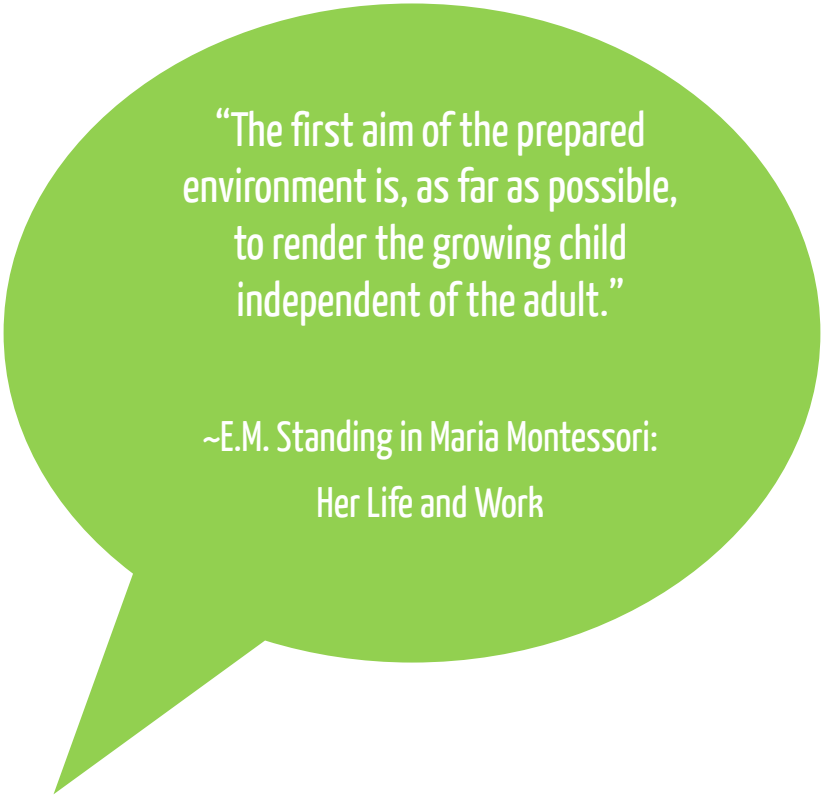




## Activities for the Home Environment





“The first aim of the prepared environment is, as far as possible, to render the growing child independent of the adult.”

~E.M. Standing in Maria Montessori:  
Her Life and Work

## Practical Life activities at home

The practice of these activities aid the child to develop ...

- a sense of order
- sequencing skills (of activities and events),
- self-control,
- independence,
- self-esteem
- and a love of learning.

A child's personality, intellect and social relationship skills develop from active, purposeful interaction and work during everyday family life in the home.

Practice allows the young child to ...

- perfect their movements,
- develop concentration and focus
- and develop control of the will.

Remember to allow lots of time for practising these activities at home!

Provide names and vocabulary for items and activities at home to extend language development. Also be sure to talk, chat and sing with your toddler as your work together at home.

Enjoy this slower, relaxed time at home together and help your child to build a sense of home, what family means, and how to be together.

## Turning the water tap on and off

Keep large towels or old beach towels to hand to clean up any spills as your child first practises water activities (taps, washing up, wiping tables, pouring water etc). Your child will become more precise with these activities with practice.

## Scrubbing the sink

The child scrubs the sink with a small sponge (cut to 5 x 7 cm).

## Wiping tables (or chairs, benchtops etc)

Show the child how to use a damp sponge (cut to 5 x 7 cm) to wipe up spills, crumbs, and so on.

Use small terry cloth towels to dry the table.

Provide a small basket for the dirty washing (terry towels, tea towels, etc.)

## Setting the table

Provide low shelves in the kitchen for dishware, placemats, napkins and utensils the child can reach and use. They can assist their adult to get out the placemats, napkins, utensils and dishes and carry them to the table one at a time.

Show them how to lay out a placemat at each place at the table. Show the child how to lay out napkins, fork, spoon and table knife for each place setting. Work together.



## Helping unload groceries

Place bags on the floor. The child can hand you one item at a time. Name the item and discuss it as you unpack.

## Sweeping

Provide a small broom, brush and dustpan. Show the child how to sweep dirt into a pile. Hold the dustpan and allow the child to sweep the dirt into it.

## Mopping

Provide a small mop or a small standard mop with a shortened handle. Show the child how to use the mop to wipe up spills on the floor. First sweep the floor, then show the child how to dip a small rope mop into a small bucket of soapy water and mop the floor.

## Vacuuming

Tell the child that only an adult can plug in the vacuum.

Show the child how to turn on the vacuum and use it.

Carpet sweepers (non-electric) can be used as well. When putting together the carpet sweeper, leave out the central tubes of the handle to make the handle shorter. Many children love this work!



## Pouring

Provide a lipped tray and a small jug. Show the child how to carry the jug with two hands, half-fill the jug with water from the tap and return the jug to the tray, again with two hands.

The child can use one hand on the handle and one supporting the base of the jug, to put the lip of the jug on the edge of a glass and pour water.

After practice the child can pour milk, juice, etc. Only fill the jug half full as the child practices this movement.

Provide small terry cloths in a basket or tray for wiping up spills and a wash basket for soiled items.

## Dusting

Provide small dusting cloths (flannel works well) or a small feather duster. Show the child how to gently wrap a dusting cloth around the fingers and slowly and carefully dust books, shelves, items, baseboards, furniture and so on.

The feather duster can be used gently and slowly on items and furniture.

## Putting away activities and toys

Make putting away a constant habit, as in the classroom.

Provide low shelves for the child's toys and activities. Provide small baskets and trays that the child can carry independently, to contain toys or activities with many parts.

Encourage the child to put away the item when she is finished with it.



## Washing fruit and vegetables

The child can stand on a step stool at the sink and wash and scrub veggies with a vegetable brush.

They can wash fruits at the sink with a soft brush or sponge. Provide a small basin of clear water and brush or sponge for the child to do this work at a low table.

## Food preparation and cooking

Encourage your child to help you in the kitchen whenever possible.

They can help to peel fruit, mix dough, stir ingredients in a bowl, slice fruits and vegetables (with appropriate adult supervision and a safety knife), make juice, or spread butter and other spreads onto bread or crackers.

## Washing dishes

If the child stands on a step stool or 'learning tower' (or similar) he can use a small sponge (5 x 7 cm) to wash dishes in soapy water in the sink.

Set up two basins at the child's level in an appropriate space. One basin should have warm soapy water for washing and the other basin should have clear water for rinsing.

The child places the clean dishes in a drying rack and then dries with a tea towel (cut in half).

## Gardening

Your child can help you with weeding, sweeping outdoors (provide a small, stiff broom specifically for outdoors), raking leaves, planting seeds, watering plants or seeds.

They will also enjoy cutting flowers and arranging them in small jugs or vases, using secateurs under supervision.



## Laundry activities

Your child can sort laundry items into darks, mediums and whites or lights and help to put laundry into the washing machine, hang out and peg onto the line. You could provide a low laundry line the child can easily reach.

Demonstrate how to fold laundry items using simple folds, edge to edge or corner to corner. Match socks in pairs and roll them together.

Put away clothes together.

## Care of self and bathroom activities

Provide a low mirror at child's eye level so he can see his face when washing the face or brushing teeth.

Provide a step stool for the bathroom so they can reach the sink.

When your child is learning to use the toilet independently you can provide a small basket with clean underwear and a small basket for wet items next to the potty or toilet so your child can learn to change him/herself. The child can sit on the step stool to remove soiled items and put on dry items.


## Care of self and bathroom activities

Allow a choice between two outfits.

Hang items on low hooks on their wall or wardrobe, or place on low shelves. Allow lots of time to get dressed.

Provide help where necessary. If the child is getting frustrated offer some support but allow the child to do what she can independently. Choose clothing that is simple for the child to pull on and off independently. Don't choose tight buttons, snaps or zippers which the child cannot yet manipulate correctly.





“Education of even a very small child ...  
does not aim at preparing him for school,  
but for life.”

~Dr Maria Montessori

## Resources

Some links with more simple suggestions, ideas and information to help foster your child's independence and development:

[aidtolife.org](http://aidtolife.org)

[marenschmidt.com](http://marenschmidt.com)

Lillard, Angeline Stoll (2008). *Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius*

Polk Lillard, Paula (2003) *Montessori from the Start: The Child at Home from Birth to Three.*

Polk Lillard, Paula (1996). *Montessori Today: A Comprehensive Approach to Education from Birth to Adulthood.*

Seldin, Tim (2006). *How to Raise an Amazing child the Montessori Way.*

Stephenson, Susan Mayclin (2013). *The Joyful Child: Montessori Global Wisdom for Birth to Three.*

Stephenson, Susan Mayclin (2013). *Child of the World: Global Education for Ages 3-12+*



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