

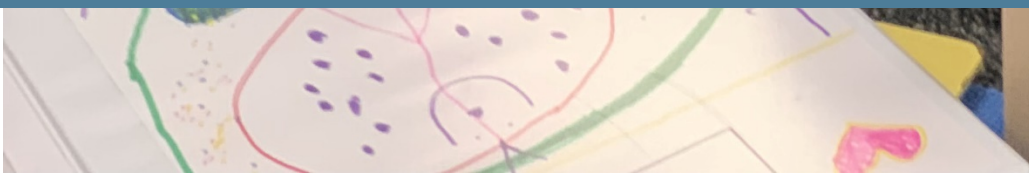


MONTESSORI LEARNING AT HOME

—
Handbook for Parents



Crystal Lake Montessori School



Practical Life

Practical life is an important part of experiential learning. These activities assist students in developing purposeful life skills for their continued growth and development. This includes refining fine motor and movement skills and practicing coordination, planning and problem solving. Practical life activities:

- foster the development of fine motor control
- provide opportunities for planning and carrying out tasks
- develop concentration
- foster physical independence
- foster order and sequence
- develop concentration

The Practical Life area also provides children with opportunities to contribute to family life. Inherent in these activities is the development of key executive functions: decision making, organization, problem-solving, impulse control, collaboration and communication. These skills form the foundation of a child's academic learning. For example, sequencing a task is a pre-reading skill.

Examples of practical life might include:

- setting the table
- watering plants
- tidying and organizing rooms
- planning an outing
- taking care of pets
- preparing a snack/meal
- helping with shopping lists/budgeting
- planting a small urban garden



Practical life is engaging for children at all stages of development and tasks are designed according to their level of coordination and independence. You can organize a job chart or list of family projects as a way to help guide your child's interests. Planning and gathering resources to complete the tasks is purposeful work. These ideas foster a sense of contribution, responsibility, shared experiences and satisfaction.

As children get older, these activities lead naturally to volunteer experiences and beginnings of community work. For our oldest adolescents, many of these practical life experiences are the foundation of their sense of belonging and personal vision.

The Uninterrupted Work Cycle

Establishing a routine that works for your family is an essential first step to creating a successful learning environment at home. In a Montessori classroom, children are given large blocks of time in order to explore their work deeply. This contributes directly to the development of concentration and provides opportunities to collaborate and problem-solve. It is the framework that fosters child-centered as opposed to adult-directed learning.

OWNERSHIP AND SHARING LEARNING

In order to foster a deep sense of ownership in their learning, we focus on two things: the developmental needs and characteristics of the child and their interests. Here are a few key points that aid in cultivating a child's self-direction and attention to their work:

- Choice
- Participation in planning and organizing tasks
- Conversation
- Finding good resources
- Sharing of knowledge

The more children are involved in developing and detailing their activities, the more they can achieve.

Sharing and presenting work:

Planning a presentation or sharing at the end of a project is very exciting for young children and gives our older students an opportunity to use their voice. It is an essential part of the learning process as it requires synthesis of learning to describe, explain and express yourself clearly. It feels celebratory as well!

Responsibility and Contribution to Community

It's easy to focus on academics, but it's equally important for children to feel they belong to a community and that they have a responsibility to themselves, others, and the environment.

Volunteering is a powerful way children can begin to feel that they are a valued part of their community.

Early Childhood (3-6 years-old)

PARENTS CAN:

- Support your child's independence in daily life activities.
- Be mindful of and allow children to continue periods of concentration.
- Establish daily routines and expectations.
- Limit screen time.
- Provide opportunities for daily physical activity.

AGE-SPECIFIC NEEDS AND CHARACTERISTICS

- Children aged 3 to 6 thrive in environments that promote repetition, routine and the mastery of purposeful movement.
- Allow your child to choose activities and give the opportunity for periods of time without distractions.
- The key to a successful learning environment is order, access to tactile resources, space to explore and meaningful activity. For the Early Childhood student, work and play should be interchangeable—a natural, fun and exciting part of life.

PRACTICAL LIFE

Ages 3 to 4:

- Meal or Snack Preparation: slicing vegetables, fruit, cheese, etc.
- Baking: measuring and mixing ingredients.
- Kitchen Care: loading and unloading the dishwasher, washing dishes by hand, sweeping floors.
- Pet Care: walking, playing with, and grooming.
- Dusting: the leaves of plants with a soft cloth or furniture around the house.
- Nature walks in the yard or about the neighborhood with a list of things to find.
- Walking on the Line: make a masking tape path through the house and walk carefully on the line.
- Art: coloring, painting, collage, sidewalk chalk.
- Cutting and gluing - for example find and cut all of the plants in a magazine; glue into a collage.
- Sewing shapes/pictures onto napkins, hand/kitchen towels, etc.

Ages 5 to 6 — Any of the above plus:

- Cutting (advance searches: mammals, birds, amphibians, etc.)
- Baking: reading, measuring and mixing simple recipes.
- Handwork: crocheting, finger knitting, or sewing words, initials, or pictures on napkins, hand towels, etc.
- Origami

SENSORIAL

Ages 3 to 4:

- Exploring the home for 2 dimensional shapes (rectangles, squares, circles, etc.).
- Exploring the home for 3 dimensional shapes (spheres, cylinders, cones, cubes, prisms).
- Explore the home for textures that are rough or smooth.
- Exploring sound by tapping on different objects (pot, glass, wooden cutting board, etc.) with different objects as well (tap with a metal spoon, then a wooden spoon).

Ages 5 to 6:

- Exploring spices and attempting to recognize them by scent.
- Comparing the various shapes of leaves found amongst the house plants.
- Drawing a picture that includes certain shapes i.e., 1 circle and 3 rectangles, or 1 square and 4 triangles).

LANGUAGE

Ages 3 to 4:

- Sound Games/I-spy: Something that begins with the sound /s/.
- Question Game: Have a conversation using who/what/when/where/why questions.
- Singing new songs (different languages).
- Tracing shapes, letters in flour (pour flour in a cookie sheet).

Ages 5 to 6:

- Write a letter to a friend or family member to mail.
- Assist in writing list of things to do for a day or a week.
- Write a story or a play and read aloud or act out when finished.

MATHEMATICS

Ages 3 to 4:

- Scavenger hunt/counting objects collected.
- Counting objects (beans, pennies, etc.).
- Sorting laundry.
- Sorting silverware.

Ages 5 to 6:

- Hopscotch math—all operations can be done, just make your hopscotch go higher than 10.
- Math facts with dice.

Elementary (6-12 years-old)

PARENTS CAN:

- Provide a quiet place for your child to work that is visible to you, so you are able to monitor their activity
- Ensure that your child is keeping up with daily assignments if you homeschool
- Invite your child to participate in household responsibilities such as preparing meals, baking, cleaning, pet care, etc.

AGE-SPECIFIC NEEDS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Ages 6-9:

- Respect the stage of development—many 6-9 year-old students are at a “concrete level” and learn best with hands-on materials (like using beads, beans, or Legos for Math).
- Develop ideas that allow the opportunity for Lower Elementary students to build from their interests. Examples may include projects, journals, creative writing, geometry constructions, Practical Life at home.

Ages 9-12:

- Develop ideas that allow the opportunity for 9-12 students to build from their interests. Examples may include projects, journals, creative writing, geometry constructions, Practical Life at home.
- 9-12 year-old students are extremely social, but they still need your guidance. We encourage periodically monitoring digital communication. Encourage your child to talk to you about anything that bothers them.

Elementary Activities at Home

MATH FACTS (LIMIT TO 10 MINUTES AT A TIME)

- Create flashcards of multiplication math facts 0-9.
- List all the factors of 18, 24, 36, and 54.
- Dice Rolling
- Jump rope while skip counting.

FRACTIONS

- Follow a recipe.
- Construct something using measurements less than one inch.
- Order fractions on a number line from least to greatest.
- Divide figures into fractional amounts and label them.

DECIMALS

- Have your own “Showcase” and price household items, then add them together.
- Look for advertisements in the mail and add prices together.
- Create a shopping list and add items together.

LANGUAGE

- Make a poem book.
- Try to write a poem in an author’s style.
- Memorize a poem.
- Go on a word hunt in a novel: make a list of adjectives on a page and write an antonym and synonym for each one.
- Find sentences in your current book, identify the subject and predicate.

GEOMETRY

- Identify shapes around the house.
- Identify angles as either: right, acute, obtuse, or straight.
- Look for congruent and similar figures.
- Measure things in one and two dimensions.
- Find the perimeter of things.
- Find the area of rectangular figures.

BIOLOGY

- Spend 15 silent minutes a day in nature and record your observations.
- Sketch plants inside or outside.
- Research an endangered animal. Why is it endangered?

GEOGRAPHY

- Look at maps together and research a specific country or state.

HISTORY

- Make a timeline of your life.
- Make a timeline of your day and include it in your work journal.
- Interview a family member in your house or over the phone about their life.

Middle School (13-14 years-old)

STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO:

- Schedule their own time for work
- Review lessons and readings
- Keep a planner
- Work solidly for roughly 4-6 hours a day (see attached sample schedule)
- Have a designated workspace without interruptions or distractions
- Take time and double check their work
- If possible, find or form a small group to work with on projects.

PARENTS CAN:

- Check in with your child each morning to plan school work time and work space
- Maintain daily conversations about work progress
- Invite your child to contribute more than usual to household chores
- View and discuss suggested movies/online media with your child when possible
- Invite your child to help meal preparation every day
- Share news items especially related to current events taking place nationally and internationally with an unbiased point of view

AGE-SPECIFIC NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

- There is an opportunity for parents and students to discuss topics of inquiry from their studies. Watching or reading the news together, and otherwise having adult-style conversations is very important. While we don't expect parents to review assignments, please do support work completion.
- Adolescents crave and require social interaction. Please facilitate ways your child can meet with other children their age in-person or virtually.

PRACTICAL LIFE

- Middle School students are encouraged to be active participants in their home. This includes activities like cooking, cleaning, and care of younger sibling. Students will be expected to set their own schedules and keep up with their studies. Students are asked to reach out to an adult if should they find themselves struggling to schedule their time effectively.

MOVEMENT

- Students are to spend time outside of the house to have at least 30 minutes of movement outdoors. Students can play actively with siblings, go for a walk, bike ride, run, etc.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

- We recommend 30-minutes of quiet , independent time. Their reflection spot needs to be peaceful and private, preferably without technology or limited to music without words.

Additional Resources

Arts and Craft Activities

- Easy Peasy and Fun
- Left Brain Craft Brain

Podcasts for Children

- The Big Life Kids Podcast
- Wow in the World
- Forever Ago
- But Why: A podcast for curious kids
- Pants on Fire
- Tumble
- Circle Round
- Reading Bug Adventures
- Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls
- The Purple Rocket Podcast
- Fierce Girls
- The Past and The Curious: A History Podcast for Kids and Families
- News Time
- Sparkle Stories
- Earth Rangers
- Myths and Legends
- Peace Out
- Story Time
- What if World
- Brains On!
- Short & Curly
- Classic Kids
- The Alien Adventures of Finn Caspian
- The Unexplainable Disappearance of Mars Patel

“We discovered that education is not something which the

***TEACHER** does, but that it is a natural process which*

*develops spontaneously in the **HUMAN** being.”*

- Dr. Maria Montessori

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