



Study Trips vs. Field Trips

How to Make your Community Outings Meaningful Experiences of Learning

WE REMEMBER 10% of what we read, 20% of what we hear, 30% of what we see, 50% of what we see and hear, 70% of what we discuss with others, 80% of what we personally experience, and 95% of what we teach others - Edgar Dale, Cone of Experience

We all have the idyllic image of childhood field trips: a class of children climbing aboard a yellow school bus with their sack lunches stowed below. The day is filled with chaperones, looking at exhibits, and a visit to the souvenir shop to spend the money burning a hole in their pockets. But, for those that school at home field trips have a different feel: the entire household piles into the family car to meet up with friends for a fun, educational outing of exploration. How can we make these days outside our learning programs truly meaningful and strategic learning experiences?

According to the article "The Educational Value of Field Trips" from the journal *Education Next*, students who spend time studying in places like museums, historical sites, and gardens can recall more detail about topics studied than when learning in a classroom or home setting. Their critical thinking, historical empathy, understanding of others, and interest in topics really expands. We all want that for our home learners, and we can be intentional to make it happen in our home school environment.



The traditional view of a field trip, even in homeschool circles, is more focused on a fun "break" from the classroom-type academic studies. Many times sites chosen are random depending on what is offered by co-ops or the charter school that the family is affiliated with. But, what if we started to think of these trips as opportunities to study more in depth in the "field" of our community? To do this we need to correlate outings with topics being studied in the books at home. We need to front load information about the topic by studying before we go. We need to respond through writing and projects after the trip. These things can make "field trips" into "study trips".

When choosing topics it is best if we can try to determine places that reinforce our family's current or recent learning. To be most effective, we need to plan ahead with a year or a semester plan of the basic subject matters to be studied, and try to find a trip or two each month that lines up with the topics the family will be covering. One way to find trips is by using sites like daytrippen.com and books like [Fun Places to Go with Kids and Adults in Southern California](#). Friends and educators in our social circles can

also be an invaluable resource of ideas. Occasionally a “fun” trip is a much needed break, but if we try to stick to these more aligned and meaningful outings our results will be tenfold.



At least a week or two before the trip we need to frontload some of the topics to be experienced. To do this we can read non-fiction and fictional books, watch videos, learn vocabulary, view maps, and have discussions on the theme of the outing. As educators we need to research the activities on our outing so we can know the best time of arrival to take advantage of any hands-on workshops, or if we need to pack any supplies. Orion & Hofstein, educational researchers, state that “If students are not adequately prepared for the experience, the novelty of the setting can negatively impact learning.” Preparation really ensures a day of deeper learning.

In the school days following the trip, a response project really helps solidify the learning from the day. There are so many options, and personalizing the project to our students is key. Things like reports, narrative writings, dioramas, experiments, travel journals, scrapbooks, or story quilts are jumping off ideas, but a simple Google or Pinterest search can yield endless results. Even writing a thank-you-note to a docent with specific details and learning included is a great way to cap off learning.

Living a holistic lifestyle of incorporating outings, vacations, and family activities into areas of study can truly make schooling come alive for those that school at home. We have the advantage of living out our learning by truly making the community our classroom. Edgar Dale, a teacher and professor of education, says if we personally experience things we retain 80% of that learning, so let's make THAT our NEW image of idyllic childhood field trips for our students!



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Sources:

Kisida, Brian, Daniel H. Bowden, and Jay P. Greene. "The Educational Value of Field Trips." *Education Next* Winter 1.14 (2014): 78-86. Web. 7 Apr. 2017. <http://educationnext.org/files/ednext_XIV_1_greene.pdf>.

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