

ViaFreedom  
Montessori

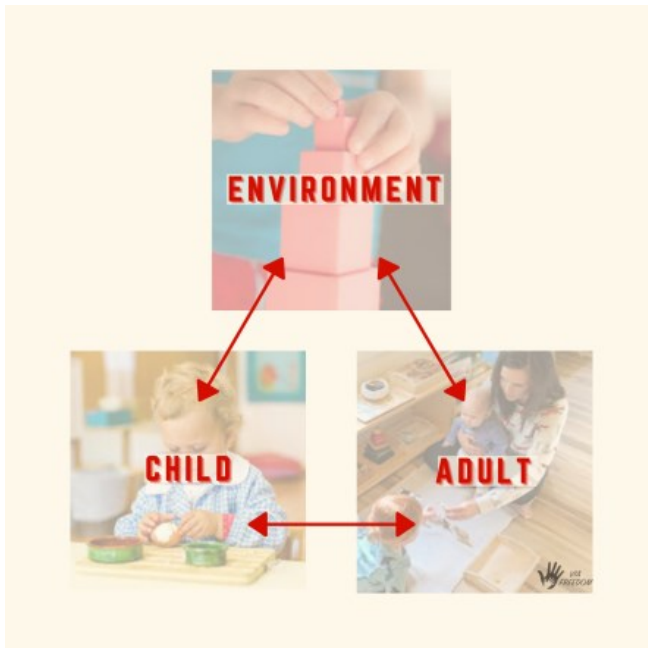


# INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

- MONTESSORI PRINCIPLES
- WHY TO CHOOSE MONTESSORI
- WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TODDLERS

## MONTESSORI EDUCATION

In Montessori education there is a dynamic relationship **between the child, the adult, and the learning environment**. The child is in charge of their **own learning**, supported by the adult and the environment.



The environment and child interact with each other. The environment attracts the child and the child learns from the materials in the environment. The adult and environment are also affecting each other. Mentor of the group prepares the environment, observes, and makes adjustments where necessary to meet the child's needs. The adult will observe the child and step in to give only as much

assistance as necessary. Montessori education is not to fill a child with facts, but to cultivate their own natural desire to learn.

# MONTESSORI PRINCIPLES

## Age

In a Montessori classroom, the ages of the children are **mixed**. Younger children can learn from observing older children, and older children can consolidate their learning by helping the younger ones.

## The hands

The hand takes in information in a concrete way to pass on to the brain. The materials in a Montessori classroom are so beautifully prepared and attractive that the child is drawn to them to make discoveries for themselves, with their hands. We give child **tactile learning experiences**.


## Sensitive periods

When a child shows a particular interest in one special area of classroom—for example, movement or language—it is known as a sensitive period. This describes a moment when the child is particularly **attuned to learning** a certain skill or concept and it happens with ease and without effort. We can watch our children to see what sensitive periods they are in and provide appropriate activities to encourage those interests. When the toddler starts to mimic us—parroting certain words—we know they are in a sensitive period for language, and we can focus on giving the child new and familiar vocabulary for them to practice. If a toddler is interested in climbing on the table, they are likely in a sensitive period for movement and need to practice those skills. Instead of allowing them to climb on furniture, we can show our movement area and say “here you can climb”.

## Order

Use routines before coming to the classes so the child knows what to expect next “he/she is going to the Montessori class / meet the friends”.

Provide understanding if the child is upset when we have something new in our classroom.



### **Small details**

From 18 months to 3 years, the child is attracted to the smallest objects and the minutest detail. Let your child to explore a tiny detail in the classroom

### **Movement**

The young toddler acquires gross- and fine-motor movement—they learn to walk and to use their hands. The older toddler refines these skills and begins to develop more coordination.

- Let them to practice gross- and fine-motor movements in the classroom
- Allow time for movement as much as they need

### **Unconscious absorbent mind**

From birth until about the age of 6, children take in information effortlessly. Dr. Montessori referred to this as the absorbent mind. From birth to the age of 3, they do this completely unconsciously. The ease with which a toddler learns gives us opportunities as well as responsibilities. Opportunities because they absorb with such ease the language around them (building a rich vocabulary and understanding), how we handle furniture and objects (ideally with care), how we treat others (ideally with respect and kindness), where we put things (creating order), and the beauty of the environment around them.

### **Freedom**

In a Montessori school, the children have the freedom to choose what they would like to work on (as long as it is available), the freedom to rest or to observe another child (as long as they are not disturbing another child), and the freedom to move around the classroom (as long as they respect the people around them). Within these limits, we follow the child and trust they will develop on their own unique timeline.

We will step in if they are hurting someone or themselves, or we will gently help them leave the classroom if they are having trouble leaving themselves. And while we are learning to see from their perspective, we are also showing them how to have mutual respect and care for others (including us, as their parents) and the environment.

## **Independence**

They learn how to handle fragile things with care. They learn how to offer help to a friend. They learn how to take care of their belongings. They learn how to make amends when they have hurt someone. They learn how to look after the plants, the classroom, and the environment around them. Even toddlers.

## **Respect**

Our group respects how different children learn, and supports their individual development.

Some children like to repeat and repeat until they master a skill. Other children will learn mostly through observing others. Some children need to move more than others.

## **Observation**

Observing simply means watching like a camera on the wall. Being factual, and observing only what we see: the children's movements, their language, their posture, their actions. Observing shows us exactly where the child is right now. It helps us see what they are interested in, what they are working to master, when there is a developmental change, and, on occasion, when to step in to set a limit or to provide a little help before stepping out again.

## **Activity**

Montessori activities have a beginning, middle, and end. The child may begin with a small part of the sequence and, as they develop, will be able to complete the full work cycle, including replacing the activity on the shelf. They experience peace while they are practicing the activity—and satisfaction once they complete it. For example, when arranging flowers, at first a child may show interest only in pouring water and using the sponge to wipe it up. Gradually they will learn all the steps and complete

the work cycle, filling small vases with water, arranging all the flowers, putting away the materials at the end, and cleaning up any water that was spilled.

Activities are often organized in individual trays and baskets. Within each tray or basket is everything the child needs to complete the task by themselves. For example, if the activity involves water, on the plate will be included a sponge or hand mitt of a certain color to clean up any spills. For example when watering the plant you will use green hand mitt and if mitt will be too wet you will put it to the clothesline for drying; if mitt will be dirty you will put it in the basket of “dirty clothes”. Then you should take a clean dry mitt of a certain color from the shelf or clothesline.

Children gain mastery of an activity through repetition. They may focus on and repeat just one part of the activity. For example, they may practice squeezing a sponge or filling a jug with water from a tap. We observe and allow them to repeat and repeat the section they are trying to master. They will eventually add steps to the process or move on to another activity.



## WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TODDLERS

### **Toddlers need to say “no.”**

One of the most important developmental phases a toddler passes through is the “crisis of self-affirmation.” Between 18 months and 3 years, children realize that their identity is separate from their parents’ and they begin to desire more autonomy. At the same time they begin to say “no,” they begin to use the personal pronoun I.

### **Toddlers need to move.**

They want to keep mastering movement. Once standing, they move on to climbing and walking. Once walking, they want to run and to move heavy objects—the heavier the better.

### **Toddlers need to explore and discover the world around them.**

Let them lay down on the mattress, take off their socks and dress, splash in the water.

### **Toddlers need freedom.**

This freedom will help them grow to be curious learners, to experience things for themselves, to make discoveries, and to feel they have control over themselves.

### **Toddlers need limits.**

These limits will keep them safe, teach them to respect others and their environment/work.

### **Toddlers need to have own translator.**

Toddlers don’t have all the words. Parents have to be child’s translator. How to help to child when another child takes their toy or child is taking someone else’s toy? Parent should translate “It’s sound like you want to say....”. Parent can translate for another group member if child is upset. Helps see their perspective or helps others understand why they are upset. If someone’s taken their toy “It’s looks like he/she sad about it; it’s look like he/she isn’t quite finished yet. It will be available soon on

the shelf". Or if somebody taking the toy parent/ child can say "It looks like you're wanting to play with that toy. Please wait!"

### **Toddlers need order and consistency.**

Toddlers prefer things to be exactly the same every day—the same routine, things in the same place, and the same rules. It helps them understand, make sense of their world, and know what to expect.

A child can become frustrated if, for example, a piece of a puzzle is missing. If any pieces are missing, we remove the whole activity. Parent can remove imperfect items on the windowsill. Parent should make sure that activities are complete and not missing any parts so the children can work with them independently. If something is wrong/missing parts parent should put hole material on the windowsill.

### **Toddlers are not giving us a hard time. They are having a hard time.**

Toddlers are impulsive. Their prefrontal cortex (the part of the brain that houses our self-control and decision-making centers) is still developing. This means we may need to guide them if they are climbing on the table again or grabbing something out of someone's hands, and be patient if they become emotional. "Adults need to be their prefrontal cortex."

### **Toddlers need time to process what we are saying.**

Instead of repeatedly telling our child to put on their shoes, we can count to ten in our head to allow them time to process our request. Often, by the time we get to eight, we'll see them start to respond.

### **Toddlers need to communicate.**

Our children try to communicate with us in many ways. Babies gurgle and we can gurgle back; young toddlers will babble and we can show an interest in what they are saying; older toddlers love asking and answering questions; and we can give rich language, even to these young children, to absorb like a sponge.

### **Toddlers love mastery.**

Toddlers love to repeat skills until they master them. Observe them and notice what they are working to master. Usually it is something hard enough to be challenging



but not so difficult that they give up. They'll repeat and repeat the process until they perfect it. Once they've mastered it, they move on.



## CLASSROOM

A child has the freedom to choose an activity. Our spaces are set up to encourage this freedom of choice by displaying a limited number of activities that they are working to master.

When children are younger than 2 years old, activities will likely have only 1 or 2 steps. As our child's concentration grows, we can increase the number of steps in the activity. As they gain mastery, add more steps (for example, put on an apron, wipe up at the end, take wet cloths to the laundry, and so on).

Our classroom divided into five main areas:

1. eye-hand coordination
2. music and movement
3. practical life (activities of daily life)
4. arts and crafts
5. language

The materials are laid out on shelves in a sequential order from easiest to hardest from left to the right and from top to bottom. Each child works at their own pace through the materials, following their interest in that moment. The parent will observe the child.

Children do not need to be directed to explore the environment. The discoveries children make for themselves—particularly within a prepared environment—build wonder in the child and a love of learning.

## **ADULTS ROLE**

Parents support children as their **guide** and **gentle leader**.

Focus on the process, not the result. The result may not look perfect, but the child is learning to master these skills.

Parents support children to make discoveries for themselves, give them freedom and limits, and mentor enable success by setting up environment.

Adult models manners and courtesies for young toddlers, who will absorb them. Trust in the child that these manners and courtesies will gradually develop without haranguing the child to use them. Don't forget to say "thank you, welcome, sorry".

Take the tray/ plate/ box where is material with two hands. Don't forget that you are modelling for another group members (if you think that your child will not absorb that you are taking with one hand than other member of the group will absorb).

Please use right things for right activities. With table cloth we are taking liquid from table. With a flooring mop we are cleaning the floor.

Sit on the ground at their height to see what they can see from their perspective

### **Tips for arts and crafts**

1. Try not to be prescriptive. Rather than showing a child what to make with the art materials, we show them how to use the materials and leave the experimentation up to them.
2. Give feedback. In Montessori, rather than tell the child their artwork is "good" we like to leave it up to the child to decide if they like what they have made. Instead we can give feedback and encouragement. We can describe what we see; for example, "I see you made a line over here in yellow." This can be more meaningful than saying, "Good job." Then the child really knows what

we appreciate when we are looking at their work. We can ask, “Would you like to tell me about your painting?” rather than “What is it?”

3. Show by example. When showing our child how to use art materials, it is often better to draw squiggles or loose lines than draw a picture. If we show them a perfect-looking flower and they can only scribble, some children will not try at all.

### **Tips for language development**


1. Use rich language.
2. Name everything with its proper name.
3. Read books.
4. Have conversations with the toddler—allow pauses for them to react.
5. Follow the child’s interests.



## HOW TO SHOW THE CHILD AN ACTIVITY

Let them choose the activity they are interested in and try it for as long as they can without interfering. Even if they drop something, we can sit on our hands to see if they will react and pick it up themselves. When we see that they are struggling and getting frustrated, we can step in and say, “Watch,” and then show them, slowly, for example, how to turn the lid of the jar. Then we can step back again to see how they manage.

Here are some tips for showing an activity to the child:

- Make precise, slow hand movements so the child can observe clearly. For example, break down all the tiny steps we take to open a button, and slowly show them each one.
  - Avoid talking as we demonstrate—otherwise the child won’t know whether to look at us while we talk or watch our hands.
  - Try to show them the same way each time to make it easier for them to pick up any steps they may be missing.
  - Handle the objects in a way that the child can manage, for example, using two hands to carry a tray, a glass, and so on.
  - If they don’t want us to help, they may be open to a verbal cue, like “Push, push.” Or we can let them keep trying by themselves until they master the task. Or they may walk away and try again at another time.
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## **GENERAL PRINCIPLES TO KEEP IN MIND**

### **1. Let the child lead**

Follow the child's pace and interests. Let them take the time to choose for themselves rather than suggesting or leading the play. Let them pick from activities they are working to master—nothing too easy or too difficult. Something challenging but not so hard that they give up.

### **2. Let them work with the activity as long as they like**

As the child is mastering an activity, we do not want to rush them to finish—even if a sibling is waiting. Once they have finished the activity, ask if they would like to do it again. This encourages repetition and gives them the chance to repeat, practice, master the activity, and increase their concentration. Ideally, we don't interrupt our child's deep focus. A simple comment from us can distract them from whatever they are working to master, and they may abandon the activity completely. Wait until they look to us for feedback, step in to offer help when they are frustrated, or see that they have finished before we make a request like coming to the table to work.

### **3. Avoid quizzing the child**

We may stop quizzing our children. "What color is this?" "How many apples am I holding?" "Can you show Grandma how you can walk?"

If you ask to the child something and there is generally only one correct answer, so if the answer they give is wrong, we have no other option than to say, "No, that flower is yellow, not blue." Not exactly great for building a child's confidence. Instead we can continue to name things right "The flower is blue", ask questions to arouse curiosity, and use observation to see what the child has mastered and what they are still practicing.

### **4. Order**

Put the activity away when finished When the child is finished with an activity, we can encourage them to return it to its place on the shelf. This routine emphasizes that there is a beginning, middle, and end to a task. And putting things back in their

special place on the shelf gives order and calm to the space. With young toddlers, we can first model where things belong and introduce putting things back as the last part of the activity. We can then start to work together with our child to bring things back to the shelf—they might carry one part and we carry the other. Gradually we will see them put things away more and more by themselves. They may not do this every day, just as we do not feel like cooking every day. Instead of insisting that they do, we could say, “You want me to do it? Okay, I’ll carry this one and you carry that one.” Even older children may need some help breaking the task into manageable parts. “Let’s first put the blocks back, and then we’ll work on the books.” If they have moved on to the next activity, I do not generally break their concentration. Instead I put away the activity myself, modeling for the child what to do the next time. They may not actually see us do it, but they may see us from the corner of their eye or unconsciously absorb what we are doing.

### **5. Model, model, model**

Our child learns a lot from observing us and other people around them. So we can think how a young child could be successful and model that—for example, push in our chair with two hands, avoid sitting on a low table or shelf, and carry just one thing at a time.

### **6. Allow any use of the materials, but stop when they’re used inappropriately**

A child will explore activities in different ways (and often in ways we weren’t expecting). We do not want to limit their creativity by stepping in to correct them. If they are not **harming the materials, themselves**, or **someone** else, then there is no need to interrupt them. We could perhaps make a mental note to show them its purpose at another time. For example, if a child is using a watering can to fill a bucket, we could show them at another neutral moment how to use the watering can to water some plants. However, if the child is using the objects inappropriately, we may gently step in. For example, “I can’t let you bang that glass on the window.” We could then show them that the glasses are for drinking or show them an activity that allows them to use that skill, for example, banging a drum or doing a small hammer-and-nail activity.

### **7. Be careful with small parts and sharp objects**

Keep observing in a calm way to make sure they are using the items in a safe way.

### **8. Undo the activity.**

A completed activity is less attractive to a toddler than one that has been left undone.

Disassemble the activity before returning it to the shelf. Place the pieces in a bowl to the left (say, puzzle pieces) and the activity to the right (the empty puzzle base).

Tracking the movement from left to right is indirect preparation for reading.





## SOME PRINCIPLES FOR CURIOUS HUMANS

### Follow the child

We have already talked about how important it is to let the child lead, to not interrupt when the child is focusing deeply on something (as much as possible, at least), and to follow their interests. Following the child means following their unique timeline, seeing where they are today, and not imposing our idea of what they should be learning. Let me be clear. Following the child is **not permissiveness**, allowing them to do whatever they like. We will set limits when needed, ensuring the safety and care of themselves, their environment, and others. But it is not being directive either. When we hear ourselves giving commands, giving lessons, or giving too much information, may we remember, Ah, yes. How can I find a way to step back and let them lead?

### “Help me to help myself”

“Help me to help myself” is an expression often used in Montessori.

It means:

- setting up things for our child to be successful by themselves
- stepping in as little as possible and as much as is necessary, then stepping back for our child to continue to try
- allowing time to practice
- showing our acceptance and support

### How to teach our child skills

Break the task into small steps and show them very slowly. Toddlers will pick it up faster if **we don't talk at the same time we're showing them**. Simply say, “Look!” and demonstrate with **slow, clear movements**.

### Offering help

Rather than rushing in to help our toddler, we wait to see how much they can manage themselves. If they are stuck or the task is difficult or new, we can offer

help. "Would you like me or someone else to help you do that?" "Would you like to see how I do it?" "Have you tried . . . ?" Then we help only if they want it.

