

THE LINK REVIEWS

Drivers Ed In A Box

10830 Piping Rock Lane, Houston, TX 77042; 713/780-3383

Reviewed by Marcia Sarka

Driver Ed In A Box is an excellent system for learning to be a safe driver. The emphasis on the parent-student team aligns well with homeschooling. Their focus is on defensive driving, making "Practice as if your life depends on it, because it does" a theme in each lesson. The deliberate, measured approach addresses the needs of a range of learning styles. Although I am a safe and competent driver, I've never taught anyone else to drive and I certainly didn't want my teen to have to learn under the conditions I had learned. I was excited to have access to a curriculum of Parent Taught Driver Education for Collision-Free Driving and am very pleased with the results.

I especially appreciated the emphasis on relationship of the parent-teacher and the teen-driver. Each member of the team has specific responsibilities which contribute to, and are essential for, successfully accomplishing the goal. Additionally, the relationship between parent-teacher and teen-driver are referred to in each lesson. I found this to be beneficial during the inevitable "glitches", or difficulties, that arise in this complex task of learning to drive. My teen-driver and I could fall back on these prescribed responsibilities without resorting to the typical conflicts (in other words - fights) between parent and teen. That aspect of the system supports the part of our homeschooling which focuses on developing mature relationships and personal responsibility.

The focus on defensive driving addresses my hopes, and fears, about my teen's safety as a driver. Perhaps other parents share my worry about my teen-driver being involved in an accident, and this system addresses that concern in every lesson. The continual reminder "Practice as if your life depends on it, because it does" expresses a practical way to become a safe driver and is the basis for their approach. Each skill is identified and practiced until habits are established. Clear

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Core Learning's Math Course Series

(See ad on p. 82)

CD-Rom (with supplementary text and workbooks available) www.core-learning.com; 800/270-4643; Toronto, Canada (Currently available for PC) Prices vary according to product, but for 3-user licenses (individual home), range is \$19.95 up to \$39.95 per CD-rom. (School site licenses also available.)

Core Learning has developed an excellent series of products to aid parents, tutors and teachers in the navigation of the teaching of Math to elementary school children. Core's line is intended to serve as a supplemental tool in achieving mastery of the basic math functions and concepts, and from my time with it, will provide an excellent drill and study aid. The products available are very broad in the material covered, with two separate categories to consider: The Math Course Series (5 Courses) and the Calculations Skills Series (4 Volumes).

The Math Course Series provides a large package of material designed to provide in-depth assessment and personalized application regarding the functions of basic math: Fractions, Decimals & Percents, Geometric Shapes, Measurement and Data Management. At the beginning of each Unit of work, the parent is able to obtain a customized lesson plan from the program, via an assessment test, which provides the information necessary for focusing on the areas that need attention. Then, the student is able to sit down at the computer and work through the lesson plan at his/her own pace. Each Unit concludes with a competency test that the student must pass in order to move on to the next Unit. The test scoring is set at 80% pass, but the parent or tutor can alter that pass level. Records of all of the tests are stored in the computer and can be viewed at any time. Each course also includes a 50+-page Help Guide offering guidance to parents/tutors on resolving common problems that may be encountered.

The Calculations Skills Series is structured as follows: Vol 1: Addition/Subtraction, Basic Level; Vol 2: Multiplication/Division, Basic Level; Vol 3: Addition/Subtraction, Advanced Level and

Vol 4: Multiplication/Division, Advanced Level. Each volume is intended to teach children the skills of mental calculation, rather than relying upon an external calculator by providing untimed practice sessions and timed drills to gradually guide the student in "thinking fast". Making money change is also included in Vol. 1 - a great boon, since many of us still feel intimidated at having to make change without a computing cash register! This is a great way to ensure that your child will not have that problem. At the time of this writing, each Calculations CD-rom was priced very reasonably, allowing a family great flexibility in purchasing only the disk(s) necessary.

For the family that loses sleep over the teaching of math, Core Learning's Math Courses are great! They take 95% of the worry out of your math work and offer a private method of assessing your child's progress. The end result is peace of mind in the Math Dept! I would recommend that you visit Core's website as noted above, to see their Math Series, as well as their other great products in Language and Health. - Michael Leppert

Access to Shakespeare

Published by Lorenz Educational Publishers, POB 146340, Chicago, IL 60614-6340; 773/929-9847 (Average Play length: 200-210 pages; Manual length: 41 pages)

Reviewed by Emma Dunbar

Access to Shakespeare is a series of books edited by Dr. Jonnie Patricia Mobley of the Drama Department, Cuesta College, San Luis Obispo, California. It contains many of Shakespeare's plays in their original form. The series features a facing-pages translation into contemporary English for each play. The plays include Hamlet, Romeo & Juliet, Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and Julius Caesar. Each book is accompanied by a manual that gives information on Shakespeare and his writing, summarizes each act, provides pertinent discussion questions, and gives suggestions for staging that particular play. Also provided are a pronunciation guide for the names of characters, a Shake-

spearean timeline, and a glossary covering words with which the average reader may not be familiar. Dr. Mobley used the facing-pages approach instead of the usual marginal notes because she considered them to be distracting and to interrupt the flow of reading and understanding which is so essential in reading Shakespeare.

This series can be used as both a tool for teaching and for pure enjoyment. The plays are very easy to follow with a line-by-line contemporary English translation on the pages facing the original text. Access to Shakespeare would be very useful for those people who enjoy Shakespeare, but find it difficult to discern portions of his verse. The manual is excellent for both teachers and students. The act summaries are handy for a quick review of the plot or for refreshing one's memory on certain aspects of the play. The discussion questions & answers touch on interesting points that give a deeper understanding of Shakespeare's work. The section in the manual pertaining to staging is helpful for those who wish to perform the play.

The contemporary English translation fails to capture the cadence and fluidity indicative of Shakespearean verse but, since the opposite page contains the original dialogue, nothing is lost by the translation. Having to read two pages - if one wishes to -- is a small price to pay for the clarity of meaning provided by the translation.

Access to Shakespeare is highly recommended for students, teachers, and anyone interested in gaining a deeper appreciation and enjoyment or having an affinity for Shakespeare's works. -- E.D.

The Larry Gluck Method™ of Drawing

The Art of Drawing, Part 1 (ages 12 and older)

Distributed by Mission: Renaissance Publications, 800 West Doran St., Glendale, CA 91203

Kit contains an Instructional DVD, a 147-page workbook, a large pad of drawing paper, two large clips to hold the drawing paper on a drawing board, a rubber eraser, a plumb line, two charcoal pencils and a 4x6 mirror.

Larry & Sheila Gluck founded Mission Renaissance in 1975 and currently have over 20 studios throughout Southern California and Canada, making it the largest fine art program in the world. The Gluck Method does an end-run around the idea that artistic ability is limited and must be received at birth. Mr. Gluck proposes that we all are possessed of creative, artistic ability and that we can all be taught, step-by-step, how to release our innate artistic skill. Obviously, after 25 years, his successful art studios, instructors, and many satisfied students, prove his point quite well.

This course is meant to focus on the first skill that the master artists of the Renaissance taught their apprentices - learning to draw with line. This is accomplished by watching short segments on the DVD, reading a corresponding page in the workbook and then ultimately, practicing the skill oneself. At the outset, Mr. Gluck states that the word "art" comes from a Sanskrit root "ar" meaning "to put together" or "to fit together", and that this is the basic idea behind how all art is done. This underscores the Gluck Method premise mentioned above, that everyone can learn to draw by learning how to put the elements together in a definite, learnable sequence. This approach helps to remove the "critical self" from the activity and thereby free the student to spend time enjoying him/herself rather than criticizing the drawing to death. It is much more difficult to judge critically, when one is only concentrating on a simple process that leads to another simple process.

Watching the first 10 segments closely, as the skill of sketching unfolds, it seems to be attainable in a very short amount of time. This first DVD of the series contains 46 different segmented lessons, and begins with holding the charcoal pencil and ends with sketching complex subjects. Part 2 continues with the second element of drawing, tone or shading. Undoubtedly, each user will find some lesson that Mr. Gluck could have spent more time on, and I am sure that the student is free to contact a Mission: Renaissance studio for further aid. However, all in all, The Art of Drawing is an excellent self-study program and one that makes one excited about the prospect of sitting down and drawing for a few hours!

-- Reviewed by Mary Leppert