

SOLID FOUNDATIONS:

Lesson 3: A place for everything and everything in its place



Independence and responsibility are some of the foundational principles of Montessori education. Children naturally watch and absorb our daily work: cooking, tidying, washing, dressing, cleaning. They are born to become functioning people of their culture: first the family and then the wider social environment.

“An adult works to perfect the environment; a child works to perfect himself.” (Dr Maria Montessori)

Children want to do everything you do. That’s why they talk, walk and imitate everything they experience.

Show how much you value them by including them in daily life at home. This will naturally increase over time from caring for their own needs to the needs of others, the home, school and eventually the whole world!

Organise spaces within your home so your child has clear areas for their toys and activities. Even the smallest home can have one basket or shelf in each room especially for your child.

- Encourage and help your child to put each toy back where they took it from once they have finished playing with it. This only takes a few seconds but has a huge impact on your home.
- Simply by putting toys away they actively learn important social rules: respect, care, sharing, taking turns, being aware of other people’s needs.
- They also learn that they will always be able to find something where they left it, unless someone else is using it, and this allows a sense of order and clarity in their minds.
- There doesn’t need to be a lot of space in your home to include these essential ideas, but having them available will make a massive difference to your child’s feelings of self-worth, as well as developing their coordination.

Keep a basket and low hook by the front door.

- Show your child how to take off their own coat, shoes, hat or scarf when arriving home and put them away.
- It’s an easy way to keep things organised, accessible and ready to put on again later.

Use trays, baskets and boxes to store activities in an organised way:

- Spray cleaning windows: a plastic basket with a spray bottle, squeegee and small drying cloth.
- Pouring water: a plastic tray with a jug, cups and small sponge.
- Toys, e.g. animals in a basket containing 6-10 items and the rest put away to be rotated next week/month.

Leave a low cupboard accessible in the kitchen:

- Keep your child’s cups, plates and cutlery here for easy reach and sorting.
- You could also have a small water source with tray underneath to catch any spills and a cloth to clean up.

Use a child-sized table and chair for sitting down activities:

- Your child will have a special place that allows good posture and hand control.
- This is a really important aspect for developing good coordination and focused attention.

Low shelf (or shelves) in their room for a small selection of toys:

- Others can be kept higher up and brought down as needed, or put away in boxes to be rotated each week/fortnight.

- There are only so many toys a child can play with in a day! It's ok to limit what's available and swap them around.

Reflections & Notes:

- Are there places in every room for your child's own activities and belongings?
- Can you make space if there isn't already?
- Do you have low furniture available for them to use comfortably?
- Can you encourage them to put things away as they finish using them, instead of waiting for a huge mess that you'll inevitably have to tidy up later?

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