

A FREE GUIDE FOR FELLOW HOMESCHOOL MOMS



Homeschooling Without the Overwhelm

*You don't have to do everything.
You just have to bring your basket.*

Her Ordinary
basket

HOMESCHOOLING IN THE PHILIPPINES · THE CHARLOTTE MASON WAY

If you found this, chances are your heart is in the right place and your to-do list is a mile long. You want to give your child a beautiful education, and somewhere between the curriculum lists, the comparison spirals, and the voice that whispers *you're already behind*, it started to feel like too much.

This little guide is for you. Not a system to add to your pile — permission to carry less. Three short parts: a shift in how we see the whole thing, a gentler way to begin, and a simple daily rhythm you can actually keep. Read it slowly. Nothing here is urgent.

One. Bring Your Basket, Not the Whole Feast

There's a story I keep coming back to: a boy with five loaves and two fish, standing in front of five thousand hungry people. He didn't feed the crowd. He just handed over his basket. The multiplying was never his job.

That's the whole mindset shift, really. On the days you feel unqualified to teach your own child — and there will be many — remember that you are not asked to be the whole feast. You are asked to bring what you have, faithfully, today. Small offerings, given with love, are enough. The rest is not yours to carry.

You are not behind.

"Behind" assumes there is one race everyone is running. There isn't. Your child is a whole person, unfolding on her own timeline, and a slow morning of one good book is not a failure — it's the point.

Comparison is not information.

The mom whose feed looks effortless is showing you her highlight reel, not her hard afternoons. Scrolling toward someone else's best day will only make your ordinary day feel smaller than it is. Close the app. Look at your own child.

Faithfulness beats perfection.

A gentle rhythm you actually keep will do more than a perfect plan you abandon by week three. You don't need a better plan. You need a plan you can carry on a tired Tuesday.

A gentle reminder

Much of a childhood happens in the ordinary days — not the field trips or the milestones you photograph, but the fiftieth reading of the same picture book, the conversation while snapping beans, the Tuesday morning nobody will remember except your child, who will carry the warmth of it forever.

Two. Start Smaller Than You Think

The single biggest cause of homeschool overwhelm is starting with too much. We buy the full curriculum, print the color-coded schedule, and try to run a nine-subject school day on week one. Then we burn out and decide we're bad at this. We're not bad at it — we just started too big.

Here is the gentler way in: begin with the smallest thing that still feels like homeschooling, and add only when the small thing is steady.

Week one: just three things

For the first week or two, do only these, and count it a full success:

- ✿ **Read one good book aloud.** A real story, well told — not a worksheet dressed up as a book. Ten minutes is plenty.
- ✿ **Ask her to tell it back.** “What happened in the story?” That's narration. No quiz, no right answer. Just listen.
- ✿ **Go outside and notice one thing.** A spider, a leaf, the way the light falls. Wonder is a subject.

That is a legitimate homeschool day. If that's all you ever built on, your child would still be well loved and well fed. Everything else — copywork, math, music, formal lessons — gets added on top, one calm layer at a time, once the three things feel like second nature.

What to skip (for now)

You have permission to not do it all this year. Skip the elaborate unit studies. Skip the fourth language app. Skip the Pinterest-perfect morning basket with the felt garlands. Skip comparing your beginner year to someone else's fifth. None of it is the thing. The thing is a mother and her child, a good book, and attention. Everything else is optional decoration.

Three. A Simple Daily Rhythm

Notice the word is *rhythm*, not schedule. A schedule is tied to the clock and breaks the moment life happens. A rhythm is just an order of things — this, then this, then this — and it bends without snapping.

A morning that breathes

- ✿ **Open together.** A song, a short prayer or Bible story, a poem. Five to ten minutes to gather everyone's heart before the day starts.
- ✿ **The harder thing first.** When attention is freshest, do the one lesson that asks the most — often reading or math — in a short, focused burst. Fifteen to twenty minutes, then stop while it's still going well.
- ✿ **Switch often.** Follow a “thinking” lesson with a “doing” one — copywork, then a walk; math, then drawing. Changing the kind of work keeps a small mind fresh.
- ✿ **Something beautiful.** End the formal part with a picture to look at, music to hear, or a story read purely for delight. Beauty is part of the lesson, not the reward for finishing it.
- ✿ **Then let the day be a day.** Free play, chores, the garden, real life. A child who is bored in a safe home is a child who is about to become interested in something.

Keep the lessons short

This is the secret that makes the whole thing sustainable. Short lessons — 15 to 20 minutes for little ones — respect how a child's attention actually works and fit inside a real mother's real day. You are almost always better off stopping a lesson a little early, while it's still pleasant, than pushing until someone cries. Leave them wanting a bit more. Tomorrow will come.

A little weekly reset

When the week starts to fray — and it will — don't overhaul everything. Just come back to the basics with three small questions on a quiet evening:

- ✿ **What went well this week?** Name one real thing. Start there.
- ✿ **What's one thing I can drop?** Overwhelm almost always means you're carrying something you were never required to carry.
- ✿ **What does my child actually need from me right now** — more of, or less of? Let the answer be small.

That's the whole reset. Not a new plan. A lighter one.

One Last Thing

On the hard days, please be gentle with yourself. You are not failing because it's hard; it's hard because it matters, and because you're doing it with love, in a home, alongside everything else you carry. That's not a small thing. That's the whole thing.

You don't have to feed the five thousand. Just bring your basket. Faithfully, today. The rest is not yours to carry.

With you in the ordinary days,

Mai 🌱

"Let all that you do be done in love." — 1 Corinthians 16:14

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