



Q & A

Practical Life

Why are the child's first lessons predominantly from the practical life area?

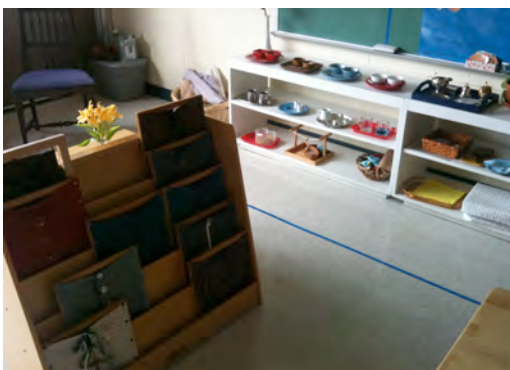


Practical life exercises are everyday activities pertaining to the home, hygiene, and social relationships. They introduce the child to the tasks of his/her culture. The activities can be classified into three broad categories:

1. Care of self (hand washing, buttoning, dressing, etc.)
2. Care of the environment (watering plants, polishing, sweeping, etc.), and
3. Lessons of grace and courtesy (greeting others, waiting for a turn, etc.)

These exercises are the child's first Montessori lessons for several reasons. First, they are tasks the child has seen others perform and thus are of great interest to the child. They also help the child to learn how to get along in the classroom and in society at large. Lastly, the main focus is on using the hands to improve coordination and preparing fine muscles for more complex efforts.

What is the purpose of incorporating practical life in a Montessori curriculum?



Practical life is an important part of the Montessori curriculum because it benefits the child in many ways. Along with improving coordination, it also helps the child to internalize the development of the pincer grasp and the left to right sequencing of work in many exercises. The practical life area also helps bring a sense of reality to the child. Instead of plastics or toys, the child uses real materials such as glass vases for flower arranging and ceramic pitchers for pouring. Therefore, the child is encouraged to concentrate and to move with great care and precision. Equally as important, the child learns that mistakes are part of life (spilled milk does clean up!). When given the dignity of correcting their own mistakes, they then have the chance to take responsibility for their own development. This establishes a positive attitude toward learning and work, a sense of independence, and feelings of worth and contribution.