



Montessori House
Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers
Sample Pages

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Infant Object Permanence Boxes (Series I): Sample Exercise

Object permanence boxes are designed for infants who are just experiencing objects and the sense of permanence. Putting a small ball into a hole and seeing it reappear is, for an infant, truly magic. Their sense of discovery and wonder is fostered through the use of these boxes.

As with all the other equipment, the pieces of the equipment are set up so that the holes fit exactly the balls, the drawers have knobs that are right-sized for small hands, and the colors are designed to transition nicely to formal color lessons later in the form of the Colored Tablets.

There are currently four pieces of equipment in this series, starting with the box below and ending with the Box with Sliding Lid, which is the most complex.



The first piece of equipment in this series is the Box with Tray (above). It is the easiest to use because your child only needs to grasp the small ball and insert it into the top hole. The ball reappears automatically on the tray.



The Box with Bins (above) is more complicated because the ball (or other object) goes into a bin without any apparent opening as there is with the first box.

When you introduce this box to your child, you can put one object into one bin, open it, and then put the object into the next bin, and repeat. Or, you can use three objects and place one object in each bin. Let your child play and explore as he or she likes.



This Box with Sliding Lid (above) is the most complicated because there are no object-sized slots, only a lid with a knob that requires manipulation at the beginning and end of the exercise.

Steps to using the Box with Sliding Lid:

1. You can use all of these boxes with a floor mat or at a table.
2. Each object is picked up using the three-fingered grasp.
3. Place each object on the mat or table.
4. Using a three-fingered grasp, open the lid.
5. Place one object at a time inside.
6. Close the lid.
7. Open the lid again.
8. Take the objects out.
9. Place each object on the mat or table.
10. Close the lid.
11. Place the objects back in the compartment as shown.

Your child can play with all of the material as he or she likes. These are just the steps for your presentation.

We have included samples from language, sensorial development, and math. For more about Montessori at home, visit us at www.MyMontessoriHouse.com and our blog for infants and toddlers is <http://montessorihouse.blogspot.com/>

Sandpaper Letters: As your child gets older



This is the first step in teaching your child to read. When should you start?

Sometimes it is easy to know because many children between two and three years of age begin to ask their parents what a particular word means, what signs say, or how to write a specific word.

We definitely do not encourage pushing your child to read too early. Children under the age of three are still developing overall language, sensory, and motor skills, all of which are key to doing everything else.

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.

Material needed:

1. A set of Sandpaper Letters.
2. A box to hold the letters (you will notice how the display boxes leave the tops of the letters showing so children can easily spot them on the shelves).
3. A permanent place on a low shelf in your home classroom.

Setup:

- Choosing a quiet time of the day, invite your child to sit with you.
- Take the letter /m/ and place it on the mat.

Part One:

1. Using your pointer and index fingers, trace the letter in the direction in which it is 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 /t/ sounds in the same way (do not make a word now).

Part Two:

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

Part Three:

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.

This is a standard Three-Part Montessori lesson. 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, so we do not recommend substituting cards that cannot be traced.

Descriptive Skills: All ages

As you work with your child to develop sounds, words, and sentences, you can consciously increase your use of descriptive words and phrases to enrichen your child's language environment.

Using descriptive language with an infant or toddler is not always an intuitive thing. It can be tempting to use simple words and phrases, omitting more difficult vocabulary and sentences, so it is important to think through the process so that you use correct phrasing and great descriptive words when you speak with your young child.

Many parents upon observing a Montessori class for the first time are struck by the sophisticated level of the vocabulary used by the teacher and students in the classroom.

From the equipment itself complete with rectangles and spheres to social skills interaction, the goal of a Montessori teacher is to provide a well-rounded language environment in addition to the beautiful equipment and furnishings.

Start here:

- Use full sentences with concise and descriptive vocabulary when you speak with your child. For example, a "the blue cup" can be described as "the blue ceramic cup" and "the red cup" can be described as "the red plastic cup".
- Use full descriptions for items in the grocery store. For example, when your child points to a tangerine, say that it is a tangerine. Avoid giving a generic explanation that it is an orange or fruit). When your child then asks about a similar looking piece of fruit, you can tell him or her what it is and then let your child explore the differences. Buy both fruits and let your child taste them! The fruit section of the store provides a great number of opportunities for these types of descriptive phrases.
- If your child attends day care or kindergarten, make the use of language by the teachers or staff one of your criteria when choosing the location, if possible. Of course, we encourage you to choose a Montessori school, if budget permits!



Sound Cylinders: For one to three year olds and up

An important part of the Sensorial section is the work we do with sound. Children love to listen to objects as they shake, rattle, and roll, so here is a formal introduction to sound distinction work for those of you who have not worked with the Sound Cylinders yet.

The full set of Sound Cylinders contains six pairs of red and blue cylinders. For toddlers, you can start with three pairs, choosing the cylinders that sound the most different.

For those of you making your own equipment, it is hard to make material like the wooden originals, so you can try a different twist by using clear bottles that allow your child to see the kinds of materials that make the different noises. Make sure the contents of each bottle in the pair are identical in type and quantity. Ingredients such as sand, rice, and dried beans work well, but make sure you do not use objects that present a choking hazard if your child is very young.

Material needed:

- A set of red and blue Sound Cylinders
- A mat for floor work

What to do:

1. Invite your child to join you.
2. Let your child unroll the mat.
3. Bring the boxes to the mat (ideally you would create a smaller box to hold each of the abbreviated sets).
4. Take the blue cylinders out and line them up in front of the box. Do the same with the red cylinders.
5. Pick up a blue cylinder. Shake it. Listen. Hold it near your child and shake it.
6. Place the cylinder on the mat in front of you.
7. Shake the first red cylinder. Shake the same blue cylinder. Shake it and let your child listen. Ask your child if they are the same. If they are not the same, put the red cylinder back and take the next one. Repeat until you find a match.
8. Repeat the process using the blue cylinders as the control set.
9. Mix the pairs and let your child try.

Toddlers are young for this exercise as Sound Cylinders are usually introduced around the age of four. But we introduce it here because it is very popular with older toddlers. If your child prefers shaking the cylinders to matching them, let him or her enjoy shaking them and then put everything away until your child is older.

Spindle Boxes with Modifications: For two to three year olds

Math Spindle Boxes provide children the experience of handling different quantities of objects and linking these quantities to numbers.



When you are working with toddlers, present only the first box with slots for quantities from zero to four. Remove the spindles for the second box as well, so that the remaining ten spindles fit the available slots in the first box.

Material needed:

1. Spindle Boxes and spindles
2. A small felt mat that is big enough for all the spindles to be placed on it.
3. A place on the shelf for this exercise.

What to do:

1. One box will have compartments labeled 0 to 5 and the other box will have the numbers 6 to 9. Note that the box should be stored with the spindles in the appropriate compartments.
2. Invite your child to bring the box from the shelf and join you at the table.
3. Your child places the first box on the table (unless your child is ready to start with both boxes).
4. You take the spindles out of their compartments and place them on the mat.
5. Point to the "1" compartment and announce that "This is one."
6. Ask your child to give you one spindle.
7. Your child counts out one spindle and places it in your open hand.
8. You count (out loud) the one spindle he or she has placed in your hand as you put the spindle into your child's open hand.
9. Your child places the spindle in the appropriate compartment.
10. Repeat this process until all of the spindles have been placed in compartments.
11. Once all the spindles are in place, make a point of observing that there are no spindles in the compartment labeled "0."

When you ask your child to count the spindles into your hand, remember to leave time for him or her to think, count, and respond. The object of this exercise is the learning process. It does not matter if your child needs much thought and practice to understand the exercise. Many younger children work with this material repeatedly before the concept finally clicks and they get all the spindles into the right compartments. It is the process that counts!

Capturing Sight and Touch



Look around your infant's bedroom and observe the room from his or her point of view. Is the room quiet and well-lit during waking times? Is it quiet, dark, and calm during sleep time?

As your infant lies in his or her crib, what is there to see? If you acquire and hang a series of mobiles, he or she will have something interesting and compelling in immediate focus to watch.

There has been lots of research into different types of mobiles, but it is hard to know what will work best. Interesting brain study work has shown that simple black and white mobiles with basic shapes can be stimulating, so try creating or buying one with simple black and white geometric shapes such as a black triangle inside of a white circle. Avoid busy patterns.

Try making or buying a mobile with simple basic shapes and primary colors, too. How does your infant respond?

The next step is to engage your infant in motion. Look for a mobile that allows your infant to hold part of it and tug on it. Your infant's tugging should result in the mobile moving and making noise. Wooden mobiles with handles work well for this. Make sure the mobile will not fall down as infants can pull harder than one might imagine.

After your infant is working with his or her mobile actively, look for attachments to the crib that he or she can use without a mobile (see the photo above). The ideal attachment is something that your infant can use to pull on to move his or her body. A simple thick cotton rope attached to a wooden ring can work wonders.

Expand on this concept by working with your infant while he or she is lying in the crib or on a blanket on the floor. Your infant can pull his or her body off of the floor a bit by using your hands as a support. You can also secure the rope and ring against a wall when your infant is a bit older (around six months or whenever he or she seems ready).

Again, safety first: Are the crib slots, if your crib has them, infant- safe? Make sure that your infant cannot wedge his or her head between them? No? If you have a family heirloom of questionable safety, do not use it! If it is an antique, it is probably not safe. Make sure that any material used in the mobiles or other equipment cannot get twisted around your infant's head.

Joining In

This exercise allows your infant to spend time on his or her stomach, developing core strength and coordination, while interacting with other family members in a group setting.

Material needed:

- A soft mat or blanket

Place the mat down on the floor in a central area of the living room (or other family area), so your infant can observe everything that is happening and feel like part of the family interaction.

What to do:

1. Ask your infant if he or she would like to go to the living room.
2. Pick your infant up and carry him or her to the mat.
3. Gently place your infant on his or her stomach.
4. Make sure to include your infant in conversations by looking at him or her when you are speaking just as you would any member of the family.

For infants who are crawling, if you have a crib or playpen, you can set up the mat next to the crib, allowing your infant to use the bars as support for standing. A sturdy couch or chair can provide the same assistance in standing, too.

Your Notes:

Date of the first time you try this exercise:

Every 30 days from the date above:

Write down your notes on progress, differences between dates, language use, and other observations (insert blank pages here or in the back of the binder).