

Together or Split?

Match what you teach together to the age gap, and what each child can do alone.

The rule: same topic, different task · same sequence, never the same lesson. Teach **content together** (history, science, read-alouds, art) and **skills apart** (math, phonics, writing).

Together or split? By age gap

AGE GAP	TEACH TOGETHER	SPLIT (OWN LEVEL)
0–2 years for example, 7 and 8	History, science, geography, read-alouds, art, music, plus spelling or grammar games if at the same point.	Math and phonics (unless a placement test shows the same point), handwriting and writing instruction.
3–4 years for example, 6 and 10	One read-aloud, one science or history topic. Younger draws or narrates; older reads and writes.	All of math, reading and phonics, handwriting and writing instruction.
5+ years for example, 5 and 12	A short family block: a story, a nature walk, cooking or art.	Nearly all academic work. The older child works mostly alone with check-ins.
Toddler or baby plus school-age kids	A song or story at the start of the day.	Everything else. Plan your one-on-one blocks around the little one's box or nap.

The independence ladder

AGE AND STRETCH	WORK THAT SUITS IT	STILL NEEDS YOU
About 5–6 10–15 min	Letter tracing, coloring, a puzzle, an audiobook.	Every new idea; a quick look when the task ends.
About 7–8 10–20 min, growing (our estimate)	A familiar book, a math page on a skill already taught, copywork.	New math and reading skills; checking the work.
About 9–10 20–30 min	Independent reading, a short summary, a practice set, a video lesson.	New concepts; a weekly look at the work.
About 11–12 45 min or more for some	A longer reading, a project, a self-grading math lesson.	Planning, check-ins at the start and end of a block, hard parts.

Independent work = something the child already knows how to do

Lesson lengths from Outschool: 10–15 min for ages 4–7, 20–30 min for ages 8–10, 45 min or more for some middle schoolers; we use them as a rough ceiling for independent stretches. The 7–8 row is our estimate. The ages are examples, not milestones. Start shorter and lengthen the stretch step by step.

Filled-In Example: Ages 6, 9 and 12

A typical case, not a real family. Blocks are lengths, not clock times. Copy the pattern, change the ages.

1 Age 6

2 Age 9

3 Age 12

DAY	TOGETHER	SLOT 1	SLOT 2	SLOT 3	SLOT 4
Mon	Topic: Read-aloud + history topic	With you: 1 1 math with you 2 practice page 3 reading	With you: 2 2 new math lesson 1 audio book 3 self-grading math practice	With you: any corrections and catch-up 1 drawing 2 reading 3 project	With you: all 2-minute check-ins (1, 2 and 3)
Tue	Topic: Read-aloud + science topic	With you: 1 1 phonics 2 copywork 3 reading	With you: 2 2 writing feedback 1 box of quiet items 3 project	With you: 3 3 new math lesson 1 free play 2 reading	With you: all 2-minute check-ins (1, 2 and 3)
Wed	Topic: Read-aloud + art	With you: 1 1 math with you 2 practice page 3 reading	With you: 2 2 new math lesson 1 audio book 3 self-grading math practice	With you: any corrections and catch-up 1 drawing 2 reading 3 project	With you: all 2-minute check-ins (1, 2 and 3)
Thu	Topic: Read-aloud + science topic	With you: 1 1 phonics 2 copywork 3 reading	With you: 2 2 writing feedback 1 box of quiet items 3 project	With you: 3 3 new math lesson 1 free play 2 reading	With you: all 2-minute check-ins (1, 2 and 3)
Fri	Topic: Read-aloud + nature walk	With you: 1 1 math with you 2 reading 3 project	With you: 2 2 new math lesson 1 audio book 3 self-grading math practice	With you: 2, 3 weekly look at work 1 drawing	With you: all plan next week on the grid

Why it is built this way (our choice)

The 6-year-old is first in the rotation, when attention is freshest (Classical Conversations). The 6- and 9-year-old each get a block every day. The 12-year-old gets a full block only on new-math days (Tue, Thu); on other days it is a 2-minute check-in. Self-checking practice comes after the lesson, never before it. Math days differ by child because programs differ: give each child the days their own program needs. The matrix would keep only a short family block for a 6-year gap; this family shares a read-aloud and a topic anyway because the 9-year-old bridges the two.

Weekly Rotation Grid

Circle who is with you in each slot, then write what the others do. Works for 2, 3 or 4 children.

1 Name: _____

2 Name: _____

3 Name: _____

4 Name: _____

DAY	TOGETHER	SLOT 1	SLOT 2	SLOT 3	SLOT 4
Mon	Topic: _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Tue	Topic: _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Wed	Topic: _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Thu	Topic: _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Fri	Topic: _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____	With you: ① ② ③ ④ _____ _____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

How to fill this in

Label each task by how much it needs you: **fully** (a new concept: it gets its own slot, one child at a time), **a check-in** (two minutes at the start or end), or **not at all** (practice of a known skill: it fills the slots when you teach someone else). Start with the youngest in Slot 1. Count the "fully" tasks: that is the number of slots you need.

One Page Per Child + Troubleshooting

Copy this page for each child. Use the table when the day goes sideways.

One page for _____ (age _____) Week of _____

WITH THE FAMILY (CONTENT SUBJECTS)

INDEPENDENT-WORK LIST (A SKILL THEY ALREADY KNOW)

AT THEIR OWN LEVEL: SUBJECT · PROGRAM · LESSON

ONE-ON-ONE MINUTES · SLOT · GOAL FOR THE WEEK

When it goes wrong

WHAT YOU SEE	POSSIBLE CAUSE (OUR READING)	TRY FIRST
Everyone needs you at once	No ready independent task, or too many one-on-one subjects at once.	Stagger start times; keep a "done, now what?" basket.
Youngest melts down mid-morning	Blocks too long, or the child comes last, tired.	10-15 minute blocks, first in the rotation.
Shared lesson bores one, loses the other	Same topic and same task.	Keep the topic; change the task: draw, narrate or write.
Math together leaves both confused	Math is sequential; they are at different points.	Split math; placement test for each child.
Toddler interrupts every lesson	Nothing is planned for them.	A box for each weekday, kept for school time.
Older child resents helping	Too much teaching, too little own work.	Short teach-backs only.
Independent work not finished	Task is new or steps are unclear.	Practice a known skill with a 3-step checklist.

Change one thing at a time

These are common patterns, not tested fixes. Try one fix for a week before changing anything else. If a child struggles in a way that a new routine does not fix, talk with a qualified professional. This sheet is general information, not educational or medical advice.