

Montessori Principles for the Home

Bringing Out the Brilliance in Infants and Toddlers
with Tamara Sheesley Balis
Montessori Families, LLC

The greatness of the human personality begins at the hour of birth. From this almost mystic affirmation there comes what may seem a strange conclusion: Education starts at birth.

- Dr. Maria Montessori

- I. Why a Montessori Home?
- II. The Unconscious Absorbent Mind
Whatever children are exposed to, whatever infants hear, see and feel - these are all uploaded directly into their brains.
- III. Infants are forming a map of how the world works, looks, and feels.
The World of Giants
- IV. The Sensitive Periods
Order
Movement
Language
- V. The Prepared Environment
The (parent's) first duty is to watch over the environment, and this takes precedence over all the rest. Its influence is indirect, but unless it be well done there will be no effective and permanent results of any kind: physical, intellectual or spiritual.
- VI. Guidelines for Prepared Home Environment
Home designed to foster sense of independence in the child
Thoughtful space for the child in every room of the house
A place for everything and everything in its place
Aesthetically pleasing
Developmentally appropriate
Natural, sensorially rich materials
Setting child up for success
- VII. Organizing the Home
Framed photos of child & loved ones at eye level
Toys & materials made of rich & natural fibers
All materials or activities have a tray, basket or some type of container
Books with photos of animals, people, places and things
A child-sized area in each room
Art at child's eye level
- VIII. The Bedroom
Five main areas:
Nursing
Changing
Activity/play
Dressing

- Sleeping
- IX. The Nursing Area
 - Nursing chair
 - Lamp
 - Side table for water & clock
 - Picture over shoulder
 - X. The Changing Area
 - No mobiles
 - Basket of diapers
 - Diaper pail
 - Laundry basket (lined)
 - XI. The Activity /Play Area
 - Shelves at child level
 - Developmentally appropriate work
 - Rug to work on
 - Musical instrument
 - Books
 - XII. The Dressing Area
 - Child's height
 - Limited selection
 - Child-sized dresser
 - XIII. The Sleeping Area
 - Floor bed
 - Futon or crib mattress
 - Surround with pillows or blankets
 - XIV. Living Room
 - Shelf for child's books and toys
 - Large space for gross motor exploration
 - Comfortable, child-sized furniture
 - Mirror
 - Pull-up bar
 - Padding for developing legs

For Toddlers:

- Table for creating
 - "Creation materials"
 - Chair (allowing feet firmly on floor)
 - Dress up area
- XV. Entry Way
 - Shelf or designated area for shoes
 - Basket for hats/gloves
 - Hooks for coats
 - Stool or chair

- XVI. Kitchen
 - Activity Shelves
 - Sensory rich items
 - Naming items
 - Books with photos of food
 - Weaning table
 - Stable chair
 - Cushion or stool for adult to sit on
 - Bibs
 - Rags or sponge
 - Table settings
 - Silverware, glasses (clear), pitchers (clear), placemats
 - High chair (child can get in & out of independently)
 - For Toddlers:**
 - Learning tower or stool to reach counter and /or
 - Place to work at child's height such as table or low counter
 - Cleaning area to include:
 - Rags
 - "Dirty bucket"
 - Place to hang damp rags
 - Broom
 - Mop
 - Mop bucket
 - Spray bottle
 - Aprons
 - Place to hang aprons
 - Water source
 - Child-sized glasses, pitchers, plates, bowls & silverware
 - Child-sized napkins
 - Hand Washing Area
 - Dishwashing Set Up
- XVII. Bathroom
 - Bathtub toys reachable & organized
 - Wash cloths in accessible basket
 - Bathroom
 - Potty
 - Small pitcher or container for shampoo
 - Hook for hanging bath towel
 - Hook for wash clothes
 - For Toddlers:**
 - Toothbrush & toothpaste within reach
 - Stool to reach sink & toilet
- XVIII. Toilet Learning Materials
 - Rags
 - "Dirty bucket"
 - Stool
 - Basket with
 - Clean underwear
- XIX. Outdoor Environment
 - "No such thing as bad weather... just inappropriate clothing."
 - Minimum 1 - 2 hours a day recommended

Blanket for grass
Shelf
Outdoor toys
Watering cans
Water toys

- XX. Car
Great deal of time in car for many children
Must be prepared as any other area of the home
Organizing car to meet the needs of your individual child based on age, length of time in car
Snacks in the car (prepared for the unexpected delay)
CDs and books
Garbage vessel(s)!

...the phenomenon common to all human beings; the possibility of the liberation of the imprisoned spirit by the education of the senses.

- Dr. Maria Montessori

- XXI. Types of Materials
Sensorially interesting
Made of natural materials
Developmentally appropriate toys correlating to current sensitive period
Beautiful (when possible)
Can be home made

- XXII. Presentation of Materials
Choose materials that allow for some struggle
Multi-dimensional
Materials to encourage both gross & fine motor skills

- XXIII. Order of Presentation

First month

Intensely connecting with mother & father
Fascinated by facial features, singing & exploring body's movements

One to Two Months

Time on well-covered floor
Mobiles & objects placed for strategic viewing

Two to Three Months

(Begin tracking)
Gently introduced to objects
Rattles with thin grips

Three months

(Cause & Effect)
Hanging wooden ring from elastic
Soft cloth or yarn balls

Three to Six Months

(Gripping & Manipulating objects)
Introduced to wide range of objects
Look for large, light objects
Objects that show how their sound is made
Objects with varied finger grips

Six to Ten Months

(Distinguishing fit & movement)

- Boxes to open & close
- Nesting boxes
- Small stool
- Object permanence box
- Bows & wooden coins (under strict supervision) at about 10 months
- Ten to Twelve Months**
- Post & rings
- Push toys
- Jars & lids
- Tracking toys
- Thirteen to Sixteen Months**
- (Maneuvering angles with fingers & balance)
- Opening & closing drawers
- Wooden coins into slots
- Pouring
- Brushing own hair
- Begins assisting with household tasks (can help set table, uses crumber, etc)
- Seventeen to Twenty Months**
- Hand washing
- Face washing
- Nose blowing
- Matching works
- Threading
- Painting
- Hanging items (coats)
- Feeding/walking animals
- Food preparation
- Twenty-one to Twenty-four Months**
- Developing rhythm
- Dish washing
- Using scissors, tape
- Sweeping with dust pan
- Gardening
- Twenty-five to Thirty-five Months**
- Buttoning
- Zippering
- Washing windows
- Ironing
- Folding
- Hanging laundry
- Polishing
- Mopping with mop bucket
- Washing the table

Education is a natural process carried out by the human individual, and is acquired not by listening to words, but by experiences in the environment.

- Dr. Maria Montessori

- XXIV. The Role of the Parent
 - Caregiver
 - Connection & love
- XXV. Guide to Discovery of Self & World
 - Observe
 - Just watching, listening, being (not engaging)

10 - 15 minutes a day

Creates & modifies environment to meet child's needs

"A child is an eager observer and is particularly attracted by the actions of the adults and wants to imitate them. In this regard an adult can have a kind of mission. He can be an inspiration for the child's actions, a kind of open book wherein a child can learn how to direct his own movements. But an adult, if he is to afford proper guidance, must always be calm and act slowly so that the child who is watching him can clearly see his actions in all their particulars."

- Dr. Maria Montessori

XXVI. Follow the Child

Model

Speak the way you want your child to speak

Eat the way you want your child to eat

Live the way you want your child to live

Speak to the child from birth as a competent human being

Use correct, precise language

Do not "make" child say important phrases (Ex: Thank you for my soup, Mom.)

Ask for physical connections (Ex: Would you like a hug?)

Always tell the child what you are going to do before you do it

XXVII. Design Schedule

To include:

Uninterrupted "work" time

Alone time

Time to sleep well

Observation

Time for connection

Time for reading

Time for unhurried meals

Outside time

Foster Sense of Order

Make sure each room gets cleaned up every day

Model work cycle

Foster Sense of Order

Includes child in daily life activities

Provide Daily Living Opportunities

Never Interfere Unnecessarily

Provides child opportunity to struggle, fail & succeed unencumbered by the adult

XXVIII. Conclusion

There is in the soul of a child an impenetrable secret that is gradually revealed as it develops.

-Dr. Maria Montessori