



FOR THE 2026-2027 HOMESCHOOL YEAR

Plan the Year Around Your Child

A Firefly planning workbook.

Nine worksheets that turn a summer of second-guessing into one page you can hang on the fridge - built around the children you actually have, not the grade levels they happen to be in.

INSIDE	WHAT IT DOES FOR YOU
Steps 1-3	Your purpose, your honest capacity, and a profile of each child you are teaching
Step 4	The five things your curriculum has to do for you this year
Build	The right level in every subject, for every child - the four minutes that change the year
The Gap Page	The holes every plan has, found in July instead of January
Spark	The elective she keeps asking for, and how to finally say yes
Plan & Budget	Subject by subject, the real number, and your one-page year

THIS WORKBOOK BELONGS TO

PLANNING FOR THESE LEARNERS

Print it. Write in it. Change your mind in it.



WELCOME

From our kitchen table to yours

A note before you begin

If you are reading this in July with fourteen browser tabs open, a half-filled cart, and a knot in your stomach - you are in extremely good company. Curriculum season has a way of turning capable, prayerful women into second-guessers.

Here is the thing we wish someone had told us sooner: **most curriculum disappointment is not a quality problem. It is a fit problem.** The program that made your friend cry happy tears in September is the same program that will make your kitchen table miserable in October - not because it is bad, but because it was built for a different child, a different mother, and a different season of life than the one you are standing in.

So this workbook does not open with a list of what to buy. It opens with you. Who you are teaching, what you can honestly carry this year, and what you actually believe education is for. Once those are on paper, the rest of the planning gets remarkably simple.

We are the family behind **Firefly Education Network**. We built Firefly because these worksheets kept producing an answer that nothing on the market would give us - a different level in every subject, for every child, without buying four boxes. Fill these pages in honestly and you may see the same things we did.

★ HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Print it. This is a pencil-and-coffee document, not a screen document. Print one copy for yourself, and one Learner Profile page for each child.

Give it about forty-five minutes. You do not have to finish it in one sitting, and you should not finish it in a store aisle.

Use a pencil. You will change your mind. That is not failure - that is the entire advantage of homeschooling.

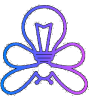
Do the Build page even if you are sure of your picks. It is the page most families tell us changed their year.

◆ FAITH CONNECTION

"Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established."

— Proverbs 16:3

Before you compare a single program, pray over the child - not the catalog. The right materials serve the child God actually gave you, not the student you imagined when you started.



START

Four things veteran moms wish they'd known

Before you open a single catalog



1

Most burnout is not caused by the wrong curriculum.

It is caused by importing the school system into the kitchen. Rigid schedules, checking every box, six subjects before lunch, and the quiet conviction that learning only counts if it looks like a classroom. Ask what your *day* needs to feel like before you ask what your curriculum should be.

2

Friction is information, not a verdict on you.

When lessons take twice as long and everyone is grinding their teeth, that is a mismatch signal - between the material and the people using it. Well-reviewed programs flop in good homes all the time. It is not a character flaw. It is data.

3

Almost every experienced family ends up eclectic.

They keep the boxed program for two subjects, swap math for something gentler, add a video course for the subject Mom dreads, and stop apologizing for it. If you are already sensing you will need to mix, you are not being disloyal. You are being early.

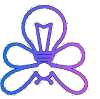
4

Comparison will cost you more than curriculum will.

The gorgeous shelfie you saw at midnight is a photograph, not a school year. Choose for the family in your house, at this age, in this season, with this budget.

■ A QUICK REFRAME

- You are not choosing a curriculum. You are designing a *year* - a rhythm your family can sustain from September through May without losing peace.
- Curriculum is one ingredient in that. An important one. But only one.



STEP 1

Start with why

Ten minutes. Do this before you look at a single price.



Every family has one or two non-negotiables driving them. Naming them out loud is what lets you say a clean, guilt-free *no* to eleven perfectly lovely programs later on.

Why we are homeschooling this year - the honest version

Not the version you give relatives. The real one.

Three things we will not sacrifice this year

Family worship in the morning • being outdoors daily • finishing by 1 p.m. • reading aloud together • solid math • Dad teaching Bible • staying under budget

One thing we are releasing this year

The thing you keep doing because you feel you should. Name it and let it go.

★ NOW WRITE IT AS ONE SENTENCE

"This year, our homeschool exists to _____, and we will protect
_____ to do it."

Tape that sentence inside a cabinet door. In February, it is the difference between "we are failing" and "we are on track."



STEP 2

The honest season check

Curriculum is chosen by a woman with a calendar

The single most common planning mistake is choosing for the season you wish you were in. A program that needs you at the elbow for three hours a day is a beautiful thing - and an impossible thing in the year you have a newborn, a job, or a parent to care for. Check every box that is true of the next nine months.

- ☐ A baby, toddler, or new little one at home
- ☐ I work for pay (any amount of hours)
- ☐ Caring for an aging parent or a family member who needs me
- ☐ A move, deployment, renovation, or major transition ahead
- ☐ A pregnancy, health issue, or recovery in the picture
- ☐ A student who needs high school credits and a transcript
- ☐ A child who needs extra help, testing, or therapies
- ☐ Co-op, church, or sports commitments that eat two mornings a week
- ☐ This is our very first year homeschooling
- ☐ Teaching three or more children across different grade levels

Now count your boxes and circle your capacity

BOXES	YOUR REALISTIC CAPACITY	WHAT THAT MEANS WHEN YOU SHOP
0 - 1	Full capacity 2-3 hrs at the elbow	You can carry a teacher-intensive, discussion-rich program. Read-alouds, unit studies, hands-on science - all realistic. Still leave one subject independent so you can breathe.
2 - 3	Split capacity 1-2 hrs at the elbow	Choose teacher-led for the two subjects that matter most to you, and something self-teaching for the rest. This is where most families actually live.
4 +	Protected capacity under 1 hr at the elbow	Prioritize open-and-go, short lessons, video or self-paced instruction, and automatic grading. Buying an elaborate program this year will not make you a better mother. It will make you a tired one.

Whichever line you circled

Firefly is built to flex to it. In a full-capacity year, teach from the printed workbooks and read the literature courses aloud together. In a protected-capacity year, lean on the self-paced courses, the built-in tutor and the automatic gradebook, and let your hour go to the child who needs it most. You are not choosing a different program when your season changes - only a different rhythm inside the same one.

There is no prize for the hardest option. A modest plan finished in May beats a magnificent plan abandoned in November - every single time.

**STEP 3****Know each learner**

Print one of these pages per child



Child's name

Grade / age this fall

What genuinely lit them up last year

A subject, a book, a project, a rabbit trail. Whatever made them keep going after you said they could stop.

What caused tears, stalling, or daily battles**Circle what is true of this child**

Learns best by	reading a story	working a page	building / doing	watching & listening
Workbooks make them	settled	neutral	restless	miserable
Writing by hand is	no trouble	slow but fine	a struggle	the whole battle
Works independently	most subjects	with a checklist	with check-ins	not yet
Pace across subjects	even	ahead in one or two	behind in one or two	wildly uneven
Wants to be with siblings	always	sometimes	prefers alone	depends on the day

The subject I most dread teaching this child**The subject we should protect at all costs****Keep this page - you will use it**

Everything you just circled is something you can actually set up in Firefly. If your child does better with a workbook in front of him, print the pages. If he does better watching a lesson, he can watch it. If he is ahead in reading and needs more time in math, you simply put him in the level that fits for each one.

In other words, this page is not a wish list. It is the plan.



STEP 4

The Five Fit Filters

The five things your curriculum has to get right

Whatever you bring into your home this year has to get five things right. Here they are, with what to ask about each one - and what Firefly does about it, so you can see for yourself rather than take our word for it.

	WHAT TO ASK ABOUT IT	HOW FIREFLY ANSWERS IT
Faith	Is Scripture part of the teaching itself, or added to the end of the chapter? Who wrote the course, and what do they believe about creation and about your child?	Scripturally aligned all the way through - Scripture is written into the lessons themselves, alongside academics that meet national standards. Christ-centered by design, not by decoration.
Teacher load	How many minutes per child, per day, does it ask of <i>you</i> ? Is there a teacher book with the answers already worked out? Multiply honestly by the number of children.	You get your child started - most children need a parent alongside them at the beginning of a course - and as he gets familiar with how it works, he takes more of it on himself. Teacher books give you the worked solutions, and the parent dashboard shows you the week without you having to sit through it.
Learner	Does it match the child you just described - and can it be set at <i>his</i> level rather than his age? Does it come in a form he can hold? And when he falls in love with a subject nobody publishes a course for, is there any way to teach it?	Choose what level your child needs for each subject. Printable workbooks and real literature for the child who needs paper; video and self-pacing for the one who does not. Our AI course generator builds a full course on almost any interest in minutes, so a passion can become real schoolwork instead of a someday - and a library of hundreds of thousands of ad-free educational videos to explore alongside it.
Season & budget	Teacher guides, answer keys, consumables for <i>each</i> child, lab kits, printer ink, shipping. And does the number climb every time you add a subject?	One flat family subscription for every subject, every child and every level. The number does not move when you add a course in February.
Accountability	What does your state require, and what will it give you toward it? Grades, hours, work samples, a portfolio, a transcript. Everyone skips this in July and regrets it in April.	Planner, gradebook, portfolio builder, transcript generator and homeschool law by state - filling in as she works, not reconstructed in May.

■ THE TIE-BREAKER, IF YOU ARE STILL DECIDING

- Ask which option will still get done on the week everything goes wrong. Not your best week - your worst one.
- Then ask what it costs you to be wrong. Changing your mind should cost an afternoon, not another purchase.

**BUILD**

Build your child's actual year

One row per subject. Be honest in the second column.

This is the most important worksheet in the book, and it takes four minutes. In the first column write the grade your child is officially *in*. In the second, write the level she is **actually** working at in that subject - the level where she is neither bored nor drowning. You already know these numbers. Write them down anyway.

Child's name _____

Age this fall _____

SUBJECT	GRADE SHE IS 'IN'	LEVEL SHE ACTUALLY NEEDS	HOW FAR APART?
Math			
Reading			
Grammar & writing			
Literature			
History			
Science			
Bible			
Elective			

If any row is more than a year apart

Then no single boxed grade level can serve that child, and no amount of shopping will fix it. You either buy two and discard half of each, or you pick one and let her be bored or lost. That is the whole problem, written in your own handwriting.

At Firefly, you just sign her up that way

Whatever you wrote in the middle column is exactly how you set her up - fourth grade math and seventh grade reading, if that is where she is. Every level is included in the same family subscription, so putting her where she actually belongs in each subject costs you nothing extra.

Those gaps stop being something to fix, and go back to being what they always were - your daughter, as she is.

Print this page again for each child. Most families find the pattern repeats - and that no two children in the same house belong in the same box.



GAPS

The Gap Page

The page most families skip



Here is the part the catalogs will not tell you: **no single curriculum covers a whole family's whole year.** Not one. Every honest plan has holes in it, and the families who have a peaceful year are simply the ones who found their holes in July instead of January.

So before you commit to anything, do this. Put the Step 3 profile of each child beside the Build worksheet you just filled in, and check every line below that is true of your plan as it stands today.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ There is a subject I still have not chosen anything for. | ☐ I am not fully sure what my state requires of us this year. |
| ☐ There is a subject I dread teaching , and I already know I will let it slide. | ☐ I have a reluctant or bored student and nothing on my list will excite them. |
| ☐ One child is working a grade or two apart from the others, so we cannot combine. | ☐ We are isolated - no co-op, few homeschool friends, or we just moved. |
| ☐ One child is ahead in one subject and behind in another , and no boxed level fits both. | ☐ I have a high schooler and I am nervous about credits and record keeping. |
| ☐ Someone will ask me a question at 8 p.m. that I cannot answer. | ☐ My plan works beautifully - but only if nothing goes wrong all year. |
| ☐ I do not have a real system for grades, hours, work samples, or a transcript. | |

★ NOW LOOK AT WHAT YOU CHECKED

That is your real shopping list. Not another boxed curriculum - you already chose one of those, and it is probably fine. What you just checked is a different kind of need entirely: these are the places where your children's actual, individual needs do not fit inside one box.

Which is not a failure of your planning. A boxed grade level is built for a child who is exactly on grade in every subject, interested in exactly the standard things, and moving at exactly the standard pace. You have probably never met that child. You certainly are not raising one.

0 - 2 gaps

Wonderful. Read the next page anyway - it is short, and it is where the other nine questions get answered.

3 or more gaps

You are the reason the next four pages exist. Turn the page and read them straight through.

**ANSWER**

Every one of those, in one place

What Firefly does with the list you just checked

Go back and look at what you checked. Now read this page against it.

WHAT YOU CHECKED	WHAT FIREFLY DOES ABOUT IT
A subject you have not chosen yet	Christ-centered, scripturally aligned courses across the core subjects, built to national standards - plus a course generator that will make one for anything we do not already have, in minutes.
A subject you dread teaching	You start him off, then step back as he finds his footing - plus a teacher book of worked solutions so you are never grading something you have not touched since high school.
Children on different levels	The whole point. Choose the level per subject, per child. The second column of your Build worksheet is simply how you enroll.
A child ahead in one subject, behind in another	Same answer, inside one child. Reading at one level and math at another is the normal case here, not a special accommodation.
The eight o'clock question you cannot answer	A built-in tutor your student asks directly, any hour, without waiting for you to finish the dishes.
Grades, hours, portfolios, transcripts	Planner, gradebook, portfolio builder and transcript generator in the parent dashboard - filling in as she works, so April is not spent reconstructing the year from memory.
Not sure what your state requires	Homeschool law by state, in the same dashboard. Read it once in July and write down your deadlines.
A bored or reluctant student	Build her an elective on the thing she will not stop talking about. It takes minutes and costs nothing extra. Plus hundreds of thousands of ad-free educational videos and live classes.
Isolation	Groups, forums and local chapters of other homeschool families, and a mobile app so it travels with you.
Nervous about high school credits	Credit-bearing high school courses with certificates carrying student and parent signature lines, plus the transcript generator. Geometry and Algebra 1 are finished; more is rolling out.
Only works if nothing goes wrong	Nothing is locked in July. A course that is not working in October can be traded the same afternoon, at no extra cost.

One subscription. Every subject, every child, every level. Not priced per course, not per class, not per student.

**FIREFLY**

Built around the child you described

Firefly Education Network

Firefly Education Network was built by a homeschooling family, around our own kitchen table, and it starts from the same conviction this whole workbook is built on: **a child is not a grade level**. He is a particular person, with his own pace in every separate subject and his own set of things that light him up.

Most curriculum asks you to treat that as a compromise. You buy the sixth-grade box, and the parts that do not fit your child are simply the cost of doing business. Firefly is built from the other direction: one family subscription, and you assemble each child's year to match exactly what you wrote in Step 3 and on the Build worksheet.

WHAT THAT MEANS IN PRACTICE	
Levels that follow the child, not the box	Choose the course level subject by subject, child by child. A boy reading two years ahead while working carefully through math a year back is not a problem to be solved - it is simply how he is made. You can build his year that way without buying two boxes and throwing half of each one away.
Electives you build in minutes	The thing your child cannot stop talking about - horses, aviation, coding, marine biology, the Civil War - can become a real course with real lessons in about the time it takes to make coffee. Our AI course generator writes it for you, so a child's passion becomes real schoolwork instead of a someday. That is how a love of learning actually gets built: by taking a child's interest seriously enough to teach it.
A video library for the curious	Hundreds of thousands of ad-free educational videos on nearly any topic, so when a question comes up at the table there is somewhere good to go and follow it.
Every subject in one place, at one price	The whole list you just checked - the empty subject, the dreaded subject, the records and transcripts, the bored student, the isolation - covered by a single family subscription rather than five separate purchases, four logins, and five renewal dates.
You start them, then they take over	Firefly is not a program that raises your children for you. For most courses you will sit down with your child at the start and walk him into it. As he gets used to how a course works, he takes more and more of it on himself - which is the goal, and which happens sooner than most parents expect.
Room to change your mind in November	You are not locked into a boxed year you already paid for, so a course that is not working can be traded for one that is. No shelf of expensive books nobody opened.



PRINT

What actually shows up on your table

Online does not mean screen-only



Online platform does not mean screen-only, and that distinction matters more to most families than any feature list. Here is what a Firefly course is made of.

-  **Printable student workbooks.** Every course comes with downloadable student books - the pages your child writes on, in pencil, at the table. If you printed this workbook to fill in, you have already got a feel for the kind of pages we make.
-  **Teacher books.** Worked solutions and answer keys, so you are never grading a subject you have not touched in twenty years.
-  **Extra practice sets.** On many courses, additional problem sets for the child who needs one more pass before it clicks.
-  **Real books.** The literature courses are built around actual books - which means read-aloud time on the couch is part of the plan, not something you squeeze in around it.
-  **The textbook lives online.** That is the piece that stays on the screen, and it is what lets the tutor, the gradebook, and the progress tracking quietly work together in the background.



Getting set up takes about twenty minutes

- 1 Add each child, then set their levels.**

Take the second column of your Build worksheet and enter it exactly as written. Not the grade on the birth certificate - the level each one is actually working at, subject by subject.
- 2 Build the elective before the year starts.**

Take what you wrote on the Spark page and make it a course this week. Then tell her it is on her schedule. Watch what that does to her opinion of school.
- 3 Print week one.**

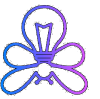
Student pages for each child, and the teacher pages for you. Put them in a binder on the table so Monday morning is already decided.
- 4 Set your state's deadlines once.**

Open the compliance page in the dashboard, write your two or three dates on the calendar, and stop carrying it in your head.

★ OUR OWN ADVICE APPLIES TO US TOO

Two honest notes. Firefly's written curriculum currently spans **grades 3 through 8**, with high school courses rolling out - Geometry and Algebra 1 are finished. And it is a subscription, which is a different shape of cost than a boxed program you buy once and hand down.

So hold us to the same standard as anything else you would bring home. Look through the course list for your children's grades, start with one or two subjects rather than the whole year at once, and give it the three-week test later in this workbook before you build the year around it. **fireflyedu.org**



SPARK

The elective she keeps asking for

The one that never fits in the budget



Every homeschool mother we know has a version of this: a child who will talk for forty minutes about one thing, and a school year with no room in it for that thing. When electives are priced one at a time, a child's curiosity becomes a line item - and the line item is always the first thing cut.

What can your child not stop talking about?

Horses, aviation, the Civil War, marine biology, drawing, engines, baking, weather, Rome, birds.

What would a real course in it actually cover?

Do not overthink it. Four or five things you would want her to come away knowing.

What has stopped you from teaching it so far?

Time, money, not knowing the subject yourself, or simply that it never made it onto the schedule.

★ NOW GO BUILD IT

Inside Firefly, what you just wrote on those lines becomes a real course - lessons, topics, quizzes and printable pages - in about the time it takes to make coffee. Adding it costs nothing extra, because nothing here is priced by the course.

This is the part families tell us changes the feel of the whole year. Not the math. Not the transcripts. The Tuesday she asked about something and you got to say yes.

**PLAN**

Subject by subject

Carry the levels across from your Build worksheet



Now write the year down in one place. Bring the level for each subject across from your Build worksheet - that column is the plan. The last two are the ones families forget, and they are the ones that decide whether the year feels calm or chaotic.

SUBJECT	LEVEL WE'RE USING	WHO TEACHES	PRINT?	HOW IT'S GRADED / RECORDED
Bible / devotions				
Math				
Reading / phonics				
Grammar & writing				
Literature				
History / social studies				
Science				
Foreign language				
Art & music				
PE / health / life skills				
Elective or interest				
Elective or interest				

Before you finalize

Count the rows where **you** are the teacher. Multiply by minutes per day. Multiply by children. If that number is bigger than the capacity you circled in Step 2, something on this page has to change - today, not in October.

Inside Firefly

You set each child to the level in the middle column when you sign them up. Every course prints, so that column is already answered. And the grades in the last column fill themselves in as she works. If you are new, or in a hard season, set math and reading carefully and let the rest be gentle - nobody has ever regretted a gentle first year.

**BUDGET**

The real number

Curriculum is rarely what breaks a homeschool budget



The extras are. Write down what you expect, then come back in December and write what it actually was. That second column is how you plan next year in twenty minutes instead of twenty hours.

EXPENSE	PLANNED	ACTUAL	REUSABLE NEXT YEAR?
Core curriculum (per child)			
Teacher guides & answer keys			
Consumable workbooks - one per child			
Printing: ink, paper, binders			
Science lab kits & supplies			
Books, readers, library fines (yes, really)			
Art, music, and craft supplies			
Co-op or class fees			
Online subscriptions or platforms			
Tutoring or outside instruction			
Testing, evaluation, or assessment fees			
Field trips, memberships, museum passes			
Sports, lessons, activities			
Shipping			
TOTAL			

For perspective

Families commonly report spending roughly **\$200 to \$700 per student on curriculum**, and somewhere around **\$500 to \$2,500 per child all-in** once supplies, activities, co-ops and testing are counted - and that is usually paid in six pieces, to six companies, across the year.

At Firefly it is one flat family subscription. Every subject, every child, every level, with the gradebook and transcripts already in it rather than being another line on this page. Adding a course mid-year does not change the number. Current plans are at **fireflyedu.org** - compare them against your total above, not against zero.



TEST

Your first three weeks

Fifteen school days. That is all it takes to know.

Whatever you start with - Firefly included - hold it to this. Not the honeymoon first week, because everything is charming in week one. And not a whole semester of quiet misery either.

Watch these five signals

1 Does it get opened?

Not "is it good." Does the book actually come off the shelf on an ordinary Tuesday?

2 How long does one lesson really take?

Time it twice. Compare to what the publisher promised. Adjust your whole plan to the real number.

3 Where is the friction?

Is your child fighting the *content*, or the *format*? Content struggle is learning. Format struggle is a mismatch.

4 How do you feel on Sunday night?

Dread about a specific subject is the loudest signal in homeschooling. Listen to it.

5 Is anything being learned?

Ask your child to explain one thing from last week without looking. That is your assessment.

Then make one of three decisions

KEEP

It is working. Order the rest of the year and stop reading reviews. Genuinely - close the tabs.

ADJUST

The bones are good. Cut the problem part: do every other lesson, skip the busywork, do it orally, drop a workbook page. You are allowed.

RELEASE

It is not the one. Change the level, change the course, or change the subject order - and inside Firefly that costs you an afternoon rather than another purchase.

★ PERMISSION SLIP

I, _____, give myself permission to change any part of this year's plan without guilt, apology, or explanation to anyone. Curriculum is a tool. My children are not.

signed _____

date _____



REVIEW

The December checkpoint

Ten minutes in December saves a February you do not want



Put a note in your calendar for the first week of December right now, before you forget. Come back to this page then.

What is working better than I expected?

What have we quietly stopped doing? (Be honest. This is the most useful answer on the page.)

Which subject is causing the most friction - and is it the content or the format?

Which child is thriving? Which one needs something different?

What can I drop for the rest of the year without any real loss?

Am I still protecting the three things I named in Step 1?

◆ FAITH CONNECTION

"A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps."

— Proverbs 16:9



YEAR

Your one-page year

Everything that matters, on one page. Put it on the fridge.



Our purpose sentence

My honest capacity

Our total budget

Each child - their levels, and the one thing that must go well this year

CHILD	AGE	LEVELS SET?	THE ONE THING

The gaps I checked - and how each one is covered

The elective we are finally going to teach

First day of school

My December checkpoint date

You have now done more thoughtful planning than most school districts do all summer. Close the tabs. Make the tea. It is going to be a good year.



One Last Thing

From our family to yours

No curriculum in this guide, or any other, will do the thing you are actually doing. You are not delivering content. You are discipling people - slowly, at close range, on ordinary days, with interruptions.

The books are just tools. Choose good ones, hold them loosely, and put them down when the child in front of you needs something the lesson plan did not anticipate. That is not falling behind. That is the whole reason you brought them home.

✦ FAITH CONNECTION

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

— Proverbs 22:6

✦ FAITH CONNECTION

"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

— Galatians 6:9

With you in it,

Mary & Jordan Page

Founders, Firefly Education Network

Share this workbook with any mother who needs it. Print it, copy it, hand it out at your co-op. It was made to be given away.

fireflyedu.org