who plays logically will beat another player who chooses to move pieces at random.

Brainstorming is a thinking skill where children learn to look beyond the first choice. While one short-term goal may seem desirable, it may lead to a bad decision in the long-term, or vice-versa. There may be easier or better ways of achieving goals by thinking through a variety of options. One example is from a Chess game in 1858 between Paul Morphy and two opponents who worked together. By his sixteenth move, he had lost his Queen, which is normally a very poor move and is generally avoided. However, he was looking at the long-term goal of winning rather than the short-term goal of saving his Queen. As a result, he had been planning to lose his Queen so that he could win, which he did on his very next move!

Consequences are one of the most significant thinking skills a child can gain. One option may seem to be attractive but we need to consider the results of following this choice while we can still correct what may ultimately be a bad decision.

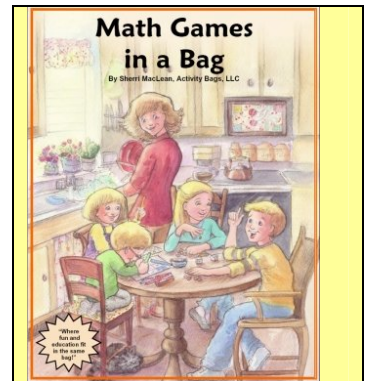
Boxes is a simple two player game where each player draws lines between dots on a piece of paper, hoping to complete more boxes than their opponent. Children will soon learn that drawing a line in the wrong place can earn the other player a lot of boxes – a lesson I learned one day when playing against one of my sons. During the game, children need to think about the consequences of every line they draw. It is much easier to learn this lesson now than later in life when the effect may be much more damaging.

Linear Planning is the last of our important strategy skills that can be learned playing games. We may have dreams that seem unattainable, such as strong family relationships or financial security. Linear Planning can help by reducing a complex goal into a series of much smaller and more manageable steps. Tower of Hanoi Card Game is a two player game based on the puzzle of the same name, where nine cards are randomly dealt into three piles. The cards must be rearranged into order according to some simple rules. At first view it seems impossible to work out the game, until you use logic to consider the consequences of a move and break it down into smaller pieces. Instead of tackling the entire set of cards, try working with only two cards and get them into the right order. Using this approach my eleven year old son can now solve the game in less than ten minutes, although it has taken a lot of practise.

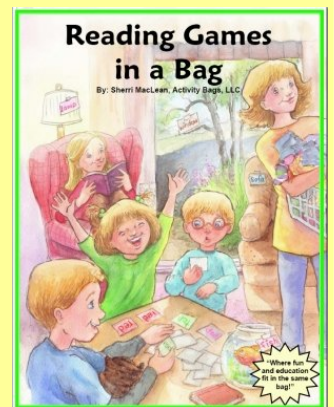
Logic, Brainstorming, Consequences and Linear Planning are problem solving skills that all children should learn, to prepare them for their future. Many commercial games are available that can assist children to learn these skills, but free strategy games like Checkers, Chess, Boxes and Tower of Hanoi Card Game can make learning these skills enjoyable. Isn't that worth considering for your child's future?

Andrew is a homeschooling dad of seven children. He owns Family Games Treasurehouse which has rules for over a hundred family friendly games. Visit Family Games Treasurehouse, sign up for our monthly newsletter and you can download our ebook, "25 Family Dice Games" for free. This article is copyright but may be freely republished provided the text, author credit, site links and this copyright notice remain intact.

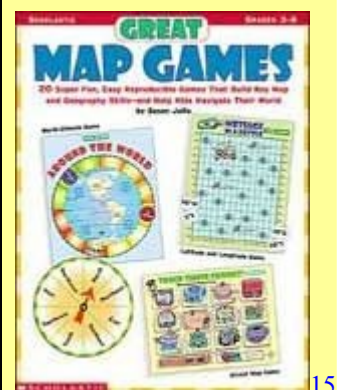
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[Math Games in a Bag](#)

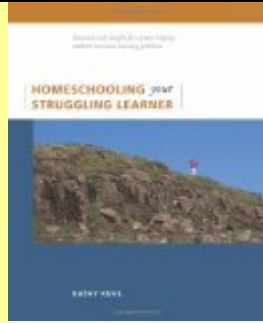


[Reading Games in a Bag](#)

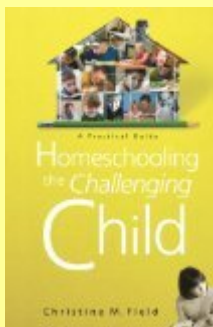


[Great Map Games](#)

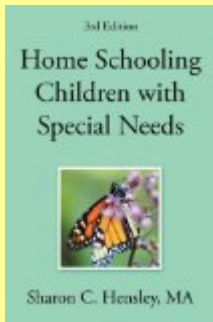
All of these products are pdf downloads!



[Homeschooling Your Struggling Learner](#)



[Homeschooling the Challenging Child](#)



[Homeschooling the Child with Special Needs](#)

Book Review: Homeschooling Your Struggling Learner by Kathy Kuhl

Reviewed by Janice Campbell

Nothing beats hands-on, in-the-trenches encouragement and advice from families who have worked with struggling learners. Sometimes, just getting a glimpse of the challenges that others face can help you face your own. In this remarkable 375-page book, author and speaker Kathy Kuhl brings together the stories of 64 families who are working with struggling learners.

Asking “Is School Working for Your Child?” Kuhl begins by discussing educational options for children with various learning difficulties or attention disorders, then proceeds to address issues such as evaluation, diagnosis, therapies, treatments and training. The planning chapter walks the reader step-by-step through the process of setting goals, learning about available options, and implementing a structure that will work best for your family. Subject-by-subject discussions offer a detailed look at creative ways to teach and evaluate. The final section in the book may be the most important of all, as it paints a vivid picture of a well-balanced homeschooling life, and points the reader to tools and resources for making it happen.

Throughout the book, sidebars and boxed information add detail and structure. Kuhl is frank about the challenges of working with a struggling learner, but she provides the reader with ample encouragement, information, and resources to approach the task with reasonable objectives. If you find yourself overwhelmed by a particular stage or task, it’s likely that the book will have just the helpful hint you need to succeed. The other parents quoted in the book have been generous and honest with their advice and encouragement, and their experiences can help you face each day with your struggling learner.

You may order the modestly priced Homeschooling Your Struggling Learner through LearnDifferently.com.

Janice Campbell, author of Get a Jump Start on College! A Practical Guide for Teens, Transcripts Made Easy: The Homeschooler’s Guide to High School Paperwork, and the Excellence in Literature series, has been writing and speaking in central Virginia since the late 1980’s. She homeschooled her four sons from kindergarten into college, using the principles she now shares in her books, blog, workshops, and her free e-newsletter. Sign up for it today.

Improve Spelling Skills

Looking for a way to increase your child's spelling ability and improve spelling scores?

Here is a simple strategy used in Syllable Savvy that can be used for all students: average spellers, or those above or below average.

This method can be used to imprint the correct spelling of a particularly troublesome word. Or it can be used with your students' entire spelling list.

Here's how it works

First, take a paper and fold it in thirds the long way, making three columns.

In the first column (left) write the spelling word the way it sounds. You can go all out and learn all the dictionary phonetic markings, or make it simple. The idea is that students will see the word written the way they hear it.

In the middle column, write the word the way it is normally written.

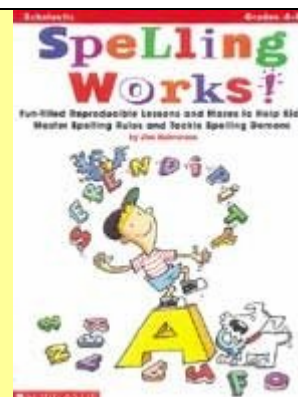
Finally, in the third (right) column, write the word in syllables. At the end of each syllable, write the number of letters in that syllable. I usually write that as a superscript. It can also be written above the syllable.

Here is an example:

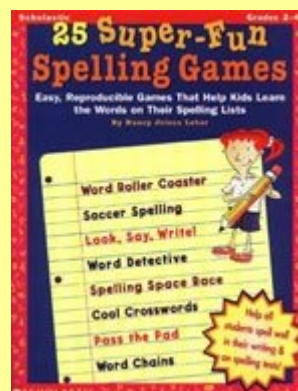
1st column: ug nol ij mint

2nd column: acknowledgment

3rd column: ac-2 know-4 ledg-4 ment-4



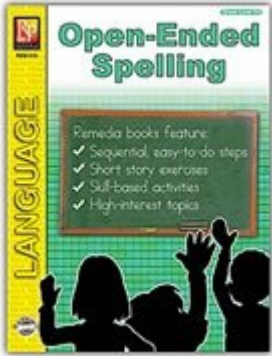
[Spelling Works](#)



[25 Super Fun Spelling Games](#)

Both of these products are instant pdf downloads.

Here's how the student will study the words:

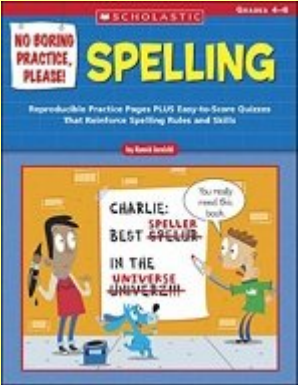


Open-Ended Spelling

Remedia books Feature:

- ✓ Sequential, easy-to-do steps
- ✓ Short story exercises
- ✓ Skill-based activities
- ✓ High-interest topics

Open Ended Spelling for use with thematic units



NO BORING PRACTICE, PLEASE!

SPELLING

Reproducible Practice Pages PLUS Easy-to-Score Quizzes That Reinforce Spelling Rules and Skills

By Carol Smith

CHARLIE: SPELLER BEST SPELLER IN THE UNIVERSE UNIVERSE!

Both of these resources can be downloaded instantly.

Fold the worksheet so only the first column is seen. The student writes the word on a separate sheet of paper. The student then unfolds the worksheet and self-corrects the word. They write the number of letters they correctly wrote for each syllable. If the entire word is correct, they place a star on the line.

Why this method works

This method improves spelling scores by focusing the students' attention on each letter. Studying the syllables reinforces common spelling patterns. In a word like "acknowledgment" the student might incorrectly write "acknowledgement" day after day and not notice their error. They then get it wrong on the spelling test, after studying it incorrectly all along.

Why do we have the three columns? The phonetic column allows the student to work independently. A second person is not needed to read the list to them in order for them to practice their words without seeing them simultaneously. There are other effective methods for helping the student to study the words independently.

This is the Syllable Savvy Spelling strategy. Watch spelling scores improve as complex and difficult words are mastered with this simple strategy.

For more ideas on how to use the Syllable Savvy Spelling method, visit [Kid Friendly Homeschool Curriculum](http://www.kidfriendlyhomeschoolcurriculum.com).

Source: <http://www.homeschool-articles.com/improve-spelling-skills/>

Before You Buy a Telescope

Astronomy is the oldest science, and was around at the dawn of recorded history

. According to Josephus, the science of the stars was first developed by the children of Seth, the son of Adam! So the sky has been studied for thousands of years. But the telescope was invented only 400 years ago, and is a relatively recent addition to this ancient science.

Unfortunately, in our generation, the media and the schools center all astronomy education around the telescope. So one gets the impression that a telescope is indispensable for learning the stars. But one might wonder, what did astronomers do for all those millennia before the telescope was invented? This is the primary focus of the Classical Astronomy Update, to teach about the forgotten tradition of observing the sky without the requirement of a telescope.

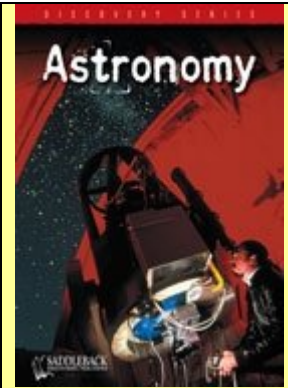
But a telescope can be useful piece of astronomy equipment, as long as the person is adequately prepared. Too many people make the mistake of rushing out to buy a scope before they are prepared, with lots of enthusiasm and high expectations. But after a few unfruitful nights under the stars, the unprepared observer can become very disappointed and disillusioned.

To save everyone a lot of trouble and expense, I always recommend that a person obtain a bit of experience with astronomy before buying a scope. Here are some points to consider before you buy a telescope.

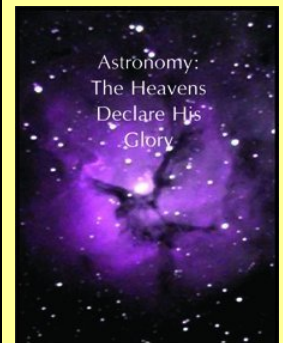
Learn the Sky

Perhaps the biggest problem with new scope owners is they rush out and buy scope, but then can't find anything! They're able to point the scope at the Moon, and not much else. They believe they can find something in the sky by pointing the scope at random. But this really doesn't work, as they soon find out. So they look at the Moon a few times, and after that becomes a bore, the scope disappears into the closet forever. I've seen it happen a zillion times.

So in my opinion, you should not invest money into a telescope until you first

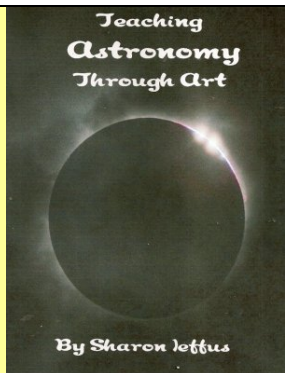


[Great for Struggling Readers](#)

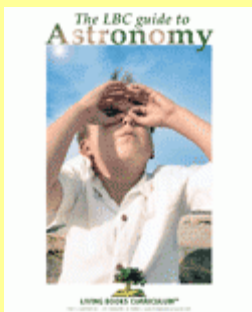


[Astronomy Unit Study/BEST SELLER](#)

learn a couple of constellations. The constellations are your “road map to the sky.” Without the constellations, you won’t be able to find anything since you won’t know where in the sky to point your scope. But scope ownership can work out if one realizes that work is required to learn the constellations. Too



[Teaching Astronomy Through Art](#)



[The Living Books Curriculum Guide to Astronomy/BEST SELLER](#)

many people in our generation expect it to be easy, and fold up right away if time and effort are required to learn the sky.

Winter is an excellent time to being learning the sky, since Orion is visible in the early evening. There is a beautiful, bright nebula in the “Sword” of Orion that is easy to find with a modest scope. So if you are at least committed to learning the constellations, you can spot a good number of celestial sights on a “learn as you go” basis.

So be patient, learn the sky and, until the appropriate time, save yourself a few bucks. You might want to read Sky & Telescope magazine. That’s how I first learned the sky. They have articles, sky maps and skywatching tips. You can find it on newstands or any library.

Have Realistic Expectations

We’ve all seen splashy astro-photographs of brightly colored nebulas and galaxies. The Hubble Space Telescope has filled our televisions, magazines and computer monitors with brightly glowing cosmic vistas. From these photos, you would get the impression that the universe is a bright, swirling place. And you then expect to see such sights through the eyepiece of your scope. But if so, you would be wrong! Like I always tell people, if the views through a telescope were all that interesting or exciting, we’d all hear about it, and since they’re not, we don’t.

There are basically three telescope targets that I consider worthwhile — the Moon, Jupiter and Saturn. These sights are always impressive, even through smaller scopes. It can be fun to learn the names of lunar craters, or follow the cycles of Jupiter’s Moons. Over a span of years, you can watch the changes in the orientation of Saturn’s rings. The other planets are either too small or featureless to be interesting targets. And even the better targets can look “smallish” through a small scope at low magnification.

Galaxies and nebulas are known as “deep sky objects” and can be visible through smaller scopes. However, these objects are only visible as faint “fuzzy patches,” little puffs of celestial smoke. Even under excellent conditions, these objects do not in any way resemble the colorful, time-lapse observatory photos that we see in magazines.

Also, you must be under a very dark sky far from the city to see these wisps at all. Most people (like me) aren't much impressed with such sights. It's definitely an "acquired taste" for many people! So be sure to adjust your expectations and not expect mind-blowing sights through the eyepiece.

Look Through Someone Else's Scope

Considering the above, do yourself a favor and invest some time at someone else's

eyepiece before you decide to plop down a few hundred bucks for your own scope. I'd recommend finding a local astronomy club in your area and pay them a visit. Most clubs have public telescope viewing nights all year round, and many clubs work through planetariums or observatories. Your family can get a look through a scope and also learn a bit about the sky.

These astronomy clubs all have at least a few veteran amateur astronomers who are very knowledgeable about the sky and would love to help your family learn. You can get a lot of information about the sky and advice about telescope buying, etc. Who knows, you might get hooked! A list of astronomy clubs, planetariums and observatories is found in the "Resources" section at the Sky & Telescope web site.

An Alternative to Scope Ownership

Before you buy a scope, I'd recommend you start out with a decent pair of binoculars. You should still be able to get a pair of Bushnell 50mm binocs for about \$40-50. You can do a lot of sky exploring with some cheap \$40 binoculars, even from a light polluted area in the city. Just lay back on the grass and you'd be amazed what you can see. Binocs are also useful during the daytime for birdwatching and looking at other distance objects on the ground.

There are a number of books available about binocular astronomy and what you can see in the sky in the binocular 7-10 times magnification range. I recommend Gary Seronik's Binocular Highlights from Sky & Telescope, available at Amazon and other online booksellers. If you like looking at the sky through binocs, it will be excellent preparation for using a scope at a later time.

If You MUST Buy a Scope

If your family must buy a scope right away, make sure you don't buy one from any "big box" retail stores, like stores that have "Mart" in the name. These scopes are just toys and will disappoint everytime. A quality optical instrument is going to set you back



[Exploring Creation With Astronomy /Lapbook Lessons 1-6](#)



[Using the Internet to Research Astronomy](#)

several hundred bucks. So if the big box stores are selling pricey scopes, make sure they are a good brand name, such as Meade or Celestron. You would probably do better if you buy a scope from a camera shop or other dealer that specializes in optical products. Telescope selection in general is based on need. A scope suitable for high-power planet watching isn't so good for low-power galaxies and nebulae. Being a traditionalist, I consider a good starter scope to be a six-inch f/8 Newtonian reflecting telescope. They tend to be small (only about 4 feet long!) and cheap (only a few hundred dollars!).

A good vendor is Orion Telescopes, where you can also find a selection of other type scopes. You also might want to look on the web at Astromart and places like that for a used scope. But as with all used item purchases — “caveat emptor” — let the buyer beware! The real question is not “what’s a good scope,” but “how much money d’ya got?”

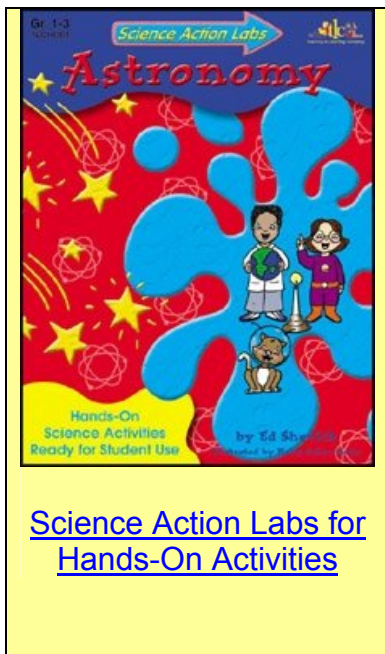
A lot of people recommend these little computer-driven Meade ETX scopes. The ETX is supposed to be a good, inexpensive (\$300) starter scope. Such scopes include a computer driven “go to” feature that locates objects in the sky and points the telescope in the proper direction. This “go to” feature assists newbies in finding celestial objects, and are supposed to help the viewer minimize the time and effort of finding objects.

But I am “old school” in that I believe that knowing the sky is most of the fun of observing. So in my opinion, you lose a lot if your scope does all the heavy lifting. Also, I’ve heard these “go to” systems are not perfect, and total novice can still encounter problems with finding objects if the scope is not properly set up and calibrated. But I’ve never looked through the eyepiece of an ETX so I can’t comment based on experience.

I’m not one to ask about commercial scopes since I’ve only made my own telescopes. Telescope making is a great hobby in its own right, but it’s a lot of work and has a very steep learning curve. But an amateur can invest the time and care needed to make a mirror that tests out better than a “production line” mirror in a commercial scope. In my opinion, the views through a \$5000 Meade are inferior to the view through my 10” telescope with a hand-ground telescope mirror, made at home for \$300 plus about 100 hours of work. Check out Stellafane.com for more info on telescope making and a million links.

Maybe you will be one of those folks who are intrigued by looking at galaxies and other deep sky objects. If so, amateur astronomy is the hobby for you! But even for the loyal hobbyists, it can be a lot of work driving from the city to set up a scope in a suitably dark rural location. If you arrive at a site after dark, it can be a real hassle to set up in pitch black darkness. And then you get a stiff neck from leaning over the eyepiece!

Really, my favorite part of astronomy is just being under a dark sky with the optics God gave me! I’ve travelled hundreds of miles to amateur astronomy “star parties” and never even looked through a scope!



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Anyway, sorry if these tips aren't what some folks want to hear, but I'd rather share my unvarnished opinions and point you in the right direction. But whatever decision your family makes with respect to scope buying and ownership, please give it the proper consideration.

Jay Ryan is the author of Signs & Seasons, an illustrated, Biblically-centered homeschool curriculum for Classical Astronomy. He is also the creator of the Classical Astronomy Update, an email astronomy newsletter especially for Christian homeschoolers. Visit his website at ClassicalAstronomy.com.

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