



Preparing Your Home the Montessori Way

ACTION GUIDE

KidsTalk

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A properly prepared Montessori environment takes into consideration the people, objects (tools), ideas and nature that are involved in that environment.

Montessori principles are the ideas we use to create a properly prepared Montessori environment.

Montessori principles are truly universal principles of learning, teaching and living.

Some of these principles follow:

- We respect our children's efforts to self-construct a human being by interacting with people, objects, ideas and nature in their environments.
- We prepare environments in order to aid this self-construction.
- We work to become "enlightened adults" in order to understand the developmental needs of children, as well as prepare the child's environment with interesting and meaningful activities that enrich the children's learning and growth.
- We take into account the important brain building interaction of the hand and the mind working in tandem—another reason for interesting activities.
- We want to show the whole and go to the parts; we offer concrete experiences that lead to abstraction. Human beings learn best that way.
- We offer freedom of choice of meaningful activities.
- We offer the children uninterrupted time to choose and complete self selected tasks.
- We observe children working on their self-selected tasks to understand who they truly are: their needs, their strengths, their interests and their challenges.

- We offer techniques that lead to physical and mental independence

An important technique for us to use when we are showing our children how to do something is “SHOW, Don’t Tell”. When we show children how to do something, we need to go slow and say very few, if any, words. The young child learns through seeing, and fast motions with a flurry of language are confusing.

Remember, S-H-O-W—slow hands, omit words.

Preparing the Kitchen

- Place dishes and snacks in lower cabinets for children
- Water dispenser so children can free choice of when to drink
- Children can prepare snacks at their child-sized table
- Children can clean up, mopping up spills, sweeping, wiping table
- Put dishes in the dishwasher
- Have sturdy step stools
- Have real tools for children to work with

Observation is key for adding that new challenge, that new step towards independence. It is our most important tool for understanding children.

Caution! Children at Work!

Here might be a good place to add a word of caution. I read a report recently that said that emergency room visits for children were at an all time high due in part to parent’s being distracted by cell phone usage. For the 30 minutes to an hour that you are in the kitchen with your children, turn off the cell phone so you’re not distracted by incoming e-mails, tweets, beeps, calls, etc. The reason they are called accidents is that they happen quickly and aren’t intentional. But it is important to have all our wits about us when we are working with our children, as well as have full use of our hands to prevent the fall, acting silly with the scissors—those kinds of things.

Observation will also help us prevent accidents, as we’ll be more aware of situations.

Preparing the Family Room

- A place to sit
- A place to work and play
- An activity center
- Touchable art
- Light switch extenders
- Childproof cabinets, electrical outlets,
- Move “untouchables” to higher cabinets or closets.

Preparing the Bedroom

- Low bed
- Light comforter so child can make bed
- Lower clothes rods
- Shelves and or baskets in closets
- Laundry basket

For the young child, focus on the bedroom to be a place to sleep and rest instead of a place to play.

Preparing the Bathroom

- Step stool to get to sink for hand washing, face washing, and toileting (also can be a great place for you to sit during bath time)
- Ask your dentist about electric toothbrushes
- Baskets of towels
- Use wash cloths for hand towels
- Full length mirror
- Baskets for hairbrushes and grooming

Preparing the Backyard

- A place to dig
- Tools to dig with
- Four or five pots to make a salad garden or pizza garden
- Child-sized brooms, rakes, watering cans, wheelbarrow
- 10 to 20 small bricks or stones
- Hula-hoops, bean bags

Our children want to be near us, so we should make it easy for them to be with us when we are doing our tasks around the house. If we can figure out a way they can work along side us, we should.

For the young child under the age of six or seven—the child is in a sensitive or critical period of development for building social relations and the time we spend with our children doing positive activities helps create a foundation for a lifetime of happy healthy relationships.

Preparing an Activity Center

Some basic rules for an activity center:

- Choose your own activity and don't touch anyone else's activity.
- Only one activity out at a time.
- Work at a table, a rug, or a mat.
- Put your activity away, ready for the next person or the next time.

Put out ten or twelve activities on a small shelving unit and rotate activities out every couple weeks or so, as you see that certain things aren't used very much. That's where observation comes in very handy. Observation is our most important skill to develop in order to help our children.

Activity Shelf Ideas

- Puzzle
- Basket of building blocks
- Dominoes are a great matching activity
- Tray of half sheets of paper and three washable markers in primary colors
- Sorting activity
- Necklace making activity
- Board game
- Deck of playing cards
- Set of dice (die make a great math problem creator, and children can count the dots to get the answer)
- Magnifying glass
- Three or four books in a basket
- Pouring beans
- Spooning beans
- Sewing activity
- Kaleidoscope

I also like to have a small rug and mats folded on the shelf so that the children can put those down to define their workspace, another way to keep things from going all over the house.

Activities in the Kitchen

- Prepare own snack
- Set table
- Use dustpan/brush
- Carpet sweeper (non-electrical, like a Hokie)
- Put away dishes in lower cabinets
- Use child sized aprons
- Squeeze juice
- Use apple corer/slicer
- Egg slicer
- Wash dishes

Activities Outdoors

- Use rake
- Use broom
- Water plants with watering can
- Use hand tools
- Gloves
- Wheelbarrow for stones and leaves
- Chalk
- Hula hoops
- Bean bags
- Dig
- Grow salad, pizza or salsa garden

When we use Montessori principles as guidelines, we set up our homes to create places where our children can live with grace and dignity. We create a place where they can take care of many of their own needs, like preparing snack, brushing their teeth, making their beds. We create a place where our children can be close to adults to learn how to do practical life skills like cooking, cleaning, taking care of the yard and so much more.

When we prepare the environment so that our children can do these things, it makes for a more harmonious home and everyone pitches in to help make a house a home. As a parent it requires that we think through the layout of our kitchen, our bathrooms, our family rooms, and our outdoor spaces so that we can support our children's growth and learning. But a prepared environment can direct our children to do essential tasks, much like a playground will have different activities that occupy and exercise a child's body.

A Montessori home is an attitude.

Do you have a home with Montessori materials
or

A Montessori Home with materials?

Resources:

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For child sized real tools visit:

Forsmallhands.com

MontessoriServices.com