



Montessori House
Primary Class Curriculum
First Year

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Contents

Montessori House	1
Dedication	6
Welcome to your Montessori Album	7
Creating a Montessori Learning Environment at Home	8
Tips for Beginning a Montessori Curriculum	8
Notes on Methodology.....	9
Your Child's Environment	11
Floor Mats.....	12
Arranging a Montessori Classroom at Home.....	13
Useful Supplies	14
The Original Montessori Class Schedule.....	15
Timing of Presentations and Daily Routine.....	17
Practical Life: Brain & Body Development.....	18
Grace and Courtesy: Beginning Presentations.....	19
Personal Care	21
Walking in the Room.....	22
Working with the Mat.....	24
Sweeping.....	25
Spooning.....	26
Pouring - Dry	27
Sponging	28
Pouring - Wet.....	29
Fabric Folding.....	30
Vase Carrying	31
Flower Arranging.....	32
Plant Watering	34
Hand Washing.....	35
Polishing Silver.....	36
Dusting.....	37
Dressing Frames: Three Large Buttons	38
Dressing Frame: Snaps	40
Dressing Frame: Hook and Eye	41
Dressing Frame: Zipper	42
Table Washing	43
Holding and Walking with Sharp Objects: 2nd Presentation	45
Using Scissors.....	47
Hammering a Nail.....	48
Banana Cutting.....	50
Food - Preparation and Serving	51
Nature Walks	52
Planting Project.....	53
Sensorial: Writing Preparation & Brain Development.....	54
Knobbed Cylinders	55
Pink Tower.....	58
Experimenting with Sensorial Material	60

Brown Stairs.....	61
Red Rods.....	63
Colored Tablets: First Box.....	66
Geometric Cabinet - Introductory Presentation.....	69
Geometric Cabinet - Regular and Irregular Polygons & Closed Form Shapes.....	71
Geometric Cabinet - Equilateral, Isosceles, and Scalene Triangles.....	72
Constructive Triangles: Rectangular Box.....	73
Mystery Bag.....	75
Touch Board (Rough and Smooth) Set.....	76
Touch Tablets.....	78
Fabric Box.....	80
Thermic Tablets.....	82
Sound Cylinders.....	83
The Bells - Introduction & Diatonic Scale.....	85
The Bells - Chromatic Scale.....	88
Geometric Solids.....	91
Binomial Cube.....	94
Cultural Development: Reading Preparation & General Development	96
Art at Home.....	97
Leaf Pressing.....	99
Water Color Paints.....	100
Geography -- Land and Water.....	101
Geography -- Colored and Sandpaper Globes.....	103
Geography -- Map of the Hemisphere.....	104
Zoology Classification.....	106
Living and Non-Living.....	107
Magnetism.....	108
Using a Magnifying Glass.....	109
Buoyancy.....	110
Light and Shadows.....	111
Language: Enriched Reading & Writing	112
Vocabulary Enrichment - Learning How to Hold a Discussion.....	113
Vocabulary Enrichment - Descriptive Language.....	114
Vocabulary Enrichment - Reading Aloud.....	115
Vocabulary Enrichment - Verbal Identification of Visual and Tactile Feedback ..	117
Vocabulary Enrichment - Real Object and Picture Matching.....	118
Vocabulary Enrichment - Picture Matching with Words.....	119
Vocabulary Enrichment - Categorization.....	120
Sounds of Letters - Rhyming Pictures and Sound Matching.....	121
Pre-Writing with the Sand Tray.....	122
Pre-Writing with Metal Insets.....	123
Letter Sounds - Sandpaper Letters.....	125
Letter Sounds - Object Boxes.....	127
Transition from Sandpaper Letters to Movable Alphabet.....	129
Reading and Writing - Movable Alphabet.....	130
Reading List of Consonant Vowel Consonant Words.....	131

Math: Quantities, Numerals, Decimal System.....	136
Sandpaper Numerals	137
Number Rods (Red & Blue Rods)	140
Number Rods -- 2nd Presentation.....	141
Number Rods & Cards.....	142
Number Rods and Cards Exercise #2	143
Number Rods and Cards Exercise #3	143
Number Rod and Cards Exercise #3 Alternate	144
Spindle Boxes	145
Numerals & Counters	147
Short Bead Stair	148
Memory Game of Numbers	150
Introduction to the Golden Beads	151
The Concept of Zero	153
Working with Units through Thousands.....	154

Vase Carrying

This is a marvelous exercise for children because it enables them to practice and develop their large motor skills along with hand-eye coordination as they walk with the vase.

Materials needed:

- Glass vase

The mouth of the vase should be wide enough that your child can later fill it with water using a pitcher. The vase should be small enough that your child can hold it securely using the hand placement introduced below.

Presentation:

1. Invite your child to join you for this exercise.
2. Your child sits at the table.
3. Bring the vase to the table. When you carry the vase, let the vase sit on the palm of your non-dominant hand and use your dominant hand to hold the neck.
4. Hand the vase to your child, showing him or her the appropriate hand position by saying, "Put out your left hand" and placing the vase on your child's palm. Then say, "Hold the neck of the vase with your other hand."
5. Your child examines the vase. Ask your child to please hand the vase to you.
6. Place the vase noiselessly on the table.
7. Both of you stand up.
8. Pick up the vase and walk around the table with it. Put it back on the table.
9. Ask your child if he or she would like to walk with the vase. Your child repeats your actions.
10. Your child can find an attractive and safe place in the room to display the vase.

A nice expansion exercise is to create a touchable set of precious things that your child can handle. Items that work well include attractive small objects that children love to handle such as glass marbles, small ceramic figures, and pictures in frames.

Set up a special corner in the house where your child can go to sit and examine these treasures.

Dressing Frames: Three Large Buttons



Display all of the Dressing Frames neatly and attractively in the Practical Life section of your home classroom. You can create a set of small hooks (two across the top) to hang them, put them flat on the shelf in a row, or create a small rack for storing them.

It is important to display the frames together in a tidy arrangement, not stacked or put in boxes. This allows your child to view the frames easily when he or she wants to select which frame to work with. It also helps train your child's eye to maintain order in the room because a misplaced frame will stand out.

Materials needed:

- Large button frame
- Child-sized table

Presentation:

Setup -

1. Invite your child to join you for this exercise.
2. Walk to the frame display with your child.
3. Say that you will be working with the button frame. Take the frame off of the display.
4. Use two hands on either side of the frame to carry it back to the table.
5. Put the frame on the table so that the side with the fabric on top is on your right side (buttons on your left side)
6. Pull out a chair and sit down.
7. Your child sits next to you.

Unbuttoning:

1. Point to the top button.
2. Use the index finger and thumb on your right hand to pinch the right edge of the button.
3. Put your left thumb on top of the fabric on the right side of the button hole, and put your left index finger underneath.

4. Dip the leading edge of the button through the opening. Say, "I am putting the button through the buttonhole."
5. Pause so that your child can observe the position of the button.
6. When that edge goes through the opening, let go of the fabric with your left hand. Use your left hand to grasp the button edge that has gone through the fabric.
7. Let go of the button with your right hand.
8. Pull the button through with your left hand.
9. Show your child that you can now open that part of the fabric.
10. Move down to the next button by sliding your index finger down the fabric.
11. Repeat the process until all the buttons are undone.
12. When all buttons are undone, open the right flap onto the table. Open the left flap onto the table. When you open the flaps, the index finger and thumb on your left hand grasp the fabric at the bottom and you slide your right hand up the edge of the fabric to reach the top.
13. Use the index and thumb of your right hand to trace the inside of the frame slowly from left to right.

Buttoning:

14. Say that you will button the buttons.
15. Grasp the left flap with the buttons on it. Use the same grip and sliding motion with the right hand as before. Put the flap back inside the frame.
16. Repeat the process with the right flap, placing it on top of the buttons.
17. Use your left hand to grasp the left edge of the top button.
18. With your right hand, grasp the top of the fabric and pull it inwards so that the buttonhole is over the button.
19. Using your left hand, dip half the button through the buttonhole.
20. With your right hand, let go of the fabric. Grasp the button.
21. Let go of the button with your left hand and tug on the fabric gently as you push the button through with your right hand.
22. Repeat until all the buttons are buttoned.

Ask your child if he or she would like to try. Put the frame in front of your child. If he or she becomes happily absorbed in the task, excuse yourself and let your child work alone. At this stage it is important that you do not interrupt your child to make corrections. The important part of the exercise is the process of trial and error and your child fits the buttons into the holes. If he or she misses a button or puts the wrong button into the hole, just fix it later on the shelf in the same way that a teacher would in the classroom.

Note that for the Dressing Frame presentations, we have loaded pictures onto our blog that will help you with the steps because they are a bit complicated to follow from written instructions if you have not worked with the material.

Pink Tower



The Pink Tower is probably one of the best-known pieces of Montessori equipment.

Assemble the tower on a low shelf or platform in the Sensorial area, so that your child can see it in its completed form before starting the exercise.

Materials needed:

- Pink Tower
- Mat for floor work

Presentation:

1. A mat must be located on the floor some distance from the Pink Tower (the tower is still on the shelf now).
2. Bring one cube at a time, beginning with the smallest which is carried in a three-fingered grasp.
3. Put the cube down carefully on the mat.
4. Return to the tower and bring the next cube. As the size of the cubes increases, employ additional fingers for carrying.
5. Place the cubes in random order, but position them on the mat so that there is a place for your child to sit on the mat to your left so that the tower can be built between the two of you.
6. When you get the last two cubes, use your left hand as a shelf and steady the cube with your right hand as you carry the cube to the mat.
7. When all the cubes have been brought to the mat, isolate the largest cube and place it between you and your child.
8. Take time to look for the next largest cube.
9. Select the proper cube and place it exactly in the middle of the largest cube. Use only one hand as you handle the cubes now.
10. Find the third cube, carefully, and place it exactly in the center of the second cube (the one you placed above).
11. Continue stacking and check often to see that the cubes are centered.
12. Stand up and move around the tower as you work because your child will need to do so in order to build the tower carefully.
13. When the tower is complete, take it down (place blocks randomly) and rebuild it.
14. After your child has had a turn or turns, show him or her how to take down the tower and carry it back to the shelf, beginning with the largest cube. He or she will rebuild the tower on the shelf.

Exercise:

After a lot of experience with the first exercise or at the point where your child is also working with the Brown Stairs and Red Rods, build the tower as follows:

- The cubes are superimposed in such a way that two sides and an enclosed angle are touching.
- Two sides of the tower are then smooth to the touch. Run your hands along the two sides in order to make sure that they are perfectly even.
- The sides that are not smooth now form a staircase.
- Show your child that the smallest cube will fill in this area of the step.
- Starting at the top or the bottom, slide the smallest cube all the way around the ledge on each cube.

The point of this exercise is to show your child that the smallest cube is the measure of difference between any two sequential cubes.

The purpose of the Pink Tower is to develop visual discrimination of differences in dimension and to work on muscular control of the hand and arm. The indirect aim of the work is to provide education in voluntary movement, prepare the hand, and prepare your child's mathematical mind for development.

After your child has worked with the material, introduce the terms -- large, larger, largest and smallest, smaller, and smallest.

Note, if your child builds the tower incorrectly, wait until he or she has finished it and, then, ask for a turn and rebuild it. If your child continues to build erroneously, then, probably a Practical Life presentation should be given since your child is not yet ready for this equipment. Be aware that an older child may be inaccurate due to boredom.

Your notes

Date of initial presentation ____ Child's age ____

Number of cubes presented _____

Date that your child was able to build the tower independently ____

Observations:

Photo credit: Apple Ridge Montessori School in Maryland

Experimenting with Sensorial Material



Your child can experiment with different formations of the Sensorial material including the Pink Tower, Brown Stairs, Red Rods, and Knobbed Cylinders. In the photo above, the child has chosen to build the tower sideways, creating a staircase.

Children can also mix two or more pieces of equipment such as the Brown Stairs and Pink Tower, building new formations and shapes. They can also create geometric patterns, long lines, and random combinations with any of the equipment.

The only rule is that the equipment must be handled with care. Interestingly, the original presentation of the Pink Tower in Maria Montessori's classroom in Italy encouraged children to knock the tower down after building it. Note that the original tower was unpainted, so there was no paint to chip. If this alternative appeals to you (or your child), your child can put his or her mat on top of a carpeted area so that the tower cubes will not be damaged when they fall.

If your child is allowed to knock down material at home and he or she then goes to a Montessori classroom, you can explain that the material should be put away carefully at school because there are too many children using it and the material would most certainly not last very long with this sort of wear and tear. Encouraging thoughtful analysis of restrictions and rules provides an excellent learning opportunity in itself.

Photo credit: Apple Ridge Montessori School in Maryland

Geometric Solids



Geometric Solids introduce your child to new vocabulary, while encouraging tactile exploration and practice.

A basket of Geometric Solids includes ten standard shapes: cube, sphere, cone, cylinder, rectangular prism, triangular prism, ovoid, ellipsoid, triangular-based pyramid, and the square-based pyramid.

Some sets include additional shapes such as the hemisphere and different sizes of cylinders. If you have one of these sets, put the extra shapes aside until the end of this exercise, and then introduce the extra shapes.

Materials needed:

- Basket of Geometric Solids
- Set of wooden tablets (bases) which have the same base as the rectilinear solids or the same shape as a vertical cross-section of the curvilinear solids.
- Mat for floor work

Presentation:

1. Invite your child to join you for this exercise.
2. Bring the basket and tablets to the mat.
3. Introduce the figures using the three-period lesson. Take the following three contrasting figures out of the basket: sphere, cube, and cone.
4. Put the basket aside.
5. Tell your child we are looking at "geometric solids."
6. Pick up the sphere.
7. Handle it thoroughly; use both hands and get as much hand as possible in contact with as much solid as possible.
8. Say, "this is the sphere, would you like to feel the sphere?"
9. Give the solid to your child.
10. Retrieve the sphere and put it aside.
11. Repeat with the cube and cone.
12. When the three figures have been introduced, and the name for each said at least twice, then, move to the second period.
13. Say, "can you find the sphere?"
14. Say, "can you put the sphere over here?"
15. Say, "feel the sphere again."
16. Repeat with the cube and cone.
17. When you feel that your child knows the terms, go on to the third period.
18. Hand your child the last shape he or she handled and say, "would you like to feel this and tell me what it is?"
19. Repeat with the cube and cone.
20. If your child's interest is still high and he or she has mastered the vocabulary easily, introduce another three solids today. Otherwise, put everything away and review the presentation in 2-3 days and see if your child is ready for more solids.

Note that the three-period lesson is slightly different in this lesson due to the intensive handling of the solids that is required.

Identifying the Forms:

1. When your child knows the names of at least six of the solids, put those six in one of the baskets.
2. Cover the basket with a cloth so that the solids cannot be seen.
3. Reach your hand in and feel a solid.
4. Name it.
5. Bring it out from under the cloth.
6. Look at it and feel it.
7. Place it on the table.
8. When your child is ready, let him or her try.
9. Say, "you have to feel it and tell me the name before you bring it out."
10. When all the solids have been removed, replace them and cover them and invite your child to do the activity independently.

Introduction of the Bases:

This is the last exercise for the solids. Your child should have had plenty of experience with the solids before starting this phase.

1. Take out three bases and the appropriate figures, for example, the triangular base, the square base, and the rectangular base; and the cube, rectangular prism, and pyramid.
2. Place the figures on the bases.
3. Take the solids off the bases and mix all six of the objects.
4. Invite your child to place the solids on the bases.
5. If your child does so readily, you can remove a couple more bases and a couple more figures and let your child work from that point.

Encourage your child to experiment with different uses of the bases and solids.

Games:

Children will develop their own games to play with the solids, but here is one example of a game they might play:

A few children sit with their eyes closed and their hands behind their backs. Another child has the basket of solids and hands each child a figure. Children then reach around in front and feel the shape of the figure in front of them. The child who has given them out, then, calls the names of the figures and the child with the appropriate figure brings it around in front of him or herself while keeping eyes closed. The leader takes it and puts it in the basket. All the children open their eyes and look at the solid. They close their eyes and the leader calls out another solid. And so it continues until all solids are back in the basket. If the leader cannot recall a name to call out, one of the children simply names the object that she or he holds.

The purpose of the Geometric Solids is to make your child aware of the solid geometrical shapes in his or her environment. The solids also have the indirect purpose of preparing children for geometry.

You provide the control of error for the names of the solids. If your child misidentifies, say, a cube as a sphere, you pick up the sphere and say, "this is a sphere" and hand it to your child. Then identify the cube as a cube. Pick it up and hand it to your child.

Your notes

Date of presentation _____ Your child's age _____

Date of successful naming and identification of all the shapes _____

Observations (e.g. identification by touch, period of concentration, language, group interaction in the game):

Letter Sounds - Sandpaper Letters

The Sandpaper Letters provide your child's first introduction to letters and reading.



Materials needed:

- Sandpaper Letter set
- Box with compartments for each letter
- Mat for floor work

The box in the photo above is perfect because much of the material is visible, so your child will spot it easily on the shelf. This is preferable to having the material enclosed and out of sight.

Presentation:

- Invite your child to join you to work with the Sandpaper Letters
- Your child can unroll a mat on the floor
- Bring the box to the mat
- Place the box on the side of the mat
- Using both hands, take the letter *m* and place it on the mat.

The letter grouping below is optional. If your child or family member has a short CVC name, you can modify this grouping so that the name can be introduced early to provide a point of interest and connection.

1st - a, s, m, t, b
2nd - i, f, h, c, d, l
3rd - o, g, k, n, r
4th - u, j, p, q, y
5th - e, v, w, x, z

The grouping provides a guide for you as you present the letter sounds. The final groups use sounds that are harder to use for word formation. Depending on your child's level of interest and recall of the sounds, you can present three sounds that include the short "a" card. If your child is eager to learn more, introduce another two sounds.

Follow the steps of Three Period Lesson on the next page.

This is a standard Montessori Three Period Lesson that is used for most equipment presentations. The beauty is in the simplicity of the language and instruction with the focus on the tactile feel of the letters as your child says the sound of the letter.

First Period:

1. Using your pointer and index fingers, trace the letter. Always trace letters in the direction in which they are written.
2. Say the sound of the letter as you trace it.
3. Put the letter in front of your child.
4. Let your child trace and say the sound.
5. Introduce the *a* and *n* sounds in the same way (do not make a word now).

Second Period:

1. Ask your child to show you the *n* (saying the sound only).
2. Repeat for the *a* and *n*.
3. If your child points to the wrong sound, say, "That is the ___." "Can you find the ___?"

Wait until you are sure that your child knows the sounds before you continue to the final period. It is not a test to see if your child knows something or not, it is the final stage in the lesson when your child is comfortable with the material. The presentation should never feel like a test! That is not the point of this final step. You are sharing knowledge with your child, and when your child has mastered the material, he or she will delight in sharing it with you in the third part of the presentation.

Third Period:

1. Point to a letter and ask your child, "What is this?"
2. If your child says the wrong sounds, say "That is the ___." Then point to the sound your child said.

You can stop after any of the parts, if your child seems overloaded. The most important thing is that your child gets to hear, see, and trace the letter sounds. Tracing the letters is an integral part of this exercise because it combines the sensory experience of touch with hearing the sound and saying it.

If your child is more interested in nibbling on the edges of the letter boards or throwing them, just gently put them away for later and focus on Practical Life and Sensorial materials.