

## MONTESSORI IN THE HOME AT THE INFANT & TODDLER LEVEL

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There are many ways to incorporate Montessori philosophy into your home. Montessori schools and education are seen as an extension of the home. Everyone has their own approach in the way they like to do things or introduce different concepts to their children. Parents are free to choose what traditional aspects they would like to incorporate in their home while still promoting the Montessori philosophy. Ultimately, it is the parents who provide a trusting, loving place that build independence and autonomy in their children. With that said, I have outlined ways to incorporate Montessori into the home as outlined below.

Everything in the home that is available to the child should be at the child's level. This includes their bed, eating places and utensils, clothing, shoes, books and other materials to work with. Everything available to the child should be practical and purposeful.

### What does an infant/toddler Montessori bed look like?



An infant Montessori inspired bed is a large, stiff but comfortable mattress on the floor. It is usually cornered in the room with a long, low mirror against the wall. There may be pillows around the edges in the hopes to protect the child if they happen to roll near an edge. Mobiles are great for the infant to interact with. This infant bed can stay as is until your child can handle climbing in and out of a toddler sized bed independently. Board books in an accessible basket and a low shelf nearby with developmentally

appropriate materials for the child to interact with is always a great idea to incorporate into their room. Change these materials based on their development and the child's interests.

Another helpful suggestion for your toddler to actively participate in would be a space in their closet to choose their clothes and eventually dress themselves. A low hanging shelf in the closet where you can put some options for them is great, because even though you may be selecting the appropriate clothing options, they still feel as if they are making a helpful choice. This can also apply to their shoe, boots or sneaker choices, as well.



### **What is an adaptable eating space for infants and toddlers?**

An infant shall be bottle fed in the arms of their caregiver. Once they are ready for pureed food, they sit on the lap of the person feeding them. As the child is sitting on their caregivers lap, the caregiver sits near the table with the bowls of food close by, so they can easily reach for a spoonful to feed the child. In Montessori education, there are no highchairs.



When the child is ready to sit and eat on their own, they can be introduced to a weaning table. A weaning table is a short table with a small chair that the child shall be able to crawl in and out of if they are ready to eat. Food is only to be eaten at the table. The parent, ideally, sits next to the table on the floor as they present food to the child. As the child grows, the size of the table and chairs grow as well and they are able to eat more independently.



Give your child a space to move freely. Containers or seats that hold the child restrict their natural movements. A child builds their psychomotor development by being able to move freely in a comfortable space.



### How to include practical life in the home?

Baskets that hold books or materials for your child should be low on the floor and easy to for the infant or toddler to access. Shelves are great to incorporate as your child learns to navigate their environment. Shelves are also fantastic to organize and hold materials for your toddler. Heavier objects should go towards the bottom shelf and lighter, manageable materials near the top.



Care of self and care of the environment are great interests amongst toddlers. Care of self can include getting dressed on their own, putting on their own socks and shoes, wiping their own noses, and being included in the process of changing diapers and toilet learning.

Care of the environment can include washing tables, walls, or chairs, washing windows, watering plants, folding clothes, loading the dishwasher, washing the dishes with a stool, unloading the dishwasher, sweeping, cleaning spills, putting away groceries, cleaning their room or making their bed, and so much more. Whatever chores around the house you can include your toddler in, they will likely be interested.

### **How can you include kitchen accessibility and food prep at the toddler level?**

Toddlers love food preparation and working in the kitchen! As parents, whatever you can include your toddler to help you with – as long as it is safe and includes appropriate sized foods – is great for their senses and fine motor development. Peeling, cutting with a lettuce knife, or pouring is interesting and purposeful to toddlers. They want real, practical work they can help with.



Another great option for your toddler is to incorporate a low drawer or shelf with their own plates, cups and utensils that your toddler can carry to their table. Even a small, low drawer of snacks for when they are hungry is great to help them serve themselves and learn to self-regulate.

### **How to start toilet learning?**

Working towards toilet learning is a different task for all parents. Before introducing a toilet, include them in the process of changing their diapers. The moment you notice it

is soiled, express that they have gone to the bathroom and need a change. They can help take off their pants, and even help taking off their diaper if it's wet. They can get their clean diaper on their own and help you to put it on and dispose of their soiled one. When you feel your child is ready, some children even so by the age of twelve months, introduce a small potty or something where their feet are still touching the ground to help them feel comfortable when sitting. The important thing is to never pressure a child into going to the bathroom but to make it routine and a choice. It is also important to remember that all children adapt to using a toilet at their own pace.