

“Practical Life” In The Home

Bathroom: A guide for Parents
Mirror at child's eye level.
Toothbrush and comb within reach.
Towel, wash cloth and towel rack within reach.
Step-stool at sink so child can turn on tap and wash hands.

Bedroom :
Clothes rack and hooks in closet
Shelves -- low and in neutral color. toy shelves are preferred over a toy box Because they attractively display the toys
Small table and chairs
Shelf for books

Living room:
Small comfortable chair near a good light
The possibility to see outside through a window
Beautiful, interesting objects in the environment that the child can safely handle.

Kitchen:
Child's own chair at the table
Possibility of getting own water from sink when he wants it.
Sponges and towels at child's level so he can wipe up his own spills.
Low drawer that contains any materials he needs for participating actively in the care of the home environment

Children should know the names of all objects in the home environment.
Activities a child can easily perform in the home environment
Turning a water tap on and off

Rubbing sinks
Material: a sponge 2"x3", a small can of cleanser with only one hole uncovered. (CAUTION: The cleanser should be stored out of the child's reach.)
In the first stage the adult applies the cleanser , the child turns on the tap and scrubs the sink with a sponge. Later the child applies the cleanser under adult supervision and then carries out the activity as above.
Sponging off plastic tabletops and countertops
Material: small sponge 2" x 3"
Allow child to wet and wring out sponge from a tap. Child carefully sponges off counters, etc., putting crumbs in a pile or sweeping them into his hand.

Putting away toys
Encourage your child to replace each toy on the shelf after he has used it . Sometimes children get out so much so fast that they get frantic and impossibly frustrated. If this happens, the adult should put away the toys in a friendly manner and say nothing.

Other activities you can develop could include:
Folding socks
folding clothes and linens
weeding
raking leaves
watering plants indoors and outdoors
helping wash the car
helping wrap packages

helping decorate the home for holidays
washing and drying dishes
sorting clothes for a wash

When your child performs an activity to help care for himself in the home environment, PRAISE him regardless of the result. Do not redo any part of his project in front of him, and if possible do not correct any part of it at all. As your child gets more practice and is able to perform the physical parts of the activity with ease, he will begin long cycles of repetition. These cycles of repetition are often annoying to adults. However they enable the child to work with interest, and eventually, concentration.

Socially your child will go through three main stages. First he will perform an activity for himself and his inner needs. Later he will be able to perform the task occasionally when asked. At this point the child begins to control his will. Finally (about 1 to 1/2 years later) he will perform the task anytime asked or whenever he sees a practical need.

In the beginning it will be difficult for your child to perform later activities without making a big mess. Have several beach towels on hand to clean up the water. Several times later there will be little spilling and the child will be able to do most of the clean up himself.

Helping unload groceries

Put bags on floor . Let child hand you things and put away things on his own level.(caution: Some cans are too large to be lifted safely by a child.)

Dusting

material: Pretty flannel clothes cut 6" x 6", a small baby's hairbrush, some place to put the dirty cloth

Call child's attention to the dust. Ask him if he would like to be a helper. Show him how to wrap the cloth around his fingers and wipe away the dust in slow careful strokes, changing the position of the dust cloth on his fingers as he notices dust collected. The brush is used for carved furniture and nooks and crannies.

Child can dust furniture tops, legs, baseboards, corners, ornaments, etc.

Sweeping

material: small broom, brush dustpan.

Show child how to sweep dirt into a pile with the broom. Hold dustpan and sweep dirt into it with the little brush. Carefully carry the dust pan to the waste basket and empty it . Wash off dust pan.

Pouring

Material: Small attractive pitchers

Child can pour milk , juice and water for himself and others.

At first pitcher should contain only as much as the glass or cup 2/3 full.

Later pitcher contains more than the glass will hold.

Setting Table

Child helps mother put out dishes and silver and carries them to the table one thing at a time. Later mother sets one place as an example and the child sets a place for each family member. Finally the child sets the table by himself, counting out each thing he needs. Of course items should be put down within the child's reach.

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE ADULT TO MAINTAIN A FRIENDLY ATTITUDE AND A SENSE OF HUMOR! Remember, praise your child for what he does or tries to do. The most important aspects of a child's personality and intellect develop through everyday life of the family. They are order, sequence, independence, self control, self respect, and the joy of learning and accomplishing something purposeful. A

child lives to work. From this vital work of building a man who will enjoy life-long feeling of self-respect, independence and concern for others.

A WORD ABOUT TOYS

Toys should be safe. They should challenge your child's interest and imagination without being too difficult or too easy. If your child plays poorly or destroys a toy, it is either too simple, or too difficult, or is in such deteriorated condition that it is impossible for him to use with a sense of joy, wonder or fulfillment.

We recommend neutral colored toys on shelves because they offer the possibility of displaying a toy in such a way that it attracts and lures the child to it. Each toy should be washed often and have all of its parts. If a toy is difficult to store or keep neatly on the shelf, make an attractive box for it. Each toy that has removable parts should have a beautiful small box for the storage of those parts.

Marvelous handles for wood puzzles by using a wood awl and making a small hole in each piece. Put a little glue in the hole and insert a mini eye screw. Also it helps the adult if he numbers each puzzle and all the corresponding pieces on the back.

Toy rotation results in better use of toys. Children always feel that some of their toys are "new." Only 8-9 toys need be on the toy shelves at one time. The others should be stored accessibly. As your child tires of some toys they can be replaced by stored toys. Of course if your child asks for a stored toy he should be able to have it.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN THE MONTESSORI HOME

Language is a communication based on order. In the home, spoken language has a most important part to play in the development of your child's potential. Parents must make language exciting. It needs to be used with joy, care and love. Children begin to love and savor words as an expression of the spirit of man. Language creates pictures (mental images) in the mind of present, past, and future. Through it we create love and hate. We have three types of language: spoken, written, and read. Spoken language is more important because words are easier to recognize when they are known as spoken or heard. In fact, the great preparation for reading and writing is done through spoken language. This can be done in the ordinary home and garden. Reading and writing are the by-products of spoken language.

Unfortunately communication in the American home often disintegrates into an amazing series of nods and grunts between man and wife, parent and child. It is a vital "task" of the home to develop the language exploration of the child. After all, the child does not imitate the sound of the house hold animals, BUT THE HUMAN VOICE. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILD'S LANGUAGE REFLECTS THE QUALITY OF THE HOME COMMUNICATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE HOME. HERE IS AN IDEA OF HOW THE PARENTS CAN CREATE AN EXCELLENT LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT FOR THEIR CHILD.

1. Extension Vocabulary

The child should know the name of absolutely everything in the home and garden. If you are at a loss on how to start look at Richard Scarry's Biggest Word Book Ever, and Busy Busy World.

2. Careful Language Brilliant and Striking

Language is something that must be used with care. Order, grammar and syntax are most important. The child absorbs and incarnates into himself the language of his environment. Is it interesting? Is it the best you are able to speak? Is it forceful, meaningful, clear and concise?

3. Poetry

Poetry is easy to read. Young children particularly appreciate it. Try poems of Robert Louis Stevenson, Blake, Browning, Carroll, Child, Coleridge, Dickinson, Holmes, Longfellow, Roseetti, Scott, Shakespeare, Shelley, Tennyson, Wittier and Wordsworth. To the young child, poetry offers rhythmical language, extraordinary expansion of vocabulary, and the possibility to savor the spirit of man through the repeated

readings and memorization of fine literary works.

4. Reading Books

Do you read to your child at least one hour a day (broken into shorter periods)? Is there a great respect for books in your home? Does your child have a tiny library near his bed or some other special place? Is everyday life punctuated with exciting weekly trips to the library? The librarian is trained and eager to assist the parents select fine books for the parent to read to the child.

- Remember any "misuse" of books should NOT be allowed. Let your child know that books belong in a special place, Not on the floor. Ripping of pages is "unacceptable".

THE YOUNG CHILD'S DESIRE TO READ IS ENCOURAGED DIRECTLY FROM READING TO HIM. Read out loud with interest, explain the vocabulary, take a related trip or go to an original source or subject that interest your child.

5. Which Books?

True stories are a must for children under four years. Very young children devote their energy to exploring, ordering and classifying their real environment. Make-believe or fantastic stories confuse this important work. The young child is interested in stories about other children, true things, family, life, and animals. At about five years, children begin to seek out make-believe and fantastic stories as well as geography, history, music, famous people, etc.

6. Story Telling

Pass along those home-spun yarns your ancestors told their children. Create some yourself to tell your child. Make up stories about your own child and what he did all day, about your child hood, mild adventure , etc..

7. Communication Between Parent and Child

Do you listen with interest when your child speaks?

Do you give him the opportunity to express his interest, thoughts, and opinions? Does your family include him in daily life, trips and other social relations with other adults and families? Do you insist that family members listen to one another? Do you speak to your child in a series of nods and grunts? Do you share your thoughts with him everyday? Do you teach him at least ten new words a day through conversation and reading? Do you communicate the family morals and values to your child to what you say and how you handle distressing as well as happy situations? By age six the child has adopted the family morality and attitude! Have you given enough of your self to last him a lifetime?

8. Turn off The T.V.!!!!

Children who spend great amounts of time watching television miss their birthright: social contact and communication with their families, the development of language, the ability to express their spirit, and the closeness that a child derives from a family communication. Furthermore, words create pictures in the mind. They are called mental images and are necessary for reading and writing. A child who watches endless hours of television often never develops the necessary ability to form mental images. He is exposed to violence, fantasy and unnatural family relationships. When you turn on television for your child, do you approve of what he will see? Is it consistent with your family values? Read a carefully selected book instead!

by Virginia L. Wells, A.M.I., 1973