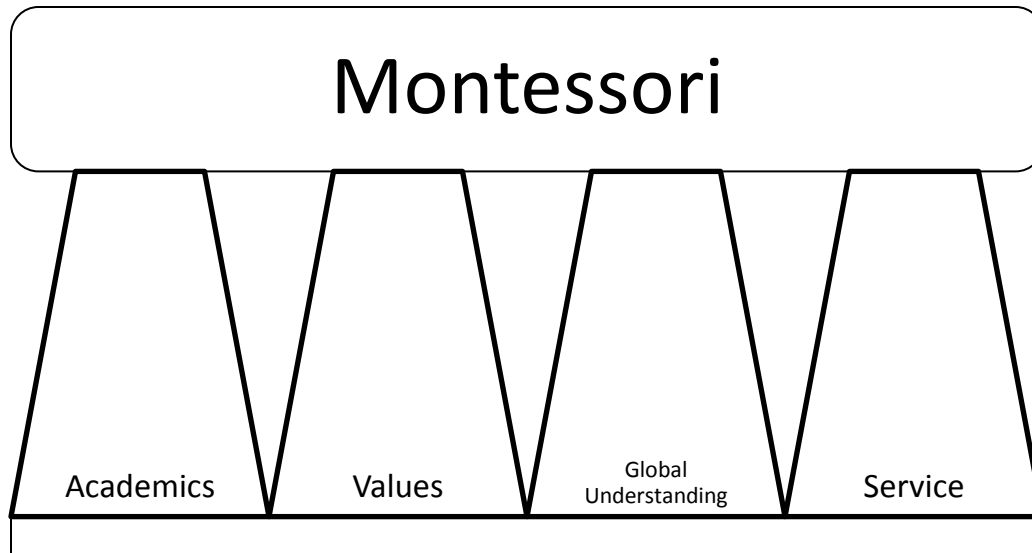


## 4 pillars of Montessori

There are four pillars of Montessori. To understand this idea, consider that Montessori is the roof, supported by four pillars.



**Academics:** This is not just about academic content – that is a by-product. With Montessori, there is an effort to instill in a child a sense of wonder; a love of learning. The goal is a child who is intellectually, vibrantly alive, culturally aware, has a desire to do things well, has many interests, and is a deep thinker.

**Teach values:** These are universal, enduring values that span across the ages, such as integrity, truthfulness, non-violence, empathy and compassion for others, courage to think for yourself, honesty, community, reaching out to others, and friendship.

**Global understanding:** Our children are educated to know about other cultures and people. This gives a feeling of connectivity. We build an understanding that we are connected to all people – and to all of the earth. Pieces contribute to a big picture. We are all interdependent.

**Service:** Being part of the bigger picture, children need to have a sense of giving back. They learn the importance of contributing and making the world a better place. They learn and practice fairness, working with others, conflict resolution, harmony, and taking care of others. There is importance in the individual taking responsibility and finding happiness. This is not to say that the individual should give up their happiness to help others, rather that they should find what they can do, **in their own way**, to make the world a better place.

## ***Alliance Charter Elementary Mission Statement***

**We are a community of learners working together to provide a unique choice in public education, using an enriching Montessori environment. We strive to engage and inspire students to become life-long learners, problem solvers, and responsible global citizens.**

*As a community of learners...*

- Our school, families, and community all play a role in meeting the needs of our students. Education is a shared responsibility. Learning occurs everywhere and does not end when the school day is finished.
- Our teachers and families work together and support each other to enhance the learning process. Parents, family, and community members are used as learning resources and volunteers in the school.
- We are all constantly learning and improving our own skills, in order to be effective teachers and models for our children.

*Key Components of our Montessori learning environment:*

- *Engaged Learning* – The most profound learning takes place when the learner is directly and intrinsically involved in the learning process. Providing daily opportunities for students to make decisions, use initiative, and follow their interests motivates students to learn.
- *Individualized Instruction* – Students have the ability to progress at their own rate, with instruction presented in a variety of ways, including small group, one-on-one, and when appropriate, whole group. Specialist classes may be done as a whole group with teachers differentiating instruction to meet individual student needs.
- *Multi-Age Student Groupings* – A multi-age classroom structure encourages students to teach and learn from each other.
- *Hands-on Activities and Sequential Learning Materials* – Enriched learning takes place through the senses as students actively engage in a variety of hands-on, real-life activities, with learning materials that teach specific concepts, and interaction with their peers and teachers. These meaningful experiences lead to the abstract understanding of ideas.
- *Specially Prepared Environment* –The classroom provides an inquiring, collaborative, nurturing atmosphere which encourages academic excellence, and physical, social, and emotional development.
- *Uninterrupted Blocks of Work Time* – Daily blocks of work time allow students to develop concentration and creativity, exercise choice in their work activities, investigate topics of interest, problem solve, and teach and learn from each other. Through their projects and studies, students learn the connections between various subjects as well as their practical applications.
- *Teachers as Researchers and Facilitators*– Alliance teachers are skilled observers of the students in their classrooms and know how to create optimal learning environments. Teachers serve as a guide, promoting problem solving techniques and leading children toward independence by stimulating their thinking and learning.

## Your role during work time

Thank you so much for all that you do. Your help during work time, and at other times during the day, is extremely important and valuable. By being in the classroom, you offer an extra set of hands, eyes, and ears. You offer our teachers a chance to work more closely with small groups and individual students. You offer extra help in completing projects, to reduce the amount of work our teachers take home with them. You make a big difference for our children, and help ensure that they get the best possible education. Here are some tips for success as a volunteer, during work time and any time...

1. **Remember that you're the assistant:** Refrain from going in to the classroom with your own agenda. We really appreciate you giving your time, and need that gift to be put to use. Your ideas are welcome, and your teacher will want to put your strengths to use. But please do what's needed, or what's asked.
2. **Know the classroom ground rules:** These are posted in the classrooms, and vary. In most classrooms, the children have come up with these rules. They are a great reference when you know there is something they should be doing differently. Make sure you lead by example, and follow all of these rules yourself.
3. **Observe first, speak later:** Make observations first before asking questions or announcing your presence. Take a minute to look around the room, and make a mental note of who's working on what, or with whom. Be a little hesitant about approaching the children who are involved in their work. Let them come to you, so they are working through things on their own when possible.
4. **Be accessible, but aside:** Letting students come to you – try not to interrupt a student at work, unless they seem to be frustrated. A good plan is to have something light to work on – materials to cut, papers to correct, shelves to straighten – and then let the children come to you. Observe them as they are working and do step in when you feel it's needed. If you think a child needs help, ask things like, "Could you show me what you are doing?" or "What are you working on today?"
5. **Look for teacher needs or projects:** Ask first, or look for a list. There may be certain tasks your teacher needs you to work on, or certain children they need you to work with. Avoid interrupting them if they are giving a lesson. They may take a break and talk with you, or they may need to continue. Often, teachers will have a spot for you to check, to get assignments for your time in the classroom.
6. **Understand social needs, but find their limits:** Children at the elementary level need to build their social skills. Work time often offers a chance to use them, which is important. Productive chatter is good, and some social chatter is fine. Let your teacher be your guide, as well as common sense, to learning where to draw the line.
7. **Watch noise levels:** Watch noise levels... regardless of the conversation, students should always use a quieter, indoor voice. You should, too!
8. **Learn the materials:** Straighten or dust the shelves to learn where things are located. At the very least, it's good to know where the different curriculum areas are located, and what types of materials are on the shelves. UTube.com, Montessoriinfo.com and other Montessori sites offer complete lessons and demonstrations of lessons being given. Take a look at these from time to time to gain a better understanding. Watch lessons being given in the classroom if you can, or watch students as they use the materials – and ask questions. Don't be afraid to get a material out and work with it during a "downtime" in the classroom. Go ahead and explore.
9. **Let the kids help :** Children learn quickly that this is their classroom. They are proud of it, and anxious to share. They should feel empowered to lead you to things you are looking for, to introduce you to other students, to explain a material they are familiar with, and to answer questions. They can be your greatest teacher when you are unsure of things. Feel free to ask them to explain a material they are using or that they have used and that another child is learning.

## Helpful things to do in the classroom

You may need to spend your classroom time working with students, or you may find that the students are working well independently and you have time on your hands. There are many things you can offer to do on a regular basis that would be helpful to our teachers. This list is food for thought. Always check with your teacher first, but here are some ideas you may wish to suggest if you are looking for ways to help.

1. Cleaning animal cages
2. Feeding animals (or helping the children do this)
3. Dusting shelves and keeping materials neatly stored
4. Sorting through materials to keep them orderly or to check for missing pieces
5. Cleaning materials
6. Correcting papers: Some, like rocket math need to be corrected daily. Others may be more irregular.
7. Recording test scores or worksheets
8. Prepping for projects the teacher may be planning
9. Organizing books to ensure they are labeled or grouped together appropriately
10. Cleaning sink or cubby areas
11. Changing bulletin boards
12. Sharpening pencils
13. Cleaning and straightening the art cart
14. Reading aloud (if asked) – to give the teacher time for other needs
15. Sorting mail or take home packets/folders
16. Checking in/out take home books for reading practice
17. Assembling Scholastic order forms to be sent home

# Winning Ways to Talk with Young Children

*Betsy R. Schenck, Ph.D., Extension Specialist, Retired, Virginia State University*

## Winning Ways to Talk with Young Children

Talking with children involves the exchange of words, ideas, and feelings between two people. Communication is what we say and how we say it. We communicate with looks (scowls and smiles), with actions (slaps and hugs), with silence (warm or cold), as well as with words (kind and unkind).

Adults usually do not have any difficulty communicating with children when it simply involves giving directions on how to use scissors or explaining the danger of ears, but they do have difficulty communicating when feelings are involved either the child or their own.

Good Communication Leads to:

- Warm relationships
- Cooperation
- Feelings of worth

Poor Communication Leads to:

- Kids who "turn off" adults
- Conflicts and bickering
- Feelings of worthlessness

Here are some winning ways of talking with children. Try them out. But remember, what works well for one person may not work for another. If these suggestions are not successful try other ways of communicating based on your own experience and understanding of your child.

## Communicate Acceptance

When the child knows that you accept him, just as he is, it is possible for him to grow, to change, and to feel good about himself. When a child feels good about himself he is likely to get along well with others. Accepting the child just as he is, makes it easy to communicate with him. The child who feels accepted will be more likely to share his feelings and problems .

When Adults:	The Child Feels:
Threaten	"I don't count."
Command	"I'm bad."
Preach	"You don't like me."
Lecture	"I can't do anything right."

Example: Larry says, Mother I'm afraid to sleep alone." Which response encourages communication?

A. "You ought to be ashamed! You're acting like a big baby! You know there is nothing to be scared of!"

OR

B. "I know you are frightened. I will turn on the night light and leave the door open for you."

Remember: We can accept a child without necessarily approving of his behavior. For example, we love and accept Sandra, but we do not accept her behavior when she zaps the baby or pulls the cat's tail.

## Use Door Openers

Door openers are invitations to say more, to share ideas and feelings. They tell the child that you are really listening and interested, that his ideas are important, and that you accept him and respect what he is saying. Examples:

"I see"  
"Oh "  
"Tell me more"  
"Say that again. I want to be sure I understand you."  
"Mm hmm"  
"No kidding"  
"How about that"  
"That's interesting"  
"Really?"

Door openers tell the child that his ideas are important, that you are interested in his ideas, and that you respect his ideas.

## Listen Attentively

Get rid of distractions and pay attention to what the child is saying. At times adults may need to stop whatever they are doing and listen to the child. It is difficult to run the vacuum cleaner, cook dinner, or read the paper and, at the same time, pay close attention to what the child is saying.

Caution: Do not pretend that you are listening when you aren't. If you are busy talking on the telephone or entertaining guests, tell the child, "I'm busy now, but let's talk about that later." Then be sure to follow through.

## Use "You-Messages" to Reflect the Child's Ideas and Feelings

"You-messages" describe the child's feelings and encourage him to express his troublesome feelings.

Examples:

- "You are sad because your dog died."
- "You are upstart because you didn't win the game."
- "You are mad because Jenny wouldn't let you play with her new doll baby."

When children are allowed to express bad feelings freely, they seem to disappear like magic. Hiding bad feelings is self-destructive. They do not disappear; they can lead to self-hate, headaches, ulcers, and violent actions.

Remember: Actions can be labeled good or bad, but not feelings. Feelings are neither good nor bad. They exist, and their existence must be recognized.

## Use More Do's Than Don'ts

Tell the child what to do rather than what not to do. Using "Do's" rather than "Don'ts" is very difficult, especially if adults already have the "don't" habit. It is very difficult to break bad habits. Using "Do's" rather than "Don'ts" requires much thought and practice. However, the improvement in your relationship with your child will make it worth the effort.

### The Don'ts

- Don't drag your coat on the ground.
- Don't squeeze the kitten.
- Don't slam the door.
- Don't draw on the table .

### The Do's

- Hold your coat so it doesn't drag.
- Carry the kitten gently.
- Close the door softly, please.
- You can color on this page.

Talk to children as you would talk to your friends. If adults would talk to children with as much consideration as they talk to their friends, they could really communicate with children and be on the way to excellent relationships.

## Talk With (Not At) Children

Talking "at" the child is one-sided conversation: "Put on your raincoat," "You are going to spill that," "You need a haircut." Adults who talk "at" children often use the excuse that a small child cannot converse at the adult's level. But no one, including the young child, likes to be talked "at." You may talk "at" the family dog, or even a tiny baby, but try to talk "with" a young child.

Talking "with" a child is two-way conversation, talking to him and then listening to what he has to say. Forming the habit of talking "with" children rather than "at" them will be especially helpful when they become teenagers.

## Use "I-Messages" to Communicate Your Thoughts and Feelings.

"I-messages" are statements of fact. They tell the child how his behavior makes the adult feel. Often children don't know how their behavior affects others. "I-messages" are much more effective than "you-messages" when the child misbehaves.

Which sounds better?

"I" Message	"You" Message
I need help picking up now.	You have a big mess to clean up.
I don't feel like reading a story when I'm tired.	You're being a pest.
I sure get upset when I see mud on the floor.	You ought to be ashamed.
I can't hear you with all that screaming.	You better stop it.
I don't understand.	You're not making sense.

"I-messages give the child responsibility for changing his own behavior. For example, if the adult says, "I see a dirt smudge on your face," he is giving the child the responsibility to do something about the dirt smudge.

Caution: Do not use "I-messages" to express anger to children. Expressing anger causes a young child to feel very upset and insecure. Instead of expressing anger, express the emotion which came before the anger. For example, if Bruce knocked over his glass of milk when the family had company for dinner, embarrassment probably came before anger. Say: "I am really embarrassed when you make such a mess." Don't say: "I'm really mad at you."

## **Make Requests Simple**

Young children have a hard time remembering several orders at a time. Remember when you asked for directions in a strange city? You were probably confused when told to "go six blocks, turn left and go past the gray slate building, turn right at the third blinker, go south and circle the courthouse." Three-year-old Sarah will be just as confused when you say, "Go to your room and hang up your clothes but first pick up your toys and put the dog out." Probably Sarah and the dog will both disappear outdoors because "put the dog out" is all Sarah remembers.

## **Get the Child's Attention Before Speaking to Him**

Children can concentrate on only one thing at a time. Call the child's name and allow him time to turn his attention to you before speaking to him.

Examples:

- "Jack." (Wait until he stops throwing the ball and looks at you.) "Dinner will be ready in 15 minutes."
- "Jill." (Wait until she stops playing in the sand and looks at you.) "It will be time to come inside in 10 minutes."

## **Make Important Requests Firmly**

Speak as if you mean it, and give the child a reason why he must do this thing at this particular time. A request made in a wishy-washy manner lets the child think you do not really care whether or not he does what you asked. Often, a child can think about only one thing at a time. When he is involved in play, it is hard for him to shift his attention to you. Also, he doesn't like being interrupted in his play any more than you do when you are reading the newspaper.

## **Communicate at Eye-Level**

Eye-contact improves communication. When talking with very young children, it may be necessary to come down to their level or to sit at a table with them.

Adults fail to realize the effect their size has on small children. How would you feel if a ten feet tall giant shook his finger and glared at you?

## **Say "Please," "Thank You," and "You're Welcome" to Children**

Children deserve the common courtesies which adults use with each other. And children learn by imitating the speech and behavior of adults. Let them learn to say "please" and "Thank you" by imitating you. Nagging a child to say "Please" sets a bad example; it is not courteous.

## **Try Not to Interrupt and Scold Children When They Are Telling You Their Stories**

Jeanie came in quite excited and started to tell Mother about the good time she had playing at Betty's house. Mother interrupted Jeanie - rudely and at great length - to scold her for going to Betty's house without permission. Jeanie



immediately lost interest in sharing her feelings with Mother. Mother certainly should remind Jeanie of the rule about asking permission, but at another time.

### **Don't Use Unkind Words Which Tear the Child Down**

Unkind words have unhappy results and they cut off communication. Avoid unkind words that are:

- Ridiculing- "You're acting like a big baby."
- Shaming- "I'm ashamed of you."
- Name-calling- "You're a bad boy."

Unkind words, spoken without even thinking of their results, make the child feel that he is disliked. They discourage the child and give him a poor concept of himself. More important, unkind words do not help. They only make matters worse.

### **Use Kind Words to Encourage and Build Up the Child**

Kind words bring happy results! They give the child more self-confidence and help him to behave better, to try harder, and to achieve more. They communicate love and respect and create an atmosphere in which problems can be discussed openly and understandings reached.

Suppose the child has spilled his milk on the floor. You can say, "Don't be so clumsy! Just look at the mess you made"- which leads to unhappy results. Or you can say, "Here is a sponge. Please wipe the milk up"- with happy results.

Examples of kind words:

- Thank you for helping me clean off the table.
- You did a good job of washing the dishes.
- That really makes me feel good.
- I love you.
- I like the way you remembered to hang up your coat.

### **The Importance of Good Communication**

Good communication helps children to develop confidence, feelings of self worth, and good relationships with others. It makes life with them more pleasant now and helps them grow into adults who have good feelings about themselves and others.

## Self Test

1. Translate these DON'Ts into DOs (Show the child what he can do).

### DON'Ts

Don't run in the store.  
Don't yell at me.  
Don't talk with your mouth full.  
Don't throw the ball in the house.  
Don't touch that.

2. Change these statements to "You-messages."

Child	Parent
"You're mean. You let Terry stay up later than me."	"I'm tired of listening to you argue with me."
"I hate Paul."	"No, you don't. It's bad to hate people."

3. Respond to these situations with "I-messages."

Johnny crossed the street to play without permission.  
Ann drops jelly-bread on the new living room rug-disobeying the rule that foods must be eaten in the kitchen .  
Teacher reports that Barry got in a fight at kindergarten.  
Children fight and jump around in back of the car as Mother drives to Grandmother's house.

4. Keep a record for one day of the things you say to a child when:

It is time to pick up his toys.  
You think he has watched enough TV.  
You take him to the supermarket.  
He "bugs" you when you are very busy.

5. Estimate the number of times during the day that you say:

No  
Don't  
Stop  
Quit that  
Cut that out  
You know better

6. Ask another person to tape record 10 minutes of your conversation with a child-when you are not aware that your conversation is being taped. Listen to the tape and evaluate your tone of voice.

## 25 Ways to Talk So Your Children Will Listen

A major part of discipline is learning how to talk with children. The way you talk to your child teaches him how to talk to others. Here are some talking tips we have learned with our children:

### 1. Connect before you direct

Before giving your child directions, come down to your child's eye level and engage your child in eye-to-eye contact to get his attention. Teach him how to focus: "Mary, I need your eyes." "Billy, I need your ears." Offer the same body language when listening to the child. Be sure not to make your eye contact so intense that your child perceives it as controlling rather than connecting.

### 2. Address the child

Open your request with the child's name, "Lauren, will you please..."

### 3. Stay brief

We use the one-sentence rule: Put the main directive in the opening sentence. The longer you ramble, the more likely your child is to become parent-deaf. Too much talking is a very common mistake when dialoging about an issue. It gives the child the feeling that you're not quite sure what it is you want to say. If she can keep you talking she can get you sidetracked.

### 4. Stay simple

Use short sentences with one-syllable words. Listen to how kids communicate with each other and take note. When your child shows that glazed, disinterested look, you are no longer being understood.

### 5. Ask your child to repeat the request back to you

If he can't, it's too long or too complicated.

### 6. Make an offer the child can't refuse

You can reason with a two or three-year-old, especially to avoid power struggles. "Get dressed so you can go outside and play." Offer a reason for your request that is to the child's advantage, and one that is difficult to refuse. This gives her a reason to move out of her power position and do what you want her to do.

### 7. Be positive

Instead of "no running," try: "Inside we walk, outside you may run."

### 8. Begin your directives with "I want."

Instead of "Get down," say "I want you to get down." Instead of "Let Becky have a turn," say "I want you to let Becky have a turn now." This works well with children who want to please but don't like being ordered. By saying "I want," you give a reason for compliance rather than just an order.

### 9. "When...then."

"When you get your teeth brushed, then we'll begin the story." "When your work is finished, then you can watch TV." "When," which implies that you expect obedience, works better than "if," which suggests that the child has a choice when you don't mean to give him one.

### **10. Legs first, mouth second**

Instead of hollering, "Turn off the TV, it's time for dinner!" walk into the room where your child is watching TV, join in with your child's interests for a few minutes, and then, during a commercial break, have your child turn off the TV. Going to your child conveys you're serious about your request; otherwise children interpret this as a mere preference.

### **11. Give choices**

"Do you want to put your pajamas on or brush your teeth first?" "Red shirt or blue one?"

### **12. Speak developmentally correctly**

The younger the child, the shorter and simpler your directives should be. Consider your child's level of understanding. For example, a common error parents make is asking a three-year-old, "Why did you do that?" Most adults can't always answer that question about their behavior. Try instead, "Let's talk about what you did."

### **13. Speak socially correctly**

Even a two-year-old can learn "please." Expect your child to be polite. Children shouldn't feel manners are optional. Speak to your children the way you want them to speak to you.

### **14. Speak psychologically correctly**

Threats and judgmental openers are likely to put the child on the defensive. "You" messages make a child clam up. "I" messages are non-accusing. Instead of "You'd better do this..." or "You must...", try "I would like..." or "I am so pleased when you..." Instead of "You need to clear the table," say "I need you to clear the table." Don't ask a leading question when a negative answer is not an option. "Will you please pick up your coat?" Just say, "Pick up your coat, please."

### **15. Write it**

Reminders can evolve into nagging so easily, especially for preteens who feel being told things puts them in the slave category. Without saying a word you can communicate anything you need said. Talk with a pad and pencil. Leave humorous notes for your child. Then sit back and watch it happen.

### **16. Talk the child down**

The louder your child yells, the softer you respond. Let your child ventilate while you interject timely comments: "I understand" or "Can I help?" Sometimes just having a caring listener available will wind down the tantrum. If you come in at his level, you have two tantrums to deal with. Be the adult for him.

### **17. Settle the listener**

Before giving your directive, restore emotional equilibrium, otherwise you are wasting your time. Nothing sinks in when a child is an emotional wreck.

### **18. Replay your message**

Toddlers need to be told a thousand times. Children under two have difficulty internalizing your directives. Most three-year-olds begin to internalize directives so that what you ask begins to sink in. Do less and less repeating as your child gets older. Preteens regard repetition as nagging.

### **19. Let your child complete the thought**

Instead of "Don't leave your mess piled up," try: "Matthew, think of where you want to store your soccer stuff." Letting the child fill in the blanks is more likely to create a lasting lesson.

**20. Use rhyme rules.**

"If you hit, you must sit." Get your child to repeat them.

**21. Give likable alternatives**

You can't go by yourself to the park; but you can play in the neighbor's yard. It's time for reading right now; but you may choose the book you'd like.

**22. Give advance notice**

"We have just a few more minutes before it will be time to clean up."

**23. Open up a closed child**

Carefully chosen phrases open up closed little minds and mouths. Stick to topics that you know your child gets excited about. Ask questions that require more than a yes or no. Stick to specifics. Instead of "Did you have a good day at school today?" try "What is the most fun thing you did today?"

**24. Use "When you...I feel...because..."**

When you run away from me in the store I feel worried because you might get lost. When you ignore your work I feel concerned, because you will end up being behind.

**25. Close the discussion**

If a matter is really closed to discussion, say so. "I'm not changing my mind about this. Sorry." You'll save wear and tear on both you and your child. Reserve your "I mean business" tone of voice for when you do.

## Creating Alignment about Ground Rules & Procedures

Consider these questions as you observe the children and the classroom during your first month or two. If need be, discuss these questions with your teacher. Learning more about the classroom and your teacher's procedures will help you be consistent. If you think through the procedures and have a clear rationale, it should enable you to better judge when it is okay to be flexible. These questions apply to all Montessori environments to some degree, though you will certainly see a difference in the kindergarten room versus the 1-2-3 or 4-5. Also remember that every teacher is different and thus their procedures will vary.

1. What are the classroom ground rules and where are they posted?
2. How are rugs rolled and stored?
3. Where are the different groupings of materials located? (Math vs. language, culture, etc.)
4. What recurring activity takes place while you are there (attendance, etc) and what are the procedures for that?
5. Are there projects you can work on alongside helping the students? (Correcting papers, etc.)
6. How can you know what work children should be doing, and where are their "work plans?"
7. Where can work be done? (On a rug, table, outside the classroom, a special area.)
8. What are the snack procedures? (Independent vs. group and what setting/times)
9. Is it okay for children to share food or drinks at snack time or lunch?
10. How long can a child stay in the reading corner, at the snack table or at the peace table? How many children can be there at one time?
11. What is the approach toward wandering children?
12. What do you do when a child chooses a material but does not know how to use it?
13. What work is one person work and which work can be done by two children? Can any work be done by more than two children?
14. What are your procedures for children watching, touching, or taking another's work?
15. What do you do about a child who hasn't put his work away? What if someone else wants to use it? Who puts it away?
16. Can any materials be used together?
17. When is it appropriate to interrupt a working child?
18. What is your procedure for getting the attention of the class (a bell or rain stick, etc.) and who is allowed to use that?
19. How are transitions handled?
20. What are the procedures for children to help clean up the classroom?
21. How do children get your attention and when is it appropriate for them to interrupt you?
22. What is the policy for using the bathroom?
23. How is inappropriate behavior redirected? When, where, and how is this carried out?
24. What is the procedure for helping children resolve conflicts and make peace?
25. What's the best way to give feedback to the teacher?

## E-mail Etiquette Made Easy or Wait! Don't Push That Button Yet!

While a lot of people understand the importance of following certain rules when writing a business letter, they often forget these rules when composing an email message. Here's a refresher.

- **Mind Your Manners:** Think of the basic rules you learned growing up, like saying please and thank you. Address people you don't know as Mr., Mrs., or Dr. Only address someone by first name if they imply it's okay to do so.
- **Watch Your Tone:** Merriam-Webster defines tone as an "accent or inflection expressive of a mood or emotion." It is very difficult to express tone in writing. You want to come across as respectful, friendly, and approachable. You don't want to sound curt or demanding.
- **Be Concise:** Get to the point of your email as quickly as possible, but don't leave out important details that will help your recipient answer your query.
- **Be Professional:** This means, stay away from abbreviations and don't use emoticons (those little smiley faces). Don't use a cute or suggestive email address for business communications.
- **Use Correct Spelling and Proper Grammar:** Use a dictionary or a spell checker — whichever works better for you. While you can write in a conversational tone (contractions are okay), pay attention to basic rules of grammar.
- **Ask Before You Send an Attachment:** Because of computer viruses, many people won't open attachments unless they know the sender. Even that can be a mistake because many viruses come disguised in email messages from someone you know. Before sending an attachment, ask the recipient if you may do so.
- **Wait to Fill in the "TO" Email Address:** Many practiced email users never fill in the 'TO' email address until they are completely through proofing an email and are sure that it is exactly the way that they want it. This will keep you from accidentally sending an email prematurely. It is all too easy to accidentally click on the send icon, when you really mean to click on the attachment icon.

Some professionals get scores of e-mails a day. Follow these tips in order to give your recipients the information they need in order to act on your message sooner rather than later.

1. [Write a meaningful subject line.](#)
2. [Keep the message focused and readable.](#)
3. [Avoid attachments.](#)
4. [Identify yourself clearly.](#)
5. [Be kind -- don't flame.](#)
6. [Proofread.](#)
7. [Don't assume privacy.](#)
8. [Distinguish between formal and informal situations.](#)
9. [Respond Promptly.](#)
10. [Show Respect and Restraint.](#)

***Email Etiquette - Tips for Professional Email**  
By Dawn Rosenberg McKay, About.com Guide*

## Netwriting: Email Etiquette Rules

We write countless emails every day. Because they are quick to write we often fire them off without enough thought about the appropriate way to write them.

**These are some Basic Email Etiquette Rules.**

1. **Be Brief and to the Point.** Don't give your life history or fill your email with off topic complaints. Keep it simple and keep it to the point.
2. **Acknowledge Receipt of Important Emails.** Even if your reply is, "Sorry, I'm too busy to help you now," at least your correspondent won't be waiting in vain for your reply. If someone answers a question or gives you a useful piece of information, it is polite to acknowledge receipt with a simple, thank-you. If you're not sure whether you need to acknowledge receipt, try to position yourself as the sender. If you sent that email, would you appreciate acknowledgement?
3. **Be Polite and Watch Your Tone.** Sarcasm, criticism and off-beat humor can easily be misunderstood. Don't be angry, aggressive or obnoxious in sending emails. It can really create problems.
4. **Limit the Chatter.** Don't write emails for the sake of it. No one likes to have endless emails coming through their inbox. Try to limit the number of messages you send, keeping emails for important things.
5. **Have a Clear Sense of Purpose.** A good email should be no more than two paragraphs. It should focus on one issue at a time. If your e-mail contains multiple messages that are only loosely related, you could number your points to ensure they are all read. If the points are substantial enough, split them up into separate messages so your recipient can delete, respond, file, or forward each item individually.
6. **Write in Good, Reasonable English.** People don't expect perfection, but unless you're writing to your fourteen year old niece, abbreviations like OMG, ROFL, WTF, and shortened words like thx are not good. Avoid using fancy typefaces as a way to add nuances. Many people's e-mail readers only display plain text. In a pinch, use asterisks to show \*emphasis\*. Use standard capitalization as all-caps comes across as shouting, and no caps invokes the image of a lazy teenager.
7. **Proofread.** While your spell checker won't catch every mistake, at the very least it will catch a few typos. If you are sending a message of importance or sending something to many people, take an extra minute or two before you hit "send". Show a draft to someone else first, in order to see whether it actually makes sense and sounds the way it should.
8. **Take a Breath before you click "Send."** If you receive a heated email that leaves you disturbed, sometimes it is better not to respond at all. If you find yourself writing in anger, save a draft and go get a cup of coffee. Let the issue cool off before sending a completely new message, or speak to the sender in person. Don't pour gasoline on a fire without carefully weighing the consequences.
9. **Consider the Feelings of Others.** Be careful about forwarding on someone else's message. No one can expect email to be completely private, but think twice about forwarding a message and do so for the right reasons. For example, if an email contains a complaint, don't forward it without the author's permission.
10. **Treat Email Like a Postcard.** Always imagine that your email could end up being read by someone you didn't intend to read it. Don't assume privacy.
11. **Reply All Only When Appropriate.** There is a big difference between replying to all and replying to an individual. Consider whether your reply is really appropriate for everyone.
12. **Pretend That You are Face to Face.** Don't write anything you wouldn't be happy to say to the person if they were standing right in front of you.
13. **Don't Spam.** You can do your company reputation a lot of damage by sending unsolicited emails.
14. **Show Appreciation.** Don't forget to offer your thanks for help you've received. In our busy lives, email can too often be too concise, and devoid of the proper appreciation for all that others may do.
15. **Be tolerant of other people's etiquette blunders.** If you think you've been insulted, quote the line back to your sender and add a neutral comment such as, "I'm not sure how to interpret this... could you elaborate?"



## Additional Resources

There are many places to look for additional information about Montessori, and about assisting in a classroom. Here are a few suggestions for more information.

### Reading:

10. Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius, by Angeline Scott Lillard
11. Montessori Today, by Paula Polk Lillard (copies available at Alliance)
12. How to Raise an Amazing Child, by Tim Seldin and Vanessa Davies
13. The Montessori Way, by Tim Seldin (PDF available from Jennie – [jeastmankiesow@new.rr.com](mailto:jeastmankiesow@new.rr.com))
14. Tomorrow's Child (Magazine available online through the Montessori Foundation, [www.montessori.org](http://www.montessori.org))

### Videos:

Videos on Montessori curriculum and materials are available in the Parent Resource cabinet at Alliance. Please check them out and review them if you wish. If you are interested in additional videos, Montessori Live offers a video library, for a monthly fee per user. This is something the board would consider paying for, if it would help your efforts in the classroom. Just let us know.

### Online Resources:

1. Montessoriinfo.com or UTube, for videos on Montessori lessons/materials
2. Montessori Today website, [www.montessori.edu](http://www.montessori.edu)
3. American Montessori Society website, [www.amshq.org](http://www.amshq.org)
4. Montessori Live, [www.montessorilive.net](http://www.montessorilive.net) (offers training courses and a video library, for a fee)

### Additional ideas:

If you are interested in learning more about Montessori, in order to enhance your abilities as an assistant in the classroom, there are some options to consider. School visits to Montessori elementary or preschools in the area might help give you another perspective or some additional ideas on how to help. There are online classes available, which **could** be funded by Alliance if you are interested in volunteering regularly, more than once a week. There are also seminars that come up from time to time, which we would be happy to keep you posted on. If you are interested in something like this and would like more information, please contact **Jennie Eastman-Kiesow**.