

## Learning to Learn at Home: For all Developmental Levels

Be mindful that you are your child's first and most important teacher. These are ways that you might enrich your child's home environment in a way that takes full advantage of your child's natural desire to learn and support your child's studies at school at the same time! Think of the world as a great big science experiment: Give language, explore together, compare, watch closely, have fun!

The suggestions below are applicable for children across a wide age range. All of the following activities are parent driven and supported. It is not until a child is in elementary that they might begin to work "on homework" somewhat independently. It is not until a student is at the middle school level that homework begins to become a predictor of a student's success in school and meaningful to the child.

### Materials and Experiences that Promote Learning Outside of School for All Children

This is the same list we send to parents and grandparents who are looking for great gift ideas for their children or loved ones. They can make wonderful gifts for other children too.

Globes

Maps

Analog clocks and watches

Monetary Currency – allowances. (Holiday shopping is the perfect time for children to handle and use currency!)

Magnifying glasses

Flashlights

Measuring tools: measuring tapes, rulers, scales, thermometers, etc.

Cameras

Compasses

Hobby Kits

Tents

Lessons

Magazine Subscriptions

Journals

Art Materials

Travel

Special Note: Workbooks-simple at first and then more challenging, reading at home, enrichment activities, travel and a rich home life all benefit the child's endeavors, at any age, and can help them make sense of this amazing world in which we live.

### Math

1. **Repeating patterns** are everywhere! When you become aware of a repeating pattern in your daily life, share it with your child: day, night, day, night or stop, go, stop, go or possible repeating patterns in clothing, etc.

2. **What's missing?:** Ask, "What's missing?" if you see a gap in a pattern. Or...you can remove something that was there and see if your child can determine what it might be. Ex: Fork from the dinner table...pillow from the bed...
3. **Analog clocks** help us track more than time: wall clocks, watches, timers, etc. Many skills are learned by interacting with analog timekeepers. Fractions, rotational directions (clockwise, counterclockwise), lines of longitude, etc.
4. **Relationships** between numbers: Present or identify these concepts as they present themselves to you and your child. Less than, more than, fewer, the same, different, put together, etc.
5. **Word problems** are no problem.
6. Ask **math questions** in preparation for word problems. Keep them very simple. "How many apples are in this bowl? How many will be left after I eat one? After we both eat one?"
7. **Money**, please: Allow your child to handle money while it is still around. It is an invaluable way to teach counting and subtracting skills. The presidents found on coins present endless opportunities to talk about our national history and in some instances, to talk about national heroes. Even if you use cards, be certain to articulate the exchange: "I'm paying \$3.42 for this wrapping paper." "I'm depositing my paycheck in this bank so we can have it available later to buy the things we need."
8. **Allowances** can provide opportunities to save, prioritize, give to others, buy things (s)he might want or need. Paying for chores can provide the same opportunities with the added learning experience of assuming responsibilities. This early experience with money can be a valuable opportunity for parents to help establish their family values. Children as young as 4 or 5 might enjoy this learning experience.
9. **The shape of things** to come. Use correct nomenclature for common shapes: sphere, cube, rectangle, polygon...
10. **Measure** everything: Your child's weight, miles to the store, steps to the backyard. Use rules and tapes and all sorts of good stuff.

### **Counting the many ways to count and memorization: Anything can be made into flashcards...**

11. **Kindergarten:** Count by rote up to 100. Start with 1-10, 1-20, 1-30, etc. Focus on the transitional tens and tricky teens.
11. Skip count by fives: 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35. Skip count by 2s and 10s. Now, x flashcards!
11. **2nd grade** students should continue to practice skip count by 3, 7, 9. Now, x flashcards!
11. **3rd grade:** skip count 4, 6, 8. Now, x flashcards!
11. **9 and older:** Children can learn to count by squares and cubes! Have a blast and count away!
11. Memorize algorithms needed for applications.

### **Language: Be a Blabber Mouth! Don't forget poetry and rhymes...**

It is sometimes a bit of a challenge to continually talk to non-verbal people but this is what we want to do from infancy through adolescence. (Yep. They may become nonverbal again.) Talk and sing and laugh and yell and whisper!

**Vocabulary:** Use correct nomenclature. Say a lot of different words and use complex sentences. Books help us use vocabulary we would not normally use in our daily speech. First dictionaries, and then more advanced dictionaries, should be kept in the home. Remember to use emotional vocabulary as well.

**Read now and forever:** A wonderful way to make memories and share your family values.

1. Begin reading now. If it is hard to read a book with a baby in your lap that wants to grab a book, try moving away a bit and read, read, read. Show the pictures. Select books with photos or realistic illustrations that suggest what is real. Rhymes and melodic texts are perfect for this age.
2. Read, read, and read by yourself in front of your child. Read newspapers, the internet, comics, and menus aloud. Read street signs and food containers aloud as well.
3. Read to your child even after your child is able to read to you. This is very important. Children should be read to until they are at least nine years old. Select books that have a vocabulary slightly more advanced than your child's vocabulary.
4. Ask the child questions about what is read. This is a chance to share your family values.
5. The amount of time a parent spends reading to a child is the very best predictor for future school success...even more than parental involvement and homework.
6. Older children: Parents can read the same book their child is reading. This will provide a valuable foundation for all sorts of insightful discussions. Brilliant!

### **Just for the older ones...home work & home study**

All of the wonderful learning experiences that you are giving to your younger child should continue. Now, a more formal type of learning may be appealing to some families. Homework may help parents reinforce their family values-daily study is good. It can allow parents to see what interests, strengths, and weaknesses their child might have. If you would like your child to engage in daily homework, select a variety of workbooks or engage them in discussions about daily reading.

Many Montessori programs do not routinely offer homework to students for these reasons.

1. Children, until they are in middle school, may find it difficult to work independently and prefer to be with others. To ask a child this age to work alone can be seen as punishment and can cause the child to resent the homework assignments.
2. Homework can reduce the quality of family time and other enrichment activities. Helping you, and chores such as caring for animals and/or plants, or helping others can build self-esteem and add a positive quality of life for children. After school and weekend social activities like scouting, dancing, and/or sports can compliment the hard work children do at school and is appropriate for children 6 and older. An enriched home with shared family activities has great value to our children.
3. Studies have indicated that homework may become a predictor of future school success at the middle school level.

4. Students use didactic materials for many of their lessons that is not available in most homes.
5. Montessori students are very busy during class. They work very hard.

Homework that is assigned through school is directly related to classroom activities. We do not grade homework until middle school. All students, 9 years old or older, may have any or all of the following homework assignments.

1. Market Day preparations
2. Science experiments for our science fairs
3. Poetry and recitation practice at home
4. Performance practice: Learning lines
5. Daily reading
6. Spelling review
7. Math facts flashcards
8. Research based homework club is available for upper el families
9. Homework is part of the middle school experience.

Special Note: Occasionally, a teacher may determine that a student would benefit from home support in a particular area of study and ask parents to support a child's homework efforts. Notice a score of 4 on your child's progress reports. You may be asked by your child's teacher to support your child in a particular area of study.

### **Upper Elementary and Middle School Programs**

1. Most school assigned homework is optional at the upper elementary level. Students may enter a "Homework Club". Members of this club select a homework assignments from several options. They complete a written assignment and then formally present their report/assignment to the class. A period of questions and comments follow each presentation. This process allows student to function as presenter as well as researcher and writer.
2. Ask your child's teacher for additional information if you would like your child to participate in school assigned homework.
3. Middle school students have daily school homework assignments. In addition, any classroom home work, not completed during classtime will be sent home as homework. Your child will receive information about this work upon enrollment in this dynamic program. In addition, incorporate these studies as well.

### **Math**

1. Flashcards
2. The students have worked on multiples (skip counting) for some time now. Flashcards are the next step. Memorization assists with timely math work and reduces mistakes. Buy or make the flashcards now. Keep them in the car for review. Invite your child to drill you if they seem to grow tired of practice. They will be certain to pay close attention and catch you if you make a mistake! "Flash" in the word flashcard means fast-no counting up.

3. Order of memorization-you can make these flashcards with index cards and markers if you can't find them in the store.
  - a. · Multiplication
  - b. · Division
  - c. · Square values
  - d. · Cubed values
  - e. · Common square roots
  - f. · Value of angles

### Money

Practice naming coins, then naming their values, then counting mixed coins, addition and subtraction of money amounts can be fun.

Use real money to buy real things. Think chores for pay or allowances.

Your child may want to make something to sell at the Central Market to make money. Older students should open a simple checking/savings account.

Real life: What are we learning all of this math for? So we can do all of this wonderful real life stuff! These activities are perfect for measuring, temperatures and so much more.

1. Keep a calendar
2. Gardening: plants, weather
3. Sewing: creating, functional
4. Cooking: can be social, temperature, states of matter
5. Carpentry: simple projects, gifts, materials, weight, function
6. Math workbooks are great for this age child. Select ones that seem a bit simple for review and increased speed.
7. There are several internet programs that we incorporate into our class studies. Khan Academy is excellent.

### Language

1. Play dictionary games: Open the dictionary and point at random. Have your partner try to read the word or tell what the definition is.
2. Keyboarding skills-time to find a program and let your child practice those keyboarding skills they have been wanting to learn. Many online programs are available and appropriate. Try to select those without flashy-distracting games and graphics.
3. Letter writing-Have your child write to those they love, admire, or want to maintain a friendship with. Perfect for handwriting practice, paragraph formation, empathy and kindness. Remember to ask a question in the body of the letter. Your child is much more likely to receive a response if a question has been included.
4. Play Scrabble and other word board games. No kidding. It works.
5. Journal writing is appropriate for older students. A journal should be kept beside the book your child is reading. It is very satisfying to look back and realize the amount of good reading you have consumed in a year's time.
6. Workbooks are great.

7. READ.READ!  
D.READ. READ.READ.READ!

### **Special Note: Screen Time and Technology...**

There has no report that indicates that learning is more efficient with screen time. It may be that the opposite is true. We have not seen an increase in testing scores with the increase of classroom technology. It takes humans a bit of time to move information from short term to long term memory. The slow learning of learning in a 3 dimensional world seems, at this point in our evolution, to still be the most efficient way to learn and generalize what we learn to novel situations..

The Pediatric Association has reported that there does seem to be a negative correlation between long screen times and attention issues in some young children. Why take the risk?

So...how to we prepare children to use technology if they are waiting until 9 or older? We have found, that once something is useful and relevant, that people can learn very quickly. A child who learns to read at 4 may not be as strong of a reader as a child who begins to read at 7 by they time they both turn 8. Let's wait until the technology has a meaningful application for our children.

Upper el students begin to use screens and the middle students must use them to complete work. The average amount of time a middle school student spends on screens in class is roughly 2 ½ hours per day.

The children of today will spend a lifetime in front of various screens...let's give them a gift of time and an amazing physical reality during these few, valuable short years.

### **Some of the physical, emotional, social skill building your child can do instead of watching screens.**

Entertaining themselves-an important life skill  
Reading books with or without you  
Playing with siblings/friends/parents  
Learning and developing hobby interests  
Playing instruments  
Chores-with or without pay  
Exercising/physical activities  
Playing board games  
Cooking and cleaning and organizing  
Puzzles  
Taking a walk  
Talking to relatives  
Making gifts for others  
Building collections  
Imaginary play-this can continue past the age of 9...

Remember, children between the ages of 6 and 12 are highly interested in understanding
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and internalizing the values of their family and their society. We don't want the producers of the programming found on screens to supplant our influence on our children. Try hard to spend these few years fully engaged with your children for the hours and minutes will pass and be gone forever..