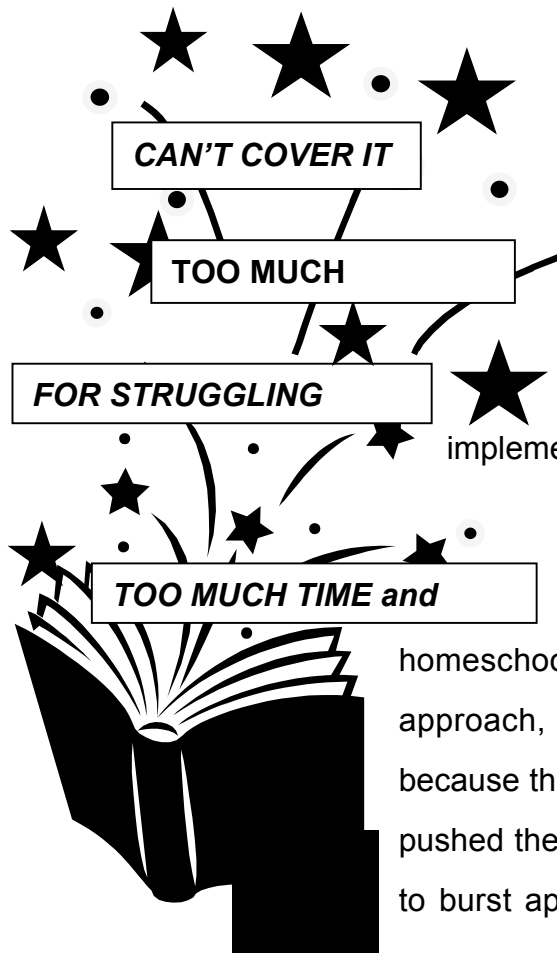


# EXPOSING THE UNIT STUDY MYTHS

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When someone mentions the word 'unit study' do your toes curl? Or do feelings of desire (longing) come flooding your way? Does the very thought of homeschooling with this method seem overwhelming? Or are you intrigued and curious about how to

implement unit studies into your homeschool?

As I've interacted with countless homeschool families in the past twenty years, I get the sense that most homeschool moms would like to be doing more of the unit study approach, and certainly know their kids would like them to, but because they have heard some myths via the rumour mill, they have pushed the option right out of their minds. In this article, I would like to burst apart some of these myths, but before we begin, let's be sure we are on the same page regarding this method.

What exactly is a UNIT STUDY? There have been many well known speakers that have spoken at conferences and written books regarding this method - Valerie Bendt, Inge Canon, Sally and Clay Clarkson, and Jessica Hulcy, just to name a few. You can buy already-prepared unit studies or gather supplies to make your own. But really, what is unit study? It is plainly and simply a study of a unit (topic), while integrating subjects. Of course, there are many different approaches to a unit study and perhaps that is exactly why the myths continue to float around. The key to exploding

these myths is directly related to the approach that you take in exploring this delightful option with your children.

Let's begin our discussion to debunk these myths:

## **MYTH #1**

***It is impossible for a unit study to cover all the subjects for all of my children.***

Of course, there are some subjects – Math and Language – that are taught sequentially, and need to be practiced daily to gain proficiency. However for ALL the other subjects there is not a specific order for topics to be learned. Curriculum writers have made decisions as to what topics we are interested in at various ages and made a scope and sequence chart so that their chapters and grade levels would not overlap topics. Somehow we have been made to believe that we have to cover every chapter in every book. However there is another way.

We as home educators have the privilege of learning topics with our children as their interest is peaked. Isn't it true that one can learn about birds at age 3 and at age 90? The opportune time to study birds is when spring is in the air and you see the robins and cardinals building their nests or when you are heading on a family vacation to the ocean and are able to spot shorebirds! Is there an ideal grade level for this learning to take place? Of course not - the younger children will learn according to their abilities and the older children will be able to research at a deeper level, but you will have opened the door to the wide world of information on this topic and will come to the realization that you will never learn it all.

## **MYTH #2**

***Implementing a unit study will take too much of my time and energy.***

Okay, so this IS the homeschool mom's nightmare! *"How in the world am I going to be able to do everything that I need to do in a day? It just seems easier to give them some textbooks and workbooks so that they can get their work done."* In my twenty years of homeschooling our five children, I have considered these arguments on numerous occasions. I have always come out of these discussions with the same answer. This is a myth! The key words in this argument are 'seems easier'. Believe me, it is way more productive to be putting time INTO a unit study than to be NAGGING your children to finish their work pages! However, the reason this myth exists is that you have 'heard' all of the wonderful and amazing things that other homeschool moms have done with their children and you stand in awe or in fear and trepidation. And then you deduct that you just do not have that time.

To help you debunk this myth you must remember that implementing a unit study can take as much time as you can give it. There is always more that you can do and learn on any given topic. That's the amazing reality about this wonderful world that God has made. That's the beauty of teaching this love of learning. But, if you can simply pick a topic, read some books- fiction and nonfiction, do a couple hands-on activities and write something about that topic, you have completed A UNIT! Remember to relax and enjoy your family.

### **MYTH #3**

#### ***Only a creative, resourceful mother can teach using the unit study method.***

I'll admit it! I have not always been this creative, nor have I always loved learning. These two bi-products have come as a result of learning with my children over the years. This is the bonus of homeschooling! Yet, this myth hovers about and keeps you from experiencing the joy of exploring new topics alongside of your children. I think this myth has paralyzed too many homeschool moms. Hands-on does not equal putting on a full-scale drama production of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night! You may not be interested

in serving a Medieval Feast while you are doing a Kings and Queens unit, but you may be able to give your children a refrigerator box and suggest that they make a castle. As frivolous as these activities may seem, they are the very thing that connects the learning, bringing retention and purpose to our studies. The good news is that you don't have to be creative- your children will have plenty of ideas. You just have to give them time, materials and space.

#### **MYTH #4**

##### ***Unit studies are for the struggling learner or ADD child.***

Everyone learns best by actually doing an activity, rather than reading about it in a book! I'm sure you have personally experienced this as you've become more adept at the use of your computer. How many times have you said to your children, "Just show me what to do" as they've clicked away in front of you? No matter what our learning style is, we ALL learn best when using at least three senses. It seems that somehow for ease of teaching and convenience of classroom management, educational experts moved towards curriculum that uses textbooks and workbooks. And somehow we've concluded that 'school' is what we do at desks or kitchen tables with pencil in hand.

This myth must be debunked! Yes, there are various learning styles which require a variety of teaching styles. I believe that ALL children will benefit from the unit study method and that ALL children will benefit from doing some hands-on activities to cement the information in their minds. As I look back at our own children's experiences, I can see that this unit study approach was a model for future activities that they would be involved in. (ie. Sunday School lessons, camp instructor, university presentations, etc.) The benefits of doing a unit study with your whole family extend far beyond the subject matter.

With these myths exposed, let me finish with a final word –JUST DO IT! You will not regret it and your children will thank you for this breath of fresh air.

Diane, and her husband, Harv have been home educating their five children since 1988. She has taught the “unit study” way, using KONOS for all of these years, adding bits and pieces of other curriculum to this approach.

Diane is the KONOS – Canada East Representative. She has been sharing these resources and her home schooling expertise at various support groups, conferences and all-day seminars for the past ten years. For more information, check out the website at [www.konos-canada.com](http://www.konos-canada.com).