



Based on the 8 Smarts identified by Kathy Koch—word, logic, picture, music, body, nature, people, and self—*8 Great Smarts for Homeschooling Families* tailors them to the home classroom. Tina Hollenbeck, a leader in the homeschool community, applies the 8 Smarts to each division of a complete curriculum.

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From Where Did I **COME**, and Where Are We **GOING**?

I met Kathy Koch in the mid-1980s, when I was a student at the university where she taught. When I began my teacher-training studies, I took two of Kathy's classes and also got to know her through church and as the advisor of our campus InterVarsity Christian Fellowship chapter. She became a Titus 2 woman in my life and stood up in my wedding. Over time, she and I got into the habit of meeting regularly for walk-and-talks, during which she listened and counseled as I worked through some difficult personal struggles, and I listened and encouraged as she spoke of her dream to move on from the university and launch Celebrate Kids.

We maintained and grew our friendship when she relocated a thousand miles away to make her dream come true. This was back in the days of dial-up—when, if you can believe it, we couldn't use

the internet if the home phone was already in use. I remember well my husband, Jeff, scrawling little notes to me as I chatted—for hours—with Kathy: *Will you be done soon? It's been three hours and I really need the computer so I can use the internet.*

Fast-forward several years to 2001 and 2002, when the Lord blessed Jeff and me with the two greatest joys of our lives: our Irish-twin daughters, Rachel and Abbie. We had waited so long to have them because of my concerns that I wouldn't be a good enough mother. But God had used Kathy and others to cover—and eventually replace—my anxiety with faith. And then the instruction and encouragement Kathy provided to parents all across America and in many other countries became real in my life as well.

Of all the wisdom and insight Kathy provided to me over the years, the message delivered in *8 Great Smarts* probably had the greatest impact on a practical level. She had taught about “the smarts” at the university, and I'd applied as much of the theory as I could during my nine years as a public-school teacher. And when I came home to raise my babies, Kathy was in the midst of birthing her writing career, knowing that the content in what became *Five to Thrive* and *8 Great Smarts* would be her first two “literary babies.”¹ Thus, the early years of my parenting adventure were bathed—via long phone conversations as she hammered out those books—in the theory of multiple intelligences and how to apply it to kids' lives.

I had developed an interest in homeschooling long before the girls were born, when I was privileged as a newlywed to meet a couple of “modern pioneer” homeschooling moms at church. My stint teaching in public schools—though successful—confirmed my desire. Jeff wasn’t sure. He had some of the common questions and concerns—i.e., what would his family think, would our kids seem “weird” to others, could they go to college—but when he met several homeschooled teens while serving as the interim youth pastor at church, the die was cast. He described the intellectual curiosity and ease with which the homeschooled kids consistently interacted—with him and the other leaders, as well as with all the other kids in the group—and said, “If that’s what homeschooling does, I’m in.”

We concluded that homeschooling was God’s call and conviction for our family, and we never looked back.² We committed to homeschooling all the way through to high school graduation, and ideas and principles from the first version of *8 Great Smarts* became an integral part of our approach.

Because I knew the model from before Abbie and Rachel were old enough to demonstrate an affinity for any particular smarts, I understood that I should expose them to resources and activities that would activate all the smarts.³ I also kept a lookout in due time for evidence of which were the top smarts for each of the girls, and I was conscious of trying to avoid paralyzing any developing

strengths.⁴ I used my knowledge of the girls' smarts profiles when choosing curriculum—and when deciding that formal curriculum wasn't always necessary. Then, when one or the other of the girls hit an academic wall, I referred to my understanding of the smarts in seeking a solution or work-around.

Time raced on, and my daughters became adults in what seemed like the blink of an eye. We graduated them (together) from our homeschool in June 2020. And, though their adult lives

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have only just begun, I see enough from the trajectory on which each is currently traveling to believe that our homeschool venture—with all its inevitable ups and downs and twists and turns—has landed them both in a good place from which to begin the next phase of their respective journeys.

But what about you? Maybe you have little ones you're planning to homeschool in a few years. Maybe you've been educating your kids at home for years and wonder if you've blown it because you've only just now heard about the smarts—and you're not quite sure what they actually are. Or maybe you have school-aged kids or teens you've recently pulled from a conventional public or private school, hoping against hope you don't screw 'em up!

First, understand that you can't wreck your kids by homeschooling—nor by just recently learning about the smarts. Second, realize that learning about multiple intelligences (i.e., “the smarts”)

will not give you the perfect homeschool; there is no such thing as a perfect home, perfect kids, or perfect parents, so you can drop that notion right now.⁵ But knowledge of the smarts and how to apply them to your home learning program is good gear for your parenting toolbox—“gadgets,” so to speak, that will increase your peace and confidence as a homeschooler and bless your kids, now and for the long-haul.

As you consider wielding these smarts tools, let me recommend actually reading *8 Great Smarts* if you haven't already.⁶ My goal is to get you thinking about applications of the theory to homeschooling, and that will make more sense if you've already pondered Kathy's detailed analysis and engaging examples and analogies.

But if you're dying to jump right in to implementing relevant ideas in your home, let me provide you with a working smarts vocabulary to get you going, taken directly from *8 Great Smarts*. Please understand that this list is not a hierarchy; in fact, though word and logic smart are prioritized within institutional school settings, every smart is equally important and valuable. Indeed, the customized nature of homeschooling provides us with the freedom and opportunity to help our kids explore and develop all eight to their highest potential.

Homeschooling provides the freedom and opportunity to help our kids explore and develop all eight smarts to their highest potential.

- **Word Smart** people think with words. When excited, they talk and might write. Children who are particularly smart in this area can argue, persuade, entertain, and/or instruct effectively through the spoken word. They tend to be masters of literacy: they read a lot, write clearly, listen intently, and/or speak well.
- **Logic Smart** people think with questions. When excited, they ask more questions. Logically inclined children have the ability to reason, sequence, categorize, and think in terms of cause-effect and comparison-contrast relationships.
- **Picture Smart** people think with their eyes and with pictures. When excited, they add to their pictures (in their minds and on paper). Children who are picture smart are very sensitive to visual details. They have the ability to observe, transform, and re-create different aspects of the visual-spatial world.
- **Music Smart** people think with rhythms and melodies. When excited, they make music. Musically gifted children are able to hear, appreciate, and/or produce rhythms and melodies. They often have a good ear, can sing in tune, keep time to music, and listen to different musical selections with some degree of discernment.
- **Body Smart** people think with movement and touch. When excited, they move more. Evidence of body intelligence is seen via strong large motor and/or small motor skills and interests. These children are talented in controlling their

body movements and/or in handling objects skillfully. They may enjoy physical pursuits like walking, sports, dancing, acting, or camping and/or they may be skilled at activities like sewing, carpentry, or model-building.

- **Nature Smart** people think with patterns. When excited, they go outside. Children who would rather be outdoors than indoors may be strong in this smart. They tend to love animals and are knowledgeable about them. They also are skilled at recognizing and classifying plants, minerals, and animals. The ability to categorize cultural artifacts like cars or sneakers may also depend on this smart.
- **People Smart** people think with other people. When excited, they talk to people. Children with this intelligence are able to discern and then respond to the moods, intentions, and desires of others. Therefore, they tend to be leaders. They have the ability (for good or bad) to get inside another person and view the world from that individual's perspective.
- **Self Smart** people think with deep reflection. When excited, they spend time alone thinking. Children strong in this smart can use their self-understanding to enrich and guide their lives. They tend to enjoy quiet times of deep soul-searching. They also need peace, space, privacy, and quiet. They are fiercely independent, highly goal-directed, and intensely self-disciplined.

Even though homeschooling is about so much more than academic content—in fact, home-based learning is a holistic lifestyle that reaches into every facet of family life—it’s a common cultural norm to organize our thinking about “school,” including home-based school, according to various “subject areas.” Thus, I

Addressing subject areas to suit children’s unique smarts profiles is one of the greatest gifts we can give—right now and for their long-term happiness and success.

might ask my friend what curriculum she’s using for math this year, or the new homeschooler with whom I’m having coffee may wonder about my favorite world-history resource.

With that framework in mind, I’ve organized the following discussion by broad subject area—math, language arts, science, social studies, fine arts, electives, and religious education—in order to share ideas about how to awaken, strengthen, and utilize each of the smarts to help your children learn and master the various sorts of academic content. Indeed, one of the many beautiful features of homeschooling is an ability to customize instruction according to how each child has been intrinsically wired. So addressing different subject areas in ways that suit children’s unique smarts profiles is one of the greatest gifts we can give—right now and for their long-term happiness and success.

I’m not about the business of endorsing particular curricula,

either here or on my comprehensive online database, The Home-school Resource Roadmap,⁷ because I believe you can best discern which material might ultimately work well for each of your children. Many good products exist, and I will mention some that have stood out to me as exemplars illustrating specific points. But it's your privilege to find what ultimately suits your kids.

The products and books I will reference can all be checked out using the internet. But I hope The Roadmap, and perhaps even my Route-Finder tool,⁸ can be of help as well. To that end, you might want to visit and bookmark The Roadmap, where all the resources mentioned—and so many more!—are listed, charted, and hyper-linked right back to company websites.⁹

I hope the next seven chapters bless your socks off. But in my view, the last chapter is the most important (don't look now; save the best till last!) because it describes the bedrock foundation that underpins and supports the daily comings and goings of any healthy homeschool. Without that foundation, the various rooms (subjects)—no matter how beautifully decorated—will easily crumble at the slightest (inevitable) provocation. It's imperative that we build and maintain the foundation at all times.

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