

## Homework : A Montessori guide for primary school (& extended day) students

### Is there really No Homework in Montessori schools?

Homework can be a confusing topic with parents since Montessori primary schools don't set homework in the traditional sense of asking the children to complete worksheets or "read chapter 2 and answer questions 1-5. then hand them in to the teacher for marking". However there is sometimes a misconception that there is absolutely no homework in a Montessori school.

In contrast we believe that learning continues at home without the teacher assigning homework. Opportunities for meaningful learning abound outside of school and children who are enlightened learners will want to continue to do things after school and on weekends. The learning 'work' or activities are ideally coming from the child's own interest and motivation, possibly stimulated by what they've been learning at school or perhaps prompted in the home environment by family members, friends or neighbours.

### How can families support what their children are doing at school?

In the absence of regular, assigned homework we wanted to give families some suggestions for ways to extend the work at school into the home.

Montessori teachers will often refer to the 'three period lesson'. This refers to the three stages of working with an idea or new information. In the first period, there is the presentation or the lesson where the student is introduced to the concept. The second period is the period of time the student spends practicing the concept, making mistakes, and receiving additional teaching or guidance. In the third period of the work, the student understands the concept and is ready to try applying it in new and varied ways.

We often ask that parents leave the first and second period of the work for the classroom. This ensures that the language and process is consistent and having too many 'teachers' in his or her life does not confuse the child. The third period of the work is absolutely open to follow up at home and this is a valuable opportunity to apply and reinforce knowledge.

### Should we set up time for homework each day or require completion of tasks?

No, do not make home a place where children must complete work for school unless this is specifically requested by a teacher. Instead, provide stimulation and opportunity for learning to happen in the most natural and inclusive manner possible.

At its best, homework is an exciting opportunity for parents and children to celebrate the acquisition of a new skill and explore the world together. In addition to these activities we encourage families to ensure enough unstructured time at home to allow for spontaneous creativity.

So, to assist you we have included a list of suggestions for "homework" relative to the key learning areas of the curriculum and the level of involvement required by the parent. You will see that most of the items on the list can be taken from start to finish at home and there is a lot of choice. This type of Montessori 'homework' is most successful when its value is evident to the student and they understand that their efforts are making a meaningful contribution to their family, their community and toward their own personal development. Many of these suggestions are not specific to one curriculum area but instead invite the children to synthesize their knowledge from several areas and apply it in a new way.

#### \*Level of Parent Involvement –

**Full** – parent or carer will need to be with the child

**Medium** – some supervision or support needed, but child can do part of this activity independently

**Low** – Child may do this activity independently

## Suggested activities for the home

Curriculum Area	Activity	Level of Parent involvement*
Language and Literacy	Allow your child to see you reading and enjoying books, newspapers and magazines.	Low
	Practice cursive in a book. Play some soothing music and take your time. Concentrate on making the most beautiful letters. Explore different scripts and illuminated letters.	Low
	Make lists: grocery lists, packing lists, lists of family and friends to invite to a gathering. Have a question about vampire bats or the tallest building in the world? Make a list of these questions to take to the library. Make a list of places you would like to visit and share them with your parents.	Low
	Write letters! It's the best way to get mail. When possible, instead of calling, write to grandparents, cousins and friends near and far, elected officials, or a company regarding one of their products.	Low
	Survey your family. Interview relatives. Start a family newsletter. Cycle 2 (9-12) students might think about starting a family blog or website.	Low
	Buy a book of easy crossword puzzles. Once you have mastered the beginning puzzles, move onto more difficult crosswords. Also try anagrams and other word games. Keep one of these books in the car to work on whenever you are riding around.	Low
	Write a review of a book you read or a movie you saw. Tell the basic idea of the book or movie and what you liked and didn't like about it. What did the author do well? What did they not do so well?	Low
	Listen to books on tape while driving around on errands or on holidays.	Medium
	Write with your family. Start a family journal. In the journal, keep lists of things to do around the house, descriptions of special events such as hosting houseguests, notes about phone calls to family friends and relatives, anything you want to record from your everyday life. See Peter Stillman's book <i>Families Writing</i> for more ideas and inspiration.	Medium
	Play great board games such as Scrabble, Boggle or Word Thief.	Medium
	Choose a story or newspaper to read aloud to the class. Practice the pronunciation of all the words. How can you use your voice to make the reading more interesting to your audience?	Medium
	Make regular visits to the library. Have your child explore shelves and look up in the catalogue system specific books of interest.	Medium
	Read and write poetry. Memorize 1 poem a week. Plan to share a few of these with the class. Use props if you like.	Medium
	Choose an original work, essay or poem. Submit your work to magazines or publications that publish student work.	Medium
Read aloud to your child. Discuss the books and ask lots of questions. Share the enjoyment of looking up an unfamiliar word or guessing its meaning from context.	Full	

## Mathematics

Curriculum Area	Activity	Level of Parent involvement
	Measure the volume and area of objects and spaces in your home. Record your findings.	Low
	Keep statistics: graph the times you go to bed for a week, how often you have friends, over, etc.	Low
	Measure the volume and area of objects and spaces in your home. Record your findings.	Low
	Create your own budget for personal spending.	Low
	Make up maths problems for yourself to work out. Consider making a "Maths Workout" for yourself once a week.	Low
	Read <u>The Number Devil</u> by H.M. Enzensberger (doubly recommended for Cycle 2 students). This is an especially good book for people who have not yet learned to love math, but those who have will enjoy the book too.	Low
	Maths Facts: Practice for speed and accuracy – think of it as learning the alphabet of mathematics. You can do this in a number of ways: flash cards, verbally back and forth, make up songs, design a board game, and there are a number of worksheets available online for those who like them.	Medium
	Money. This is a concept that is almost always more meaningful in application. Discuss the values of coins and notes and then decide upon a fair amount of weekly or bi-weekly pocket money. Keep receipts and do some basic accounting (at least for a few weeks).	Medium
	When buying family tickets for an event, figure out the total ahead of time. Extend this to making a complete entertainment budget. How much money can we spend at dinner? On items for sale at the event? What are the spending priorities?	Medium
	Building. Choose to build a birdhouse or other project. Use your measurement skills and the help of an adult to create and assemble the pieces. Decorate to taste.	Medium
	Help with the family budget. Record the family expenditures for a week.	Medium
	Play good 'thinking' games such as chess. Learn how to notate chess games. Learn to play chess by mail with your friends (that's where you mail your moves back and forth on post cards or in letters).	Medium
	Create story problems with your family. Take turns inventing scenarios and challenge the other person to solve it. These can be written down or just a fun conversation (that may need some scratch paper)	Full
	Baking! There is no better, or more delicious, opportunity to do some concrete work with fractions (and begin exploring other units ounces, liters, etc). Double the recipe and explore the equivalences.	Full

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Curriculum Area	Activity	Level of Parent involvement
<b>Health &amp; Physical Development</b>	Keep a journal of what you eat for a week. Share what you learn about your own habits and any changes you decide to make as a result.	Low
	Make your own lunches, remembering what we have learned about healthy eating.	Medium
	Plan family menus for the coming week, keeping in mind what you have learned about nutrition and healthy eating. Discuss your plans with your parents. Plan the shopping list and taken into account your family's weekly grocery budget.	Full

Curriculum Area	Activity	Level of Parent involvement
<b>Science &amp; Technology</b>	Own a few identification key books as a family. Repeat the above activity but now see if you can identify the specimens using the books.	Low
	Make a botany map of your back yard. Place each plant in its place on the map and label each plant with its common name and scientific name. You might need some help from a library book or a knowledgeable adult gardener.	Low
	Design an experiment using the scientific method you have studied at school. Test your hypothesis. Write up the results to share with your family and the class.	Medium
	Before you travel to another part of the country or to a different country, read about the biomes there. Read about their climate, animals and plants. While you're there, look for things you read about.	Medium
	Go for a walk and gather a few leaves along the way. At the end of your walk, take a few minutes to observe what is different and unique about each one. Do the same with fruits, stems, roots, flowers, and seeds.	Medium
	Whenever you travel to a new city, visit the local zoo and aquarium or the local natural history museum.	Full
	Go camping with your family or friends.	Full
	At the library, look through the children's books on science. Choose one that has experiments you can do at home with your parents.	Full
	Go fruit picking. Mark your calendar with the schedules of when different fruits and vegetables are ready to harvest.	Full

Curriculum Area	Activity	Level of Parent involvement
<b>History &amp; Geography</b>	Help plan the family holiday. Research the landmarks, geography, culture and special attractions of the area you will visit. Map out the route that you will take.	Low
	Make a map of your house and gardens. Make a detailed map of your room.	Low
	Pick a continent you'd like to know more about. Using an atlas, make flash cards of all the countries in that continent. On one side of the card, have the country's name; on the other side, the country's capital city. Memorise all the countries and capitals in that continent, then do the same for another continent.	Low
	Make a family tree. Share and record any family history or stories about family members.	Medium
	Choose a place in your neighbourhood and research its history. It could be a park, a building, or those people whose names are now the street names in our city. Put your findings together onto a presentation board or create book. Share it with your family or neighbours.	Medium
	Study world religions. Pick a religion you don't know much about. Read about it in books you check out from the public library. See if you can find a local group that practices that religion. Plan with your parents to visit their church, temple, synagogue, mosque, or other place of worship.	Medium
	Interview someone from another country. Ask them about their country's history, landmarks, cities, agriculture, industries, religions, festivals, form of government, famous scientist, famous artists and writers, etc. Ask them for permission to tape the interview. From the tape, make notes. From the notes, write a summary of what you learned about the person's country.	Medium

Curriculum Area	Activity	Level of Parent involvement
<b>Technology / Media Literacy</b>	If you have a computer, practice typing. Keep track of your accuracy and speed. You might want to use a software package that teaches typing.	Low
	Cycle 2 : Begin learning a word processing software. See if you can 'beat' the spell corrector.	Low
	Set out to learn BASIC or other basic programming languages.	Medium
	Learn basic elements of a table / graph and conduct surveys around the house (e.g., record on a table the number of lamps/ light fixtures in each room of the house)	Medium

Curriculum Area	Activity	Level of Parent involvement
<b>Social / Emotional Development / Practical Life</b>	Keep a scrapbook of newspaper articles on issues you care about in the community or world. Write letters to elected officials expressing your opinions about issues you've read about.	Low
	Offer to help neighbours with pet sitting, picking up their newspaper when they're out of town, etc.	Low
	Do your own laundry, or do laundry for your family. Sort the clothes by colour. Find out when to use which temperature, the amount of soap needed, and how to work the washing machine. Discover which clothes cannot go into the dryer and hang them. Fold and put away.	Medium
	Babysit. Read to the younger children. Invite a younger sibling to do something with you. Pick up rubbish. Volunteer. Do some community service.	Medium
	Be responsible for one or two meals per week. Plan the menu with your parents. Make a shopping list, do the shopping and cook the meal with your parents. Try not to use a microwave oven when you cook.	Medium – High
	Participate in an environmental cleanup. This might be as simple as going to the park with your family or friends and filling up a big trash bag with all the trash you can pick up.	High
	Visit an elder. Look for opportunities to assist the elderly.	High

Curriculum Area	Activity	Level of Parent involvement
<b>Creative &amp; Practical Arts</b>	Learn new art projects by reading in books or taking an art class. Prepare an art project to teach to the class.	Low
	Learn a new song to teach the class. Bring a copy of the words when you teach it to us.	Low
	Knit, crochet, spin, weave quilt, embroider, batik, bead.	Medium
	Learn photography – how to take a really good picture.	Medium
	Learn how to operate a video camera. Make your own movies. Document a week in the life of your family using a camcorder or camera. Write a paragraph about each family member and what they will be doing for the summer. Mail the package to your grandparents or some other relative or friend who would like to receive the update.	Medium
	Learn and practice a musical instrument.	Medium
	Learn to dance.	Medium
	Read how-to books about building or crafting and try them. Build a fence, doghouse, garden bed, bike ramp, etc. Learn to use tools.	High
	Visit one of the art museums in town. Visit the gift shop after you've toured the museum. Buy postcards of your favourite works, and try to copy them at home with coloured pencils or watercolours.	High

*You may like to keep this list in a folder or even laminate it and keep it somewhere handy for easy reference.*