

How to Create a Unit Study

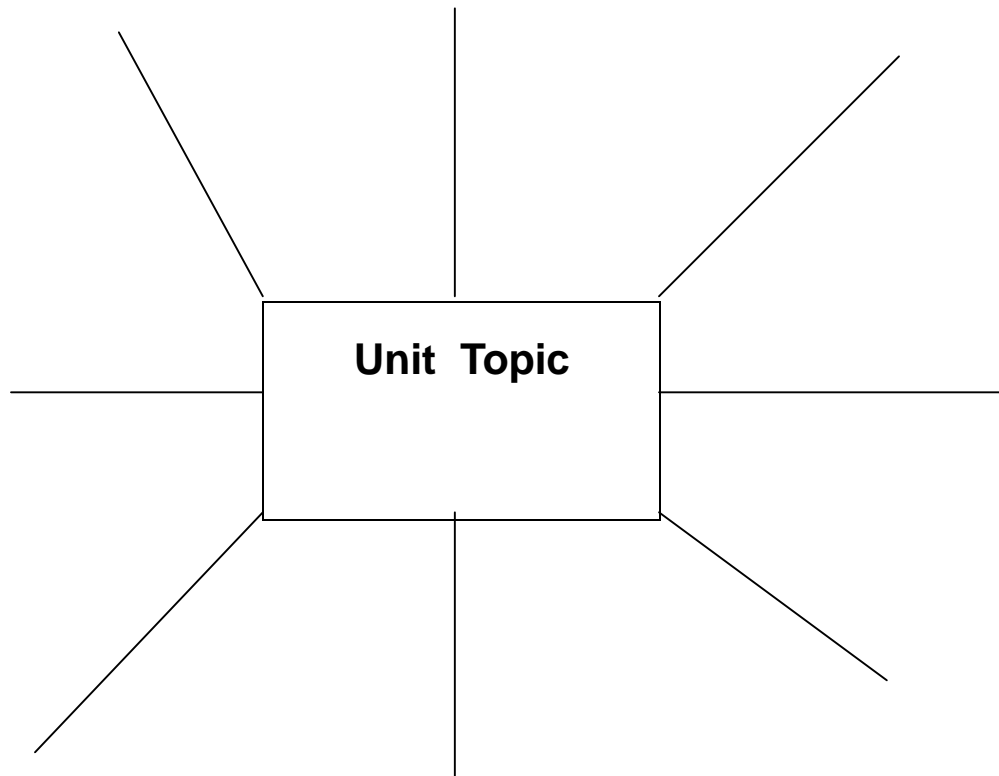
by Eileen Heath

copyright 2001

Table of Contents

Brainstorming your initial topic	2
Activities and Projects – another Brainstorm list	3
Fitting Activities into Curriculum Areas	4
Ways to come up with ideas – Tic-Tac-Toe Menu	5
Resources	6
Unit Study Assignment Sheet	8

I. Brainstorming Your Initial Topic



Start with your central topic and brainstorm **WITH YOUR CHILD** as many subtopics and related topics as you can. Don't limit this to **ONLY** the current interests. Sometimes an idea for a subtopic that you throw out might lead to other ideas neither of you had thought about.

Once you've exhausted all ideas, narrow down your focus and choose what your unit study will be about.

2.. Activities and Projects

Another brainstorm list

Unit Topic _____

Think of all sorts of activities you could do with this.... again, just throw out ideas, even if they seem wild at first. Some general headings to put these under:

Writing	Reading	oral & visual presentations	dioramas & models
learning centers	posters	field trips	community experts
field trips	cooking	games	other

3. Fitting Activities into Curriculum Areas

Take the activities you have come up with and fit them into the different curriculum areas. One activity will probably be put into more than one curricular area. For instance, a written report on Leonardo D'Vinci will go under Language Arts, History, and Art.

Unit Focus _____

Math	Language Arts	Science
History/Social Studies	Art/Music	Physical Education

Ways to come up with activities...

Tic Tac Toe menu...

This is to give to your child – the idea is to promote decision-making and choices within your guidelines.

Collect facts or ideas which are important to you	Teach a lesson about your topic to your family or other group. Include at least one visual aid.	Compare two things from your study. Look for ways they are alike and ways they are different.
Photograph, videotape, or film part of your presentation.	Graph some part of your study to show how many or how few	Demonstrate something to show what you have learned.
Survey others to learn their opinions and feelings about some fact, idea or feature of your study.	Dramatize something to show what you have learned.	Forecast how your topic will change in the next 10 years.

Directions: Choose activities in a tic-tac-toe design. When you have completed the activities in a row – horizontally, vertically, or diagonally – you may decide to be finished. Or you may keep going and complete more activities.

Resources

Library

Search for books about your topic
include fiction

Use the Reader's Guide to find articles in journals and magazines

Look in the video section for related videos

Internet

Do a search for your topic. Use Boolean operators to narrow your search.

example: herbs AND Civil War
nutrition AND Victorian
water AND Washington NOT George
"George Washington" NOT "Valley Forge"

include such words as:

lesson_plans

webquest

unit_study

example: nutrition lesson plans
horses webquest
buildings unit study

Family, Friends, and neighbors

- Start asking around! Think you know your family? You may find out that cousin Elmo actually raised worms when he was young!
- Ask the lady with the beautiful vegetable garden down the street if she will work with your child to learn about the process.
- Ask your neighbor who is building a car if he can give an explanation and demonstration to your child.

Community

Find an expert! Ask around!

ideas:

restaurants

Animal Rescue

nursery

beekeepers

grocery stores

Nature Center

dairy

tree trimmers

electricians

auto mechanic

fire department

heavy equipment operator

plumbers

airport

police dept.

fashion, marketing: contact a local clothing or department store and ask for the buyer.

geology: look in your yellow pages for “geologist” or “rocks”

animal related: contact a ranch or farm; someone who gives horse lessons; 4-H club leaders – ask for group who works with specific animal; veterinary office.

local, state, federal agencies: water company; Fish and Game; Forestry

retirement home: call and ask for “expert” in specific field

local courthouse: find out if your child (more suitable to older) can sit in on a jury selection and short trial.

factories: We happen to live relatively close to the Jelly Belly factory. Perhaps you live within distance of a cheese factory or a cannery or some other type of industry.

Don't be afraid – most people LOVE to share their knowledge and expertise.

Tips:

1. Plan well in advance – you will need to adjust to fit their schedules.
2. If the place you call can't help, ask for a referral or other ideas.
3. Tell the person the age/level of your children.
4. Be on time!
5. Help your child come up with a list of questions in advance.
6. Take notes – bring tape recorder if possible.
7. Ask for any handouts.
8. Allow your CHILD to be the focus – asking his own questions. Sometimes may need encouragement.

Remember – you will be learning as well!

Bookstores -- new and used

School Supply stores

Museums and museum stores

Look for those little museums as well! We have a little tiny history society museum here. Make sure to visit the museum stores – they often have wonderful books and science related activities.

You may have to expand your search to other areas of your state. Make this a family trip that is an extended field trip!

Television: Watch for PBS or Discovery (or other Cable stations) productions on topics related to your study AND UPCOMING studies. PLAN AHEAD – record program for use when you need it.

Software: Look for quality software about your unit.

