



Montessori House
Curriculum for the Primary Class
Sample Pages of Year One Material

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Pink Tower



The Pink Tower is a ubiquitous building set found in every Montessori school. It is also among the most commonly mis-presented materials in these classrooms!

Originally, in the early 1900s when Maria Montessori described her idea for the tower (it did not become pink until later), she envisioned children using the ten sequentially sized blocks to build a structure, then knocking their creation over in delight. The combination of careful assembly contrasted with enthusiastic destruction is perfect for children in this age group.

Unfortunately, the presentation of the tower activity changed over time, getting rid of the knocking down part in favor of careful disassembly of the tower. We suspect this may have been due to the rising cost of Montessori equipment and the fact that the now painted tower cubes could be relatively easily chipped when they tumble.

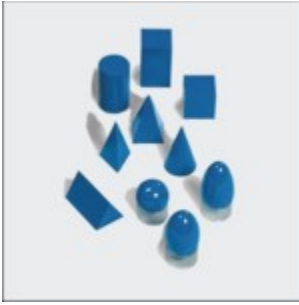
At home, you are free to present the tower in the original manner in which Montessori intended it, however, and we heartily encourage you to do this. You can use a plain tower, which will make the cubes much more resistant to damage, or you can set up an area with carpet so that the cubes fall on the carpet. If you have a carpeted floor area (or a large area rug) that your child can put his or her work mat on top of, this will create a firm work area under the mat with a larger surface area on the sides for the cubes to fall onto (it is impossible for the tower's fall to be managed on only the work mat, by the way).

The tower has ten sequentially sized cubes. You can build it on a low shelf or platform next to a shelf, so that your child can see how it is formed. When your child is ready to work with it, he or she can take it to the mat piece by piece. The three-fingered grip is used to hold the smaller pieces and a two-handed grip is used for the larger pieces.

What to do:

1. Invite your child to join you in this exercise.
2. You and your child can bring the cubes to the mat (as described above) and put each cube on the mat. Your child can unroll the mat in preparation for the exercise.
3. You start first. Place the largest cube in the middle of the mat. Put the next largest on top of it. Finish by placing the smallest cube on top (using your three-fingered grip).
4. Knock the tower down.
5. Let your child build the tower. The two of you can observe the tower.
6. Your child can knock the tower down.
7. When your child is finished with the exercise (he or she may enjoy repeating it for some time), the tower can be reassembled on the stand.
8. Your child can roll up the mat and put it away.

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.

Material needed:

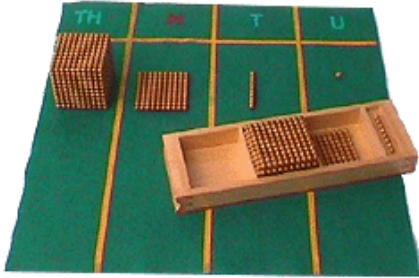
1. A basket of Geometric Solids
2. A small mat for floor work

What to do:

1. Invite your child to try this new exercise.
2. Ask your child to bring the mat to the floor and unroll it.
3. Bring the basket of shapes and sit down next to your child on the mat. Remember to sit on your child's non-dominant side (on the left side of a right-handed child).
4. Take out the cube, sphere, and pyramid.
5. Hold the cube and tell your child, "This is a cube" as you hand the cube to your child.
6. Let your child take a moment to hold and feel the cube.
7. Repeat these two last steps with the remaining two shapes.
8. Ask your child, "Please show me the cube."
9. Repeat the question for the other shapes.
10. If this is very easy for your child, then introduce the remaining shapes.
11. Otherwise, move to the third part of the exercise, asking your child, "What is this?" as you point to the cube. Repeat this question and answer process for the other two shapes.
12. If you have moved to new shapes, use the "What is this?" question and answer session at the end of the exercise for all the shapes.
13. Remember to give your child time to hold and examine the shapes. The tactile part of this exercise is very important.
14. Your child can roll up the mat and put it away, while you put away the basket of shapes.

You will note that we split the preparation and clean up after each exercise between you and your child. If you have more than one child, the children can share cleanup.

Introduction to the Golden Beads



The Golden Beads are a staple piece of material in the Montessori classroom.

There are a lot of exercises that use these beads, and this is the first one.

In terms of language, the words for one, ten, and 100 are introduced here.

Material needed:

- A board (shown in the photo)
- Golden Beads: one unit, one ten bar, one hundred square
- Four small boxes to hold each of the Golden Bead types
- A tray to hold everything
- A mat for floor work

What to do:

1. Invite your child to join you in this exercise.
2. Your child can take the mat out and unroll it on the floor.
3. You and your child can bring the material to the floor and lay it out. Sit down next to your child for the presentation.
4. Using your thumb, index, and pointer fingers, grasp the unit bead and pick it up, saying "This is one unit."
5. Ask your child "Would you like to hold the unit?"
6. Place the unit bead in your child's palm. Let your child examine the unit.
7. Your child hands the unit bead back to you, using the same grip you used.
8. Place the unit on the green square.
9. Using the same grasp on each end of the ten-bar, pick it up and say "This is a ten-bar. It has ten beads."
10. Ask your child "Would you like to hold the ten-bar?"
11. Transfer the bar into your child's fingers, so that he or she can hold it with the same grip.
12. Your child examines the ten-bar, counts the beads, and hands it back to you using the same grip.
13. Place it on the blue square.
14. Using both hands to hold the wire loops at the ends and pick up the hundred-square as you say "This is a hundred-square. It has one hundred beads."
15. Ask your child, "Would you like to hold the hundred-square?"
16. Hand the square to your child.
17. Your child examines the hundred-square and hands it back to you using the same grip.
18. Place it on the red square.
19. Part Two (if your child's attention is waning, skip to the ending part of the lesson now and continue next time).

20. Ask your child, "Can you show me the unit?"
21. Thank your child and then repeat the process with the ten-bar and hundred-square.
22. Part Three (another opportunity to skip to the end of the lesson and pick up next time).
23. Point to the unit and ask your child "What is this?"
24. Thank your child and repeat the process with the ten-bar and hundred-square.
25. You and your child can share cleanup. If there are two children participating, let each of them take a task.

If your child points to the wrong object or gives the wrong name, ask him or her to count the beads. If your child does not correct his or her error, you can gently name the object. For example, if he or she has said that the ten-bar is a hundred-square, you can say, "Let's count the beads." When you get to ten, you can say, "This has ten beads. It is the ten-bar."

Colored Bead Stairs



Creating the combinations of colored bead bars that add up to ten helps your child internalize the concept of addition. While it is nice that your child memorizes addition facts because it is a handy skill, that is not the primary point of the lesson.

For older children who are new to Montessori, we highly recommend that you introduce this exercise, even if your child can already perform single digit addition.

Material needed:

- A set of colored bead bars in a box with sections for each type of bar
- 10 Golden Bead Ten-Bars in another box
- A tray for carrying the bead material
- A counter with a notch for the beads
- A small mat for the table (felt works well)

The counter can be made out of any thin material. It can either be notched or just very thin, depending on the spaces between your beads. The counter is held between the thumb, index, and pointer fingers.

What to do:

1. Invite your child to learn this exercise.
2. Let your child gather the bead boxes and bring them to the table on a tray.
3. Put the small mat down on the table.
4. Put a ten-bar on the mat (vertically)
5. Use the counter to count each bead.
6. Tell your child that you are going to make ten using the colored beads.
7. Take the nine-bar and place it on the right side of the ten-bar. Line up the top beads evenly, so your child sees clearly the missing length.
8. Ask your child if he or she can find the bead bars that will make it equal ten.
9. Your child places the bead bar at the bottom and uses the counter to count them.
10. If, for example, your child selected the two-bar, instead of the single bead, the final count will be 11. Let your child try until he or she finds the right combination.
11. Let your child finish the remaining combinations.
12. Share cleanup.

You can decide whether to introduce this exercise using a combination of any two colored bead bars, any three, or you can let your child create as many combinations as possible. If you have any doubts, start with the combination of two.

If your child has a hard time making the first combination of ten, the next thing you should do is the inverse combination. Start with one and let your child find the nine. Tell your child it was a job well done and then put the material away for later. Take a step back for the next lesson, refocusing on work with the Spindle Boxes, Red Rods, Red & Blue Rods, and Math Counters.

How to Present Sandpaper Letters

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 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.

If you are making these at home, use Century Gothic font, create stencils in Word (the letter "c" should be about four inches high to give you a scale), and cut out letters in fine-grained sandpaper. These are tricky to make, however, so if you are planning to buy a few items of equipment and make others, this is a good one to buy.

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.

This is a standard Three-Part Montessori lesson format that is used for most equipment presentations. The beauty is in the simplicity of the language and instruction.

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.

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.