

An overhead photograph of four children sitting around a white table on a wooden floor, engaged in food preparation. One child is holding an orange, another is using a knife on a cutting board, and others are handling ingredients in bowls. The scene is brightly lit and shows a collaborative learning environment.

FOSTERING THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIFE SKILLS AT HOME

The guide to preparing a home environment supportive of your child's development, including how to involve them in maintaining a positive space in which to grow.

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MONTESSORI



CHILDREN'S HOUSE
of Denver

01 INTRODUCTION



RESPECT THE CHILD'S ENVIRONMENT

One of the key tenets of the Montessori philosophy is *to respect the child's environment*, meaning that the spaces around the child should be handled with care and consideration, given their importance to the child's development.

Too often the child's environment is taken for granted, but the exterior world has an profound impact on the interior one.

This resource brought to you by Montessori Children's House of Denver, an accredited school serving children ages 1 - 15. All of these principles for the home are also applied in our classrooms.

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01 INTRODUCTION

Every child is hardwired to mine every routine, book, game, conversation, animal, tool, expression, tree, pattern, movement, etc. for information on how to live successfully. It's why children are so impressionable. After learning something new from the world around themselves, they try it out and judge how the world responds.

How the world presents itself has an effect as well. Order and predictability lower anxiety and increase positive affect, making it easier to concentrate, enjoy, and learn from what they're doing. Studies even show that an orderly environment encourages mental order, the brain literally patterning itself after the world.

Before you go overboard in structuring their home and schedule though, pay special attention to Section 4: freedom and the room to fail are just as important.

The following resource outlines a number of ways you can foster a home environment supportive of your child's development, including how to involve them in maintaining a positive space in which to grow.

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02 ENVIRONMENT

BUILD A PREPARED ENVIRONMENT

You should surround your child with age-appropriate materials and toys, so that wherever they turn, there are options before them that will help them grow. Not so much that it clutters up their room and causes stress, nor so much that cleaning up their toys is burdensome. Rely on the child to determine the appropriate mix of materials: if they frequently become bored, there's too little available; if too many items sit around gathering dust, there's too much available.

Furthermore, their room should support their independence and freedom to explore those options. Shelves should make items easy to find and place them within reach. Furniture — chairs, tables, etc. — should make it easy for them to sit down, plant their feet on the ground, and work. The less help they need from you to navigate the world they live in, the faster they'll develop their own independence.

A world sized to fit is also more comfortable to inhabit, further reducing anxiety and increasing positive affect. When set up correctly, your child can quietly occupy their own time. Though, of course, this is not a reason to leave them alone. Having you nearby as a support system keeps them safe and ensures their development doesn't stall on any obstacles.

To buy age-appropriate furniture and activities, check out montessoriservices.com.

The less help they need from you to navigate the world they live in, the faster they'll develop their own independence.

If you would like to see firsthand how to prepare an age-appropriate environment for your child, you are welcome to tour our classrooms for insights and inspiration.

[SCHEDULE A TOUR](#)

03 CHORES



THE SECRET TO AN ORDERLY HOME? INVOLVE YOUR KIDS

Getting your child involved with household chores is doubly beneficial. For one, it makes it easier to maintain a neat and orderly environment that will benefit their development. **But equally important, it helps your child develop the life skills — as well as the cooperation and motivation — needed to keep their life organized as they grow older and start a household of their own.**

For that reason, in our Montessori classrooms, having the children contribute to the upkeep of the classroom and community is an integral part of the daily routine. Read on to learn which chores are appropriate for which ages, as well as helpful tips for how to get them to do their chores and do them well.

Chores help your child develop the life skills needed to keep their life organized as they grow older and start a household of their own.

03 CHORES

AGE-APPROPRIATE CHORES

Ages 2-3

- Put toys away
- Put books away
- Place laundry in hamper
- Sort laundry by darks, lights, and whites
- Throw trash away
- Fold washcloths
- Set the table
- Fetch diapers and wipes
- Dust
- Wash windows
- Wash furniture
- Organize shoes
- Wipe spills
- Serve their own snacks

Ages 4-5

- Feed pets
- Clean up spills
- Make the bed
- Help younger siblings get ready
- Straighten bedroom and playroom
- Fold simple laundry
- Put clothes away
- Help with the garden
- Water houseplants
- Sort silverware
- Vacuum
- Pack their lunch
- Clear dining table
- Dry and put away dishes

Ages 6-7

- Take out the trash
- Fold their own laundry
- Empty dishwasher
- Match clean socks
- Weed the garden
- Manage their section in the garden
- Rake leaves
- Peel fruits and vegetables
- Make homemade non-toxic cleaning products
- Straighten around the house

Ages 8-9

- Prepare house for guests
- Answer the phones
- Change bed sheets
- Load dishwasher
- Cook scrambled eggs, macaroni & cheese, and spaghetti
- Pack a well-balanced lunch
- Sweep and mop floors
- Clean patio
- Carry in and put away groceries
- Walk dogs

03 CHORES

AGE-APPROPRIATE CHORES

Ages 10-11

- Clean bathrooms
- Help with meal plans
- Clean the kitchen
- Prepare simple balanced meals
- Mow the lawn
- Shovel snow
- Bring in mail
- Mend clothing
- Clean up pet waste
- Assist with clerical tasks

Ages 12-13

- Change overhead lights
- Wash and vacuum the car
- Trim hedges
- Paint walls
- Shop for groceries within set budget
- Cook complete dinner
- Do simple household repairs
- Wash exterior windows
- Iron clothes
- Watch younger siblings
- Coordinate yard sale

Ages 14-15

- Help plan family trips
- Re-fuel the car
- Manage family calendar
- Track acquaintances' birthdays
- Send out cards
- Organize and label items in storage
- Babysit outside of the house
- Volunteer for causes of interest

Ages 16-18

- Run household errands
- Hold regular job outside of home
- Volunteer on outside projects
- Help with home repairs and construction projects
- Build boxed furniture
- Build fences or garden structures
- Paint rooms
- Build dog house



03 CHORES

TIPS TO ENCOURAGE ENGAGEMENT AND IMPROVE THEIR SKILLS



Ages 0 - 5

1

From a very early age, model the chores for them, making sure to authentically enjoy what you're doing, as they'll want to do what their parents enjoy.

As you model each chore, move slowly and slightly exaggerate your movements, making your actions easier to follow and drawing attention to points of interest.

2

When they're ready and want to help, let them.

If they ask for help, give it freely, otherwise don't help with a task they feel they can do by themselves. Even then, don't focus on their mistakes or discourage them with constant corrections. For children ages 4-5, you can begin offering gentle feedback to refine their skills.

3

Acknowledge their contribution, focusing on what they did right and were able to do by themselves.

Let your pride shine through in your body language and tone of voice. As they grow older, you can become more verbal with your praise, letting them know how their contributions have helped you and the family.

4

When they feel done and don't want to continue, don't push them.

Continue to provide opportunities to practice their skills, and acknowledge any improvement they make. For children ages 4-5, you can begin setting more consistent expectations around their contributions, such as a daily routine of easy chores.

03 CHORES

TIPS TO ENCOURAGE ENGAGEMENT
AND IMPROVE THEIR SKILLS



Ages 6 - 11

At this stage in their development, their interest level in chores begins to vary, and they may begin to argue against doing their chores.

1

Hold family meetings and give everyone the choice of which chores they will be doing, so there's buy-in.

Document who has committed to which chores for the week, and have them check off their finished chores with you, before heading off to their next activity, for built-in accountability.

2

You will need to implement gentle, but logical consequences for when chores don't get done.

Don't nag, give them the opportunity to follow-through, and if they don't, then calmly bring home the consequences. Remember, it is the consistency rather than the severity of the consequence that is effective.

3

On the other hand, don't link chores to allowance.

Although you may want to positively reinforce completing chores by tying it to their allowance, they should learn that chores are a natural expectation of being part of the family, and not something to be done for financial benefit.

4

Continue to acknowledge a job well done and your appreciation for their help supporting the family's greater good.

If the job isn't done well, remind them how to do the job correctly, re-teach your expectations and offer them opportunity to practice by doing it again.

03 CHORES

TIPS TO ENCOURAGE ENGAGEMENT AND IMPROVE THEIR SKILLS



Ages 12 - 18

At this stage in their development, the children should be expected to manage their responsibilities and time themselves, and they will test the waters to see whether expectations have changed and they can get away with less.

1

Avoid over-scheduling your child's day, and keep chore expectations realistic and in balance with other responsibilities that they might have.

Establish priorities around their activities so they know what comes first, and if chores are not done by the end of the day, consider a gentle consequence, like waking them before midnight to complete their chores.

3

Don't link chores to allowance.

Although you may want to positively reinforce finishing chores by tying it to their allowance, they should learn that chores are a natural expectation of being part of the family, not something to be done for financial benefit.

2

Establish logical consequences for failing to follow through on their chores, and calmly uphold the consequences if they don't.

The consequences can become more real-life. For instance, if you have to complete their chores, invoice them for your time, and if they don't pay you back, deduct it from their accounts or allowance.

4

Continue to emphasize the importance of their contribution to keeping the family and home running smoothly, and show your appreciation.

Make sure they know all you are doing too, so they realize others have to do chores as well.

03 CHORES

WEEKLY CHORE CHART TEMPLATE

Include all family members' chore commitments on the chart below, for both accountability and transparency.

NAME	CHORE	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT

04 TIME MANAGEMENT

FINDING TIME IN THE DAY

Time management is a life skill children are especially grateful to have learned when they become adults. Before you begin to teach them, be understanding of their concept of time. Younger children do not have a solid grasp on the concept of time, which makes it difficult for them to go about partitioning it for activities. That said, even most adults struggle to manage their schedules.

1

Don't overschedule your child.

Let them choose 1 or 2 activities to do. For example, during soccer season (2-3 practices and games each week), you may not want your child to also take piano and participate in scouts. This will give them time at home for homework and chores, as well as time to play and be a kid.

3

Use calendars and lists as visual aids.

Younger children enjoy visual lists that help them navigate troubling transition times, like bedtime, especially lists that let them check items off. Children can start using a personal calendar / planner at around 10 years old, but they will need a lot of adult help learning how to use it and to keep them using it.

2

Have a schedule framework.

For example, dinner at 5:30, bedtime at 8:30. Within that framework, let your child start practicing time management. Ask guiding questions to help them think about how much time something will take: "Will you have enough time to complete your science project if you go to your friend's house to play?" But let them learn naturally from their choices.

Make sure there is time in their schedule for play. It's good for their mental health, develops creativity, and gives them a chance to experiment with all they're learning.

04 TIME MANAGEMENT

PICTURE SCHEDULE TEMPLATE

MORNING TASKS ☀



BRUSH TEETH



GET DRESSED



EAT BREAKFAST



MAKE BED



PREPARE FOR SCHOOL

BEDTIME TASKS 🌙



SHOWER



BRUSH TEETH



PAJAMAS



STORY TIME



POTTY

05 EMBRACING FAILURE

PROVIDE ROOM TO FAIL

Although it is in our nature as parents to want to see our children always succeed, it is essential that we give them the space they need to fail without swooping in to save the day.

1

For one, experiencing the consequences of their failure can push them harder to succeed.

If they forget to do their homework, don't remind them or force them to do it. Let them deal with the natural consequences at school the next day. Then they'll be more motivated to remember to do their homework, and not rely on you for the reminder.

3

Single-handedly overcoming failure is also one of the best ways to develop problem-solving skills.

And, by pulling the problem apart to understand what's working and what isn't, they'll develop a much more intricate understanding of the skill they're trying to pick up.

2

Being experienced with failure will help them develop a measure of grit and resilience to carry them through hard times they may face in adulthood.

Knowing that they've failed before and survived will give them the confidence to push through future challenges.

Step back. Give them freedom to explore, don't overschedule their lives, and be willing to let them fail. Life skills are born from living, not having someone else live our lives for us.

ABOUT MONTESSORI CHILDREN'S HOUSE OF DENVER

Montessori Children's House of Denver (MCHD) is an AMS, NAEYC, and AdvancED accredited school with three campuses in northeast Denver. Founded in 1991 and growing faster than any Montessori school in the state, MCHD provides an exceptional private school education for children ages 1-15. We believe in cultivating a lifelong love of learning, and giving children the tools they'll need to continue learning. Visit www.mchdenver.org to learn more or call 303.322.8324.

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