

## CURRICULUM CONUNDRUMS: GRAMMAR

A MENTOR MOM © CLASS

by SaraLyn Baxter, Marty Huie, Kim Kuhn, Jill Syphert, and Anne Marie Toleman,

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### ABEKA Grammar & Composition

Abeka grammar is a K-12 comprehensive grammar program. In the preschool years, it focuses on learning Phonics with the Letters and Sounds workbooks. The Language workbooks begin in the 1st grade and parallel the Letters and Sounds workbooks for 2 more years continuing to reinforce phonics while teaching the basics of capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure. By the 3rd grade, Letters and Sounds is completed and the Language workbooks shift focus to entirely grammar. Each year the same parts of speech, sentence structure, and word usage are touched upon but in greater depth. By 4th grade, writing and research skills are added to the program. By 7th grade composition is introduced.

With exception of portions of the writing aspects of the program, I have used Abeka's grammar program with each of my four children. I have found it to be incredibly thorough. My oldest who is 16 started dual enrollment this year at the local community college. In taking Freshman composition, she was much farther ahead in her grammar skills than all the actual college students in her class. It has been a great program for our children and incredibly easy to follow with much review built in. See [www.abeka.com](http://www.abeka.com) for current prices. Retail: \$15.25

--presented by Marty Huie



### Rod and Staff

Rod and Staff is an English curriculum that teaches grammar principles while teaching Christian values. I began using Rod and Staff when I first started homeschooling my daughter and was intimidated since it had been a long time when I was learning grammar myself. However, I found the principles very easy to understand. I also found the sentence diagramming much easier to understand than other curriculum I saw for middle schoolers.

The one thing that was tricky was the copy work. The lessons sometime asked the student to go to a certain place in the Bible and either copy a verse and/or do a grammar lesson with the verse. However, Rod and Staff's version of the Bible is different than the King James version.

I liked the extra practice worksheets and tests that I purchased to help strengthen the grammar lessons being taught. Overall, the explanations of the grammar principles were easily understood and that's why I enjoyed using Rod and Staff for my daughter's middle school years.

*Teacher texts start at \$15.25 and increase and vary in price from grade level to grade level.*

*Pupil Textbooks start at \$12.90 and also increase and vary in cost as the child progresses through the program.*

See <http://www.rodandstaffbooks.com> to order and compare.

- presented by Kim Kuhn



### Shurley Grammar

English is not my primary language. At the age of 22 I came to the USA from the Netherlands. I started homeschooling my oldest son in 2000. For many years I avoided the Grammar subject for quite a long time as it was a difficult topic for me. When it finally became clear that it was time for me to teach grammar to my children, I tried several methods. The Shurley English Homeschool curriculum was an absolute winner for me. I started it 3.5 years ago and am still doing it with my oldest son.

Shurley Grammar has been a favorite grammar program for many homeschooling families, especially those who use the classical methodology. Materials for each grade level (1-6) are sold in a kit package. Each kit contains a teacher’s manual, student workbook, and audio CD. I found the Question and Answer flows in the Teacher’s manual one of the strengths of the program. For the teacher who is new to Shurley, these scripted flows really help you teach the analytical thinking and sentence decoding skills. Grammar, Language skills, and writing are taught in each chapter, although I have not used the writing parts. The workbooks contain a Jingle Section, Reference Section, Practice Section, and a Test Section. Each test is divided into 4 basic areas: grammar, vocabulary, language skills, and a summary of things learned for the week. The audio CD helps the student memorize all the different jingles and can be a great review. I found that the jingles really helped my children with differentiating between the different grammar terms (for example the difference between an adjective or adverb).

Shurley level 7 is a secondary education program and really an intense, in-depth study of grammar. This program could be done over more than one year as it covers almost too much material to be put into one year. Currently I am doing that level with my oldest son who is in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Another way students can learn to expand and improve their original sentences, using revision strategies to write Revised Sentences. Here is an example:

Labels:	A	Adj	Adj	SN	V	Adv	P	A	Adj	OP
Practice:	A	big	black	snake	crawled	slowly	over	the	rotten	log.
Revised:	The	enormous	poisonous	copperhead	slithered	rapidly	under	the	decayed	log.
Strategies:	Word Change	Synonym	Word Change	Synonym	Synonym	Antonym	Word Change		Synonym	

Some of the weaknesses of the program can be found in the repetition from level to level. This could be a strength for some students, but may hinder others. Overall it’s a great, easy to use program.

See <https://www.shurley.com/> for pricing and bundling options.

--presented by AnneMarie Toleman



### Daily Grammar Practice

DGP was recommended to me by an AP English teacher for improving student’s writing. This program utilizes daily exercises for each grammar/usage topic area one sentence at a time. On Monday we identify parts of speech. Tuesdays we label the function of each word or group of words in the sentence. Wednesday brings identification of clauses and sentence type. Thursday we use editing symbols to show proper punctuation/capitalization. Finally, on Friday we diagram sentences.

- Pros:
- Simple to use, no prep, takes only minutes per day.
  - Provides enough practice in all topic areas to really master grammar.
  - Challenging, but builds in difficulty gradually. (Starts in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, continues through college)
  - Gives diagramming practice.

- Possible Cons:
- Doesn’t include instruction.
  - Many users say you can use this as your only grammar text, but I think it is helpful to have another text to do the “teaching” unless the parent remembers grammar thoroughly and wants to teach the concepts themselves.
  - If used alone, this program lacks the focused practice that your child may need to understand and master more difficult concepts.

Order teachers manual (\$29.95) and student workbook (\$5.95) from [www.dgppublishing.com](http://www.dgppublishing.com)

--presented by SaraLyn Baxter



### Classical Conversations

Classical Conversations (<http://classicalconversations.com/>) is a classical tutorial program where teachers, parents, and students meet once a week. CC believes that parents are their children's primary teachers not because parents know everything but because each child is uniquely (and wonderfully!) made and because the people who know and love a child best are the ones most motivated to help that child succeed. In the Language and Grammar program students and parents are taught by a tutor once a week, and the students and parents subsequently implement this program at home. CC also has a specially designed C3 online community.

The Essentials Program meets once-a-week for twelve weeks in the fall and twelve weeks in the winter/spring. Students meet in the afternoons after the Foundations program. A trained tutor helps strengthen the "essential" subjects of language arts and structure.

The **language arts and structure** portion employs Classical Conversations own The Essentials of the English Language (EEL) Guide which includes lessons that provide a mixture of grammar and dialectic learning tools used to establish language structure understanding. The unique EEL approach takes students beyond "the worksheet" and the ubiquitous fill-in-the-blank method. Upon a firm foundation of memorized vocabulary, rules, and lists, students build strong language skills through the use of a series of analytical tasks. Students are taught how to thoughtfully analyze sentences and language structure, resulting in stronger language skills, which also strengthens students written and oral works.

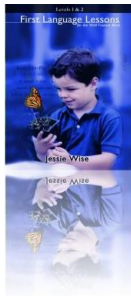
Analytical Tasks and Confirmations include:

- 1) Grammar and recitation
- 2) Sentence Confirmation
- 3) Question Confirmation
- 4) Diagramming Confirmation
- 5) Modification Confirmation
- 6) Quid et Quo Confirm

I have loved the copy and memorization tasks and believe they are some of the strengths of the program. Students for example memorize 112 sentence classifications, sentence patterns, eight parts of speech, verbs, noun usages, pronouns, conjunctions, etc. This is done through the memorization of charts and worksheets. My children have not always exactly understood the meaning of the charts right away, but as we went along those memorized charts actually became meaningful to them and helped them a lot in the understanding of grammar. The program, however, may only be used by parents and students who are enrolled in a classical conversations program. Overall, I like the program, it is good but not an easy program to learn.

See website for pricing: <http://www.classicalconversationsbooks.com/>

-presented by Anne Marie Toleman



Jessie Wise's First Language Lessons uses a "Four Strand" approach to teach grammar.

1. Poetry Memorization. These "instill beauty and rhythm of correct language in the child's mind."
2. Copy work and Dictation. Both of these are exercises that build with the child's ability.
3. Narration is also used to prepare the child for "real writing."
4. Finally, First Language Lessons teaches "the correct definitions of grammatical terms from the very beginning."

**Pros:**

- The lessons are scripted and very straightforward with notes at the beginning of each lesson to help the teacher prepare materials necessary.
- Uses a Four Strand Approach
- Requires very little prep
- Starts introduces grammar terms at a very early age
- Requires minimal hand writing so it can be used while the child is learning to write.
- Occasional games and activities to reinforce new learning.

**Cons:**

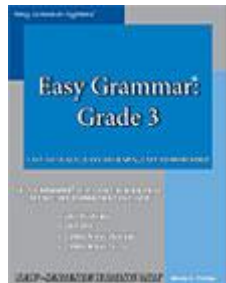
- Incredibly repetitive, especially in the 3<sup>rd</sup> level book. But this could be a "pro" for some children.

I love having these simple lessons that build from year to year to give my children a solid footing in the art of the English language.

Purchase Volumes 1 & 2 (Same book) at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) for \$12.89 Volume Level 3 is \$19.77 for the instructor's manual, the student workbook \$12.89.

Volume Level 4 is \$29.99 at [www.welltrainedmind.com](http://www.welltrainedmind.com) , the student workbook is \$13.57 at Amazon.

-Presented by Jill Syphert



## Easy Grammar

**Easy Grammar** has a unique approach in that it teaches prepositions first. You then eliminate prepositional phrases as an aid to more easily identify other parts of the sentence. After that, layout is quite standard: progresses each year through nouns, pronouns, verbs, punctuation, usage, etc., focusing on one topic at a time with increasing difficulty each year. I love that it involves **very** minimal teaching time, depending on student(s). It's also simple to understand and use. My children enjoy it because they understand it and it is quick. The same author publishes a **Daily Grams** text to give short daily exercises in each grammar/usage topic area + sentence combining exercises. Samples are included in **Easy Grammar** text.

### **Pros:**

-Time saver for mom! Involves **very** minimal teaching time, depending on student(s). Get teacher's manual, skip the student book! Teacher's manual includes the student worksheets, then students can self-check. We use page protectors and dry erase markers. (If child misses more than two problems, I ask them to come to me for help. I check tests).

-Simple to understand and use. My children enjoy it because they understand it and it is quick.

-Same author publishes a **Daily Grams** text to give short daily exercises in each grammar/usage topic area + sentence combining exercises. Samples are included in **Easy Grammar** text.

### **Possible Cons:**

-Not as thorough and rigorous as some programs. Introduces topics slightly later than Abeka, Rod and Staff, and First Language Lessons. The bonus about this is that it isn't overwhelming, and eventually covers all the basics. "Easy Grammar"

-Only has 5 levels (3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, Easy Grammar Plus).

For advanced grammar, you'll probably want to find another program. They now have **Easy Grammar Ultimate** for upper grades. I am not familiar with it. Product description available at [rainbowresource.com](http://rainbowresource.com). -Includes sentence marking exercises, but not diagramming.

<http://www.easygrammar.com> Order from [www.rainbowresource.com](http://www.rainbowresource.com) for \$21.95-\$25.95, *Daily Grams*- \$19.50

presented by SaraLyn Baxter

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Saralyn Baxter is a native of Rexburg, Idaho. She now resides in Silver Spring, Maryland, with her husband and five children. Crazy as it sounds, she's always enjoyed grammar-- Her hobbies include playing the violin, reading, and homeschooling my kids.

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Marty Huie and has been homeschooling their four children, ages 16-10 for 8 years. She has served as a member of the adult Conference Committee for 2 years from 2007-2009, and this year is the Graduation co-chair. They reside in the Gloucester, VA area.

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Kim Huhn started homeschooling her two children for different reasons. Her first son started homeschooling in 6th grade because he would forget the material as soon as he took a test, now he's able to retain more information with Kim as his teacher. Her 15 yr. old daughter is now choosing to be homeschooled because it allows her to be more involved in her acting. She has an agent so she's hoping to pursue acting as a career.

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Jill has 4 daughters ages 8, 6, 5, and 16 mos old. She believes that homeschooling is what you make it! Sometimes it can be dry and boring, other times it is alive and organic. She loves learning along with her children, and seeing how naturally children grasp ideas *in their own time*. and how frustrated it is when she doesn't respect that natural law. If there were ever a window created to show a mother the true insides of her soul, it's homeschool!

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Anne Marie is originally from the Netherlands and came to the US when she was 22 yrs. old. She has 4 children ages 14, 12, 10, and 5 years old. She sees raising and homeschooling her children as her greatest accomplishment so far. She started homeschooling when her oldest son was four and has homeschooled ever since (10 years).