



Unschooling. What is it?

By Beverley Paine, www.theeducatingparent.com

Different people define unschooling differently. I use the following definitions:

Unschooling is a rejection of the traditional methods of educating children, that is, segmenting learning into chunks and spoon feeding it according to a set timetable as though children are passive receivers of knowledge and skills. Unschooling is respecting children and young people as individuals and capable learners. Instead of teaching children what we think they ought to know because someone else says they should, we help them learn what they need to learn in order to grow and develop. The child's education is built around the child's interest with the child determining how, and when, what to learn. Unschooling is a rejection of school-based methods of instruction; the parent is not regarded as a 'teacher' but as a 'facilitator', someone who helps the child find appropriate resources to support his or her learning. The emphasis is on retaining or rediscovering the child's natural inclination and enthusiasm for learning.

Natural learning, often used as another term for unschooling, is simply celebrating the fact that everyone learns all the time and that by observing and reflecting on the processes by which we learn we can become more focused in meeting our learning needs efficiently, achieving our goals and purposes in our own way and timeframe. Children learn the skills and knowledge necessary for healthy and holistic development and growth within the everyday context of home and community. There is an emphasis on learning life-skills, as well as practical activities and skills, development of work ethic, self-reliance and service to others.



Unschooling Links

Use the following list to get you started on your exploration of all things Unschooling!

Victorian home educators pioneered unschooling in Australia in the 1980s, bringing John Holt to Australia to talk to interested families, and linking with other families through Otherways <http://www.home-ed.vic.edu.au/>. As soon as the internet arrived it was used by many unschoolers in the USA to share their stories and explain this very different way of looking at and experiencing education and home education. I maintain a list of Australian home educating blogs on my site

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<http://theeducatingparent.com/directory/categories/australianblogs.html>: please email me contact@beverleypaine.com if you wish to add your blog to be added to the list.

The following sites are but a few of the thousands of unschooling sites, blogs and online groups available. If a link no longer works, cut and paste the name of it into your search engine.

- Beverley Paine's Unschool Australia site is now integrated into her The Educating Parent website. See the growing list of articles on unschooling and natural learning here: <http://theeducatingparent.com/sitemap.html#unschooling>, and <http://theeducatingparent.com/sitemap.html#naturalllearning>
- Wendy Priesnitz has been writing about life learning for over three decades - definitely subscribe to [Life Learning Magazine](#) as it is the best e-zine on natural learning and unschooling available! <http://www.lifelearningmagazine.com/index.htm>
- Idzie was unschooled and her very popular blog is a must visit: <http://yes-i-can-write.blogspot.com.au/p/new-to-this-blog-new-to-unschooling.html>
- Unschooling.com is the home of the USA based Home Education Magazine <http://unschooling.com>, founded by Mark and Helen Hegener in 1984 and now edited and produced by Barb Lundgren, originator of the Rethinking Everything conferences and online community <http://rethinkingeverything.com>.
- A description by Earl Stevens on Jan Hunt's awesome Natural Child website – while there have a wander around: http://www.naturalchild.org/guest/earl_stevens.html
- Pat Farenga was a personal friend to John Holt and helped produce Growing Without Schooling with him. He now manages the GWS site: <http://www.holtgws.com/whatisunschoolin.html>. The entire collection of Growing Without School, the unschooling magazine started by John Holt can be read at http://www.holtgws.com/gwsarch_ives.html
- Zenhabits' Leo Babauta's take on unschooling: <http://zenhabits.net/unschool/>
- Taking Children Seriously is well known to many unschoolers: it is THE attachment parenting and non-coercive learning page on the internet! Offers a background into the parenting and educational philosophy behind radical unschooling. <http://www.takingchildrenseriously.com/>
- An awesome collection of definitions and descriptions of unschooling from many practicing unschoolers on Sandra Dodd's popular site <http://sandraddodd.com/unschool/definition.html>. Sandra's site also includes some definitions of 'radical' unschooling <http://sandraddodd.com/unschool/radical>. Find Sandra's 'office' on this page <http://sandraddodd.com/unschooling>
- Joyfully Rejoicing is a very thorough and much loved site on unschooling by Joyce Fetterrol <http://joyfullyrejoicing.com/unschooling/unschoolingphilosophy.html>

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- Why Unschool is a site by two adult unschooled siblings <http://whyunschool.info/>
- Pam Laricchia's Playground delves into all areas unschooling <http://www.livingjoyfully.ca/>
- Unschooling Info and Connections Australia <http://www.unschooling.com.au>
- Christian Unschooling <http://www.christianunschooling.com/>
- USA unschooler Dayna Martin's popular radical unschooling site <http://daynamartin.com/>
- One of the oldest and most informative home educating sites on the internet Ann Zeise's A2Z Home's Cool contains useful links on her unschooling page http://a2zhomeschooling.com/methods/homeschooling_methods/unschooling_home_school/
- Unschooling is not Child-Let Learning by Pam Sorooshian, a regular writer for Sandra Dodd's Always Learning support group: <http://learninghappens.wordpress.com/2011/09/24/unschooling-is-not-child-led-learning/#comment-141>
- The Parental Intelligence, an Australian eNewsletter collated pertinent articles every month with an unschooling flavour, read the back issues online <http://www.parental-intelligence.com/>.
- Camp With Wings is a popular unschooling camp for teenagers run by Janine Banks and home educated young adults: <http://campwithwings.org/>. It is modeled on The Not Back to School Camp, an idea originally created by Grace Llewellyn author of the education-expanding *The Teenage Liberation Handbook*, <http://www.nbtsc.org/>.
- <http://www.lds-ohea.org/natural/index.htm> USA author Amy Bell's natural learning page
- John Taylor Gatto <http://johntaylorgatto.com/> links to his essays and articles - thought provoking stuff



Unschooling Books

Please email Beverley contact@beverleypaine.com to add your favourite unschooling and natural learning books and eBooks to this list.

Reviews wanted! If you have read any of these books, can you spare a few minutes to write a brief (or lengthy!) review to share with others on <http://theeducatingparent.com> to give them idea about what the book has to offer them. Thank you.

- How Children Fail, John Holt
- How Children Learn, John Holt

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- [Learning in the Absence of Education](#), Beverley Paine
- Natural Learning (booklet), Beverley Paine
- Natural Learning Answers, Beverley Paine
- [Free Range Learning](#), Laura Weldon
- Moving a Puddle, Sandra Dodd
- Natural Born Learners: Unschooling and Autonomy in Education, Beatrice Ekwa Ekoko
- And the Skylark Sings to Me: Adventures in Homeschooling and Community-Based Education, David H Albert
- How Children Learn at Home, Alan Thomas
- Guerilla Learning, Amy Silver and Grace Llewellyn
- [The Unschooling Unmanual](#), Jan Hunt and Nanda Van Gestel
- [Challenging Assumptions in Education](#), Wendy Priesnitz
- Free Range Education How Home Education Works, Terri Dowty
- The Unprocessed Child, Living Without School, Valerie Fitzenreiter
- Bound to be Free, Jan Fortune Wood
- Educating Children At Home, Alan Thomas
- Those Unschooled Minds, Julie Webb
- Doing it their way, Jan Fortune Wood
- Big Book of Unschooling, Sandra Dodd
- Radical Unschooling - a Revolution has Begun, Dayna Martin
- Fortune Wood, Jan. With Consent: parenting for all to win
- The Continuum Concept, Jean Leidloff
- Free to Learn: Five ideas for a joyful unschooling life, Pam Laricchia
- Real Lives: Eleven Teenagers Who Don't Go to School, Grace Llewellyn
- The Teenage Liberation Handbook: How to Quit School and Get a Real Life and Education, Grace Llewellyn
- Unconditional Parenting, Alfie Kohn,
- The Unschooled Mind, Howard Gardner.
- The Natural Child, Jan Hunt
- Instead of Education, John Holt
- Free to Live, by Pam Laricchia
- Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling, John Taylor Gatto
- [Live Love Learn](#), Csilla Tottszer

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- Homeschooling and the Voyage of Self-Discovery: A Journey of Original Seeking, David H Albert
- Homeschooling For Excellence, David and Micki Colfax
- Parenting a Free Child - an Unschooled Life, Rue Kream
- Beyond Schooling : Building Communities Where Learning Really Matters, Gatto, John Taylor & Hamza Yusuf Hanson.
- Unschooling, Sara McGrath
- The Unschooling Handbook: How to Use the Whole World as Your Child's Classroom, Griffith, Mary
- The Day I Became an Autodidact: And the Advice, Adventures, and Acrimonies That Befell Me Thereafter, Hailey, Kendall
- [Self University](#), Hayes, Charles D
- Deschooling Our Lives, Hern, Matt
- Magical Child, J Chilton Pearce
- Escape from Childhood; the needs and rights of children, John Holt
- Learning All the Time, John Holt
- Honey for a Child's Heart, Hunt, Gladys
- Deschooling Society, Ilich, Ivan
- Better than College, Blake Boles
- [Trust the Children](#), Kealoha, Anna
- Free to Learn, Peter Gray
- Never Too Late, John Holt
- Weapons of Mass Instruction, John Taylor Gatto
- Gifted Education Comes Home: A Case for Self-Directed Homeschooling, Rivero, Lisa
- Unschooling Rules, Clark Aldridge
- Punished By Rewards, Alfie Kohn
- No Contest, Alfie Kohn
- I Learn Better by Teaching Myself, Leistico, Agnes.
- For the Children's Sake, Sheffer, Susannah
- A Life Worth Living : The Selected Letters of John Holt, Sheffer, Susannah.
- The Simplicity of Homeschooling: Discover the Freedom of Learning Through Living, Goodchild, Vicki and Goodchild, Jack.
- Summerhill, a New View of Childhood, AS Neill
- Leistico, Agnes. Still Teaching Ourselves

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- McKee, Alison. Homeschooling Our Children, Unschooling Ourselves
- The Freethinker's Pocket Directory to the Educational Universe, Meighan, Roland
- Meighan, Roland John Holt, Meighan, Roland
- Meighan, Roland. Learning Unlimited, Meighan, Roland
- The Next Learning System, Meighan, Roland
- Theory and Practice of Regressive Education, Meighan, Roland
- Natural Learning and the Natural Learning Curriculum, Meighan, Roland
- Creating Learning Communities, Ron Miller (Ed)
- Unschooling Kelly, John McEwan



Since 1989 Beverley Paine has steadfastly promoted and supported home education as an educational choice for Australia families. Her books and websites aim to demystify education, gently deschooling families so that they may meet their children's individual and unique educational and developmental needs. Her honesty, insights and wealth of experience continues to bring hope, reassurance and confidence to families.

<http://alwayslearningbooks.com.au>