



How to Use Charlotte Mason's Methods with Multiple Children?

Sheila Carroll

At Living Books Curriculum, we *love* to answer that question. Here—in a nutshell—is the answer:

- Yes, the [Charlotte Mason method](#) (CM) can be used by anyone, no matter how many children you have.
- By **applying the basic principles** of Charlotte Mason's method, you can accomplish more in a few hours of homeschooling than all day with another method, even with several children.
- To accomplish this, you **choose living books** according to subject; **create a schedule** that meets the needs of you and your children and consistently apply the methods. Result? Your children will fall in love with learning all over again.

Applying the principles—consistently

Familiarize yourself with the basic ideas of a Charlotte Mason education. When you do, you will say, “This is the education I wanted for myself!” LBC expresses Charlotte Mason’s philosophy with our [Seven Keys](#) and [Six Tools](#) of learning. We also offer [articles](#), as well as Charlotte Mason’s [twenty basic principles](#).

What are living books?

A living book is, as Charlotte Mason expressed it, “well put” and “well told” (*Parents and Children*, p. 263). In other words, a *living* book powerfully and beautifully expresses the ideas of its author.

Here’s an example:

Typically in elementary school today, the study of germs is given a few pages in a science text. Louis Pasteur and the story of his work with cows and vaccines is given a passing reference. Instead, read [Louis Pasteur: Founder of Modern Medicine](#) to learn of Pasteur’s early research into why vats of fermented beer were turning sour (answer: microorganism had contaminated the batch), and later how three of Pasteur’s daughters died from typhoid and then, in 1865, a cholera epidemic hit Marseilles, France. It was then that Pasteur carried out a number of experiments in a hospital in the hope of finding the germ that caused this feared disease. Interested? So will your children be. That’s a living book.

How to find living books

Visit the booklists on our website; we have over 300 living books listed as part of our curriculum. Your local library is full of living books. Two excellent resources, which are booklists, are [1000 Best Books for Children](#) and [All Through the Ages: History through literature](#).

How will you know it’s living when you read it? Apply “the test.” Read a few pages to your children, and then stop. If they ask for more you know, you have a winner.

How to combine subjects with multiple children

Penny Gardner, a mother of seven, author of *A Charlotte Mason Study Guide* and [*Italics: Beautiful Handwriting for Children*](#) offers this advice regarding how to combine subjects with a range of children:

“Subjects such as history, art appreciation, science, literature, nature study, and anything else that mom is reading aloud can be combined with two or more students. They may take turns narrating those topics. I have done this with three students who were between first and sixth grade. Older students (5-6th grades) may write some of their narrations independently, while mom listens to the younger ones.”

Subjects such as math, beginning reading instruction for the first grader (while the older child reads independently), and perhaps handwriting, including copywork and dictation, may need to be worked on with each child individually.

How can Living Books Curriculum help in teaching multiple children?

When we are asked how best to combine our curriculum with children of varying ages, we recommend the following:

1. If there is a wide range of ages (e.g. 1st and 6th) the parents could purchase LBCs American History and World History and Science living books as the core of their studies and follow Penny Gardner’s advice above.
2. If there is a range of a grade or two (e.g. 1st and 3rd grade), we recommend choosing one of our [complete curriculum bundles](#), usually the upper level of the two.
3. If families would like to get to know us and how our curriculum applies Charlotte Mason’s methods, we recommend our [Getting Acquainted Pack](#).
4. We also highly recommend signing up for our newsletter, which often includes a helpful articles and the latest news.



Sheila and Jim Carroll are founders of Living Books Curriculum, a K-8 Charlotte Mason curriculum for the 21st century. [Living Books Curriculum is a 501 C3 nonprofit](#), the proceeds of our company supports the use of our curriculum in developing nations.