

A Montessori Preschool Vocabulary "Survival" Guide for Parents

Here is a list of a few of the Montessori classroom terms your child may use throughout the year:

Group Time: These are daily gatherings in which the whole class comes together. This time might include: calendar, singing, stories, science experiments, unit information, group lessons, problem solving. It takes place at transition times such as the beginning and end of the session.

Activity or Work: A defined activity or set of activities intended to be done with a learning material or set of materials. Usually includes direct and indirect objectives, points of interest, control of error, variations and extensions. The preschool classroom consists of mostly one or two person works.

Lesson: An educational event or series of events usually involving some direct instruction by a teacher. A lesson is most often one-on-one with the teacher and a student. Once your child has had a lesson they may return to that work at any time it is available. As new activities are placed on the shelf, they will learn to ask a teacher for a "lesson". (Your child may excitedly share he had a new lesson today!)

Journals: Each child will eventually have a writing journal. This is used to practice writing sounds, words, numerals and stories. It is approximately six pages long and is brought home when full.

Folders: This is a place in the classroom where students keep their paper work. Papers are usually sent home at the end of each week.

Show-n-Tell: A group time once a week when your child brings an item to share with the class; book, scientific object, something from nature, a toy, etc. The item needs to correspond with the "sound of the week" (s=snake). Other than show-n-tell time, please remind your child that all toys stay at home.

Estimating: Sometime during the year your child will bring the estimating jar home. They usually are very excited about this opportunity! This is a time they can put anything of their choice in the jar. It stays at school a week or two. During that time the students record their estimates. It culminates with

the counting of the objects at group time. This is a math experience; counting units and combining them to make tens and occasionally combining tens to make hundreds.

Calendar: Several times during the year your child will lead the class at group time in calendar. This involves adding the date to our class calendar and then leading the class in saying the calendar sentence which includes the day of the week, month, date and year. We then have several days of the week" songs to choose from. Your child will be anxiously awaiting her turn.

Watcher: A student that would like to watch another student work on an activity. Many students learn much by watching others work. The student working has the right to say, "No watchers, please." Because concentration is one of our main goals the watcher needs to be willing to watch without talking or touching his or her friend's work.

Snack: Snack is an activity available on the shelf. Your child will have a lesson on snack preparation and will then be able to prepare and serve himself sometime during the session. It's not unusual for your child to tell you snack is his favorite activity. Snack is usually simple and is not meant to replace a healthy breakfast or lunch.

Mats: All activities, unless it is a written work, are done on a mat. This defines the student's work space. If the work is done on the carpet, the student uses a "rug mat"; if on a table, the student uses a "table mat"; and if it involves water or paint the student uses a "washable mat". The children quickly learn to respect another friend's work space.

Aprons: Students usually wear an apron when working on a water or art activity.

Quiet or Inside Voice: This is the voice the children learn to use when entering and working in the class room. This voice assists in providing a healthy learning environment for all. (Often, children need a lesson on how to find their quiet voice.) It is also appreciated that as parents enter the classroom, they use their inside voice.

I Did Nothing Today

Author unknown

When children come home at the end of the day
The question they're asked as they run out to play
Is "Tell me, what did you do today?"
And the answer they give makes you sigh with dismay
"Nothing. I did nothing today!"
Perhaps "Nothing" means that I read a book,
Or...with a teacher I got to cook.
Maybe I painted a picture of blue,
Or heard a story about a mouse that flew.
Maybe I wrote in my journal myself,
Or found a great book on the library shelf.
Maybe I helped a friend today,
Or went to my favorite area alone,
Maybe today was the very first time,
That my scissors followed a very straight line,
Maybe I sang a song right to the end,
Or worked with a special brand new friend.
When you're three, four, or five your heart has wings
And "nothing" can mean so many things.

What was Montessori's philosophy on language development?

Have you ever wondered how your child developed spoken language? Have you ever thought about why a young child does not verbally include the sound of the telephone or the doorbell or perhaps the dog barking in their spoken language?

Maria Montessori believed that as human beings we are all social creatures. All people naturally want to communicate with others of their kind. In a child there are nebulous urges for language. This gives the child the ability to select out of the sounds he hears in his environment that which will enable him to learn language. Until about age six the child has an "*Absorbent Mind*" with a special kind of memory which allows him to take in everything and remember it subconsciously. These bits of information are stored in the brain for later use at a conscious level.

How children acquire language led Montessori to believe that language is "absorbed" by the young child. Language and the "mother tongue" develop naturally and follow a familiar path in children all over the world. The four stages are: Auditory (listening), Oral, Manual and Interpretive (reading).

The three to six year old is in his **Sensitive Period** for language. His absorbent mind is adding new words to his recognition at a rate that will never be the same. By age six the sensitive period of language has weakened and the child begins to be more interested in the structure of things and is now drawn to grammar work. Early work on phonics is gradually replaced with an emphasis on sight recognition of vocabulary as the child improves his reading skills.

The concept of **Indirect Preparation** was introduced when Montessori discovered that through the Sandpaper Letters and the Moveable Alphabet the child can simultaneously prepare himself for reading and writing. When the child is ready, the Montessori preschool environment provides experiences in Oral/Auditory, Mechanical, Word Reading and Sentence Reading.

Children need to be active participants in teaching themselves to read. By working on the rug with the moveable alphabet or writing by hand they figure out (in-code) words on their own. It is a stimulating and fun learning process that often happens spontaneously. Montessori referred to this process as an "explosion into writing."

Language skills alone are not the whole of the experience in a Montessori classroom. It is of primary importance to develop a love of language and of literature. You can help your child take the first steps towards literacy by emphasizing attitudes and modeling a rich language experience at home. Poems are a wonderful way for your child to develop an appreciation of our language. Re-reading his favorite story with love and patience is another.

Here are a few suggestions we recommend to nurture your child's language development:

- Read a story to your child every day.
- Hold your child while you are reading.
- Have a conversation about the book before, during and after you read it.
- Relate the stories in the book to real life events.
- Let your child see you reading for enjoyment regularly.
- Point out examples of words or letters inside and/or outside your home such as signs.
- Monitor your child's TV viewing and talk about the programs.
- Explain unfamiliar words or experiences to your child.

Guide to phonetic sounds

Phonetic reading is based on understanding the individual sounds that make up words. Learning to blend sounds into words and breaking words into sounds is how a young child develops pre-reading skills. As your child learns these pre-reading skills, please have them bring something for Show-n-Tell that starts with the sound of the week. To the right is a phonetic guide to help you in finding things that start with the sounds being taught at school.

You can help your child catch on the phonetic sounds by emphasizing the beginning sound a word makes. For example the m has the sound mmmm as in the first sound you make when you say the word mop. Saying the word mop as mmmop and having your child repeat it will make it easier for your child to isolate the sound and remember it.

26 phonetic sounds

a	apple	n	nest
b	bat	o	off
c	cat	p	pig
d	dog	q	quill
e	eskimo	r	rug
f	fun	s	sun
g	gum	t	top
h	hat	u	up
i	igloo	v	vet
j	jacks	w	wagon
k	king	x	box
l	lamp	y	yam
m	mop	z	zip