

Montessori At Home!

Parent's Guide



Counting Coconuts



Shannons Tot School



“When dealing with children there is greater need for observing than of probing”

“It is true that we cannot make a genius. We can only give a child the chance to fulfill his potential possibilities.”

“Never help a child with a task at which he feels he can succeed.”

Maria Montessori

Providing Montessori experiences at home involves different elements. At the heart of it are the activities and materials described in this book. These will be the center of your home Montessori program. There is more to understand to get the most benefit from these experiences. This section will cover the important things you need to know to help your child get the most out of doing Montessori at home. You can be a great **Home Teaching Parent!**

For an excellent, quick introduction, read this [article at Montessori Print Shop](#).

The Learning Sweet Spot

A young child's development is a moving target. One minute your child is taking her first steps and saying her first words; and the next she is on her way to kindergarten. So much development occurs in just a few years. The brain architecture is formed, your child has a unique personality, and your baby is ready to start taking his place in the world. Montessori teachers are trained to observe children so that they can, when needed, guide them to appropriate activities. For your early learning activities at home, that process is much simpler:

Find activities that excite interest and hold your child's attention; and that your child wants to repeat using. When your child has mastered an activity or skill, provide something slightly more challenging.

This is what I call the **Learning Sweet Spot**. Activities that are too easy will cause **boredom**, and will not hold your child's attention. Activities that are too difficult will cause **frustration**. Both are extremes to be avoided. Boredom is not as big a problem; you can simply find a slightly more challenging activity. Frustration can turn a child off to learning. If you see your child becoming frustrated with an activity, bring it to a positive close and do something else.

Here is a graphic depiction of the Learning Sweet Spot:



You see how the Sweet Spot is just slightly toward the frustration end? Activities that are at the cutting edge of your child's development will take some **effort** and **practice**; success will not come right away. With the right activity, **a few mistakes will not deter your child** from wanting to do the activity. That's when you know your child is in the Learning Sweet Spot.

Above all, you are looking for activities that **hold your child's interest and attention**. Those are the activities – and they are always changing – that give your child's brain the experiences it needs to grow and develop strong **brain architecture**.

It is a mistake to think of young children as having very short attention spans. **Concentration is a skill** that is learned like any other. Young children are very capable of paying attention and concentrating on a task for an extended period. In fact, when they learn to do this by being given appropriate activities, they become calmer and happier children. Montessori called this **Normalization**.

Children's interactions teach them about getting along, taking turns, cooperating, negotiating win-win outcomes, delaying gratification, verbalizing effectively, and being both a leader and a follower.

Young children see themselves as the center of the world. This is normal for a 2-6 yr. old. **As children interact, their natural egocentric viewpoint gradually expands** to an awareness that they live with other people and they must learn to get along with them. A handy skill!



It is very helpful to get together with other parents and arrange a **play and early learning group**. These can happen informally when you have time or on a regular basis. You can take turns at each other's houses and have times for learning activities, unstructured play, outside time, a snack, and maybe a trip to the zoo or park.

Use this book as a resource. Have a number of activities ready for each session. Keep track of how the children are progressing once they start the Math and Reading Sequences. Have the children work with activities awhile, then read them a book, celebrate a holiday, or do a crafts project. Put on music and dance, do some exercise, and play outside. Then, they can have a snack or lunch. Play groups can be a great venue for learning activities and social development. If the parents work together to make materials, seek out resources, and put together a varied program, they can be a fabulous opportunity for children.

Making your learning materials



Photo: Counting Coconuts

Most of the activities described here can be easily made using things already in the home, or inexpensively obtained at most discount, crafts, office supply, or home improvement stores. Montessori does not have to mean thousands of dollars worth of expensive materials! I have tried to find affordable options for you.

I have also tried to keep prep time to a minimum. You can create very nice learning materials on a limited budget. Making your child's learning materials need not be a burdensome project. The activity instructions will tell you what to get and how to make the material. You can even **involve your child in making them**.

Also included here are recommendations for original Montessori and other commercial learning materials for the home. If you can divert a portion of your budget for plastic toys to obtaining some of these, your child's development will be the better for it.

Each home Montessori material you make should be **attractive** and **self contained**. Trays, plates, small boxes, and even plastic food containers work well for holding materials. Try to

make each material as attractive and interesting as possible. This increases your child's interest, and communicates that this material has something special to offer. Here are some examples from the great blog [Counting Coconuts](#):



Sorting various items with tools



Sweeping Rice



Pouring Buttons

Montessori materials **isolate specific skills** and present them as attractive, **self-contained materials**. You can use nice bowls, trays, and boxes to hold your child's materials. These **look so different from your child's toys** that they bring out the curiosity right away! **Your careful handling of the materials** communicates that these things are special.

Here is a list of some of the materials used in the activities. You probably have many of these items already. Check before you buy anything. The rest can be found at a discount, office supply, home improvement, crafts, or Goodwill store.

Containers

Serving & cooking bowls
Small boxes & trays
Plastic food containers
Muffin tin
Cookie sheet
Measuring cups
Small drinking cups
Coffee cups
Paper cups
Larger plastic storage containers
Plastic bucket, tub
Small baskets

Food Items

Unpopped popcorn
Grape Nuts cereal
Rice
Beans of different kinds
Pasta in different shapes
Empty egg carton
Empty food boxes
Spices: salt, ground thyme, ground cinnamon, minced garlic, vanilla bean, cumin seed, Mrs. Dash

Kitchen Utensils

Serving spoons
Whisk
Orange juice squeezer
Tongs
Eating utensils
Spice grinder
Turkey baster
Measuring spoon set
Soup or gravy ladle
Cheese slicer
Sifting tool

Other Items

Clothespins
Straws
Refrigerator magnets
Eyedroppers
Coins, .01, .05, .10, .25
Small floor rug or woven mat
Buttons, diff shapes, colors

Small hand mirror, comb
Illustration board, 14 ply

Funnels in different sizes
Index cards
Construction paper, diff colors
Markers, crayons
Plastic placemats (one color)
Wooden beads
Small plastic beads, same size & shape, diff colors
Shoelaces
Science project display board

Tools

Scissors, large & child's blunt end
Shears (heavy duty scissors)
Stapler
Computer & printer
Single hole punch
Glue sticks



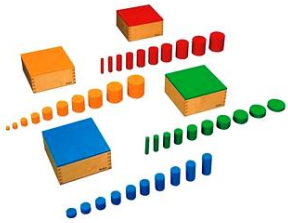

Key points for parents

- **Look for activities and materials that excite your child's interest and hold his attention; and that he wants to repeat.**
- Home learning should be a series of **positive, fun experiences** of exploration and discovery. The process is what is important, not finishing as soon as possible. Early learning activities should develop a love of learning in young children. Be **patient**, be **positive**, and **encourage** your child's efforts. **Avoid pressure and negativity.**
- Children need access to child size furniture – **low shelves, a table, and a chair.** A stepstool can allow access to water for activities that use it.
- A child's environment should be maintained in an orderly and attractive condition. The child should participate in keeping it that way.
- Children should participate in helping around the home from age three on. Plates, utensils, and food placed on low shelves will allow them to serve themselves and others at mealtimes.
- From the youngest age possible, children should learn proper self care, basic manners, and courtesy toward others.
- A child should have consistent, fair rules and expectations for behavior.
- Early learning is closely tied to movement and Sensorial stimulation. All inputs – thoughts, sense impressions, muscle movements – help a child build strong brain architecture. Avoid a total reliance on TV, computers, and other display devices.
- Learning materials should **isolate specific aspects of the environment** in the form of **self-contained, attractive materials** stored in their own nice tray, basket, box, bowl, or folder. They should be nicely displayed in consistent locations on **open, low shelves** for easy access. Catch-all toy drawers, boxes, and buckets should be largely eliminated.
- The **Activity Cycle** really helps children develop an organized approach to tasks: make a work space with a floor rug or table mat, bring the activity to it and use it, clean the activity up, put the container back on the shelf, put the rug or mat away.
- Learning materials should progress from the simplest to increasingly challenging and complex activities. This allows children to always find activities at the cutting edge of their development. Sequential materials keep children moving along rather than endlessly repeating different versions of the same activities. The goal is to always avoid both boredom and frustration.
- Children should be encouraged to **repeat** activities as much as they desire, working **independently** whenever possible. Repetition creates brain nerve pathways.

Montessori materials for home use

Here are some Montessori materials for home use, with online sources and prices as of summer, 2011. These make fantastic additions to your home early learning materials. Diverting some of your plastic, disposable toy budget into buying these learning materials is a great investment in your child's future. Your child will learn more from these. Montessori materials are a quick sell on Ebay when your child has finished using them; or you could sell them to another parent.

Kid Advance Montessori [kidadvance](#) **A Plus Montessori** [aplusmontessori](#)
Adena Montessori [adenamontessori](#) **Montessori Outlet** [montessorioutlet](#)
Grandpa's Montessori [grandpas](#) *Ask about package discounts*

Material	Photo	Kid Advance	A Plus Montessori	Adena Montessori	Montessori Outlet
<p>Cylinder Block #1 Classic material for 2-3 yr. olds. Increasing height & diameter.</p>					29.95 Block #1
<p>Cylinder Block #3 Decreasing height, increasing diameter.</p>					29.95 Block #3
<p>Knobless Cylinders Cylinders in color with no knobs. These match the 4 sets of knobbed cylinders in size.</p>		46.99	48.95	42.85	59.95
<p>Red Rods From 10cm to 1 meter long, for experiencing length gradation</p>		34.99	33.95	34.40	39.95

\$95-100 for the complete set of 4 Cylinder Blocks.

You do not really need all 4 blocks for home use. The #1 & #3 blocks will do fine. As of Summer, 2010, Montessori Outlet was the only online store selling the blocks individually.

Sandpaper Numerals

Basic Math Sequence tool for learning the numerals. **A must have.**



14.99
Includes a box

12.45
Includes a box

15.16

6.95

Teen Bead Box

Teaches quantities 10-20. **A must have.**



7.99

7.98

5.07

6.95

Gold Bead 10 Bars

For teaching quantities 10-100. **A must have.**



17.99
17.00 in box

11.98
In box

10.20

12.95
In box

100 Golden bead Chain

A must have.



3.00

2.98

7.00

2.95

The Hundred Board

Very nice, with number tiles for learning numerals 1-100



24.99

22.95

20.41

22.95

The Sandpaper Letters and Numerals are essential materials and bargains at under \$35 total. You cannot make your own sets in anything close to the quality of the sets shown. **The Teen Bars, 100 Golden Bead Chain, and the Golden Bead 10 Bars** cost under \$30 altogether and are used for many lessons in Math. These materials will help develop your child's brain for life. You do not need them all at once. If your child is 3 yrs. old, you could start out with any of the first 9 materials shown. Spread your purchases out over a year and it will cost about \$30 / month for a beautiful set of home Montessori materials. When your child is older, you can recover half your investment selling on Ebay or to a parent starting their own home early learning. If your child uses the materials for a couple of years, that will work out to **under \$10 a month!**



One more essential item is a **blindfold**. Many Sensorial activities use a blindfold to help a child focus in on their other senses. Pictured is a nice one from Kid Advance Montessori that costs \$5. You can also use a scarf tied around the head or a costume mask with the eye holes taped over.