

# What is Montessori in Practice

*How to apply it at home without renovating the room or buying expensive materials*

por Fernanda Lucio | Pitanga Kids

## The origin and essence

Maria Montessori was an Italian doctor who, while observing children in vulnerable situations in Rome in the early 20th century, discovered something that changed education forever: when the environment respects the child and offers freedom with limits, they learn naturally, with concentration and joy. In 1907, she opened the first Casa dei Bambini — and the world was never the same.

The Montessori method is based on the belief that each child is unique and has an innate potential to learn. Meta-analyses comparing Montessori with traditional approaches reveal positive impacts on executive function, creativity, social skills and academic performance (Medicare, 2024).

## Pillar 1 — Autonomy: the "by myself" that transforms

Autonomy is the heart of Montessori. The child who learns to do things alone develops self-esteem, initiative, persistence and confidence in their own abilities (Escola Prisma, 2024).

In practice at home: low shelves with accessible toys, a hook at the child's height for their backpack, a step stool to reach the sink. Every "by myself!" the child says is a real developmental achievement. Children in Montessori environments become "authors of their own life" — learning to recognize their aptitudes, feelings and limits.

## Pillar 2 — Prepared environment: less is more

Too many toys at once overload the nervous system and reduce concentration. The Montessori environment proposes the opposite: few elements, well organized, accessible and aesthetically beautiful — because beauty is also a stimulus for the child.

Rotate: 4 to 6 toys or materials available at a time. When the child loses interest, swap. Controlled novelty keeps curiosity alive. As Montessori wrote in 1912: "the environment must be calm and avoid over-stimulation of children."

## Pillar 3 — Observation: the power of the quiet adult

The Montessori adult observes before intervening. When your child is concentrated on something — even if it's stacking blocks for the fifteenth minute — resist the impulse to interrupt. Deep concentration is a precious neurological state that should not be broken unnecessarily.

The pedagogical director of Prima Escola Montessori in Sao Paulo highlights that applying this method requires parents who behave as "eternal learners" — observing, respecting and trusting the child's process (Lunetas, 2022).

## Practical life: the most Montessori activity that exists

Folding clothes, setting the table, watering plants, sweeping, peeling fruit, preparing their own snack. They seem simple, but practical life activities develop fine motor coordination, concentration, logical sequencing, autonomy and self-esteem — all at once, completely naturally (Escola Prisma, 2024).

Invite the child to participate in household tasks without rush, without expectation of

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perfection. A child who helps make dinner is developing far more than it seems. What matters is the process, not the result — and celebrating each attempt with genuine enthusiasm.

### A reflection to carry with you

Montessori said: "The greatest achievement of education is teaching the child to think for themselves." You don't need a specialized school for that. You don't need to renovate the room or buy expensive materials. You need presence, patience and faith in your child's abilities.

Because the most powerful Montessori is not in the materials — it is in the relationship. In the gaze that trusts, the voice that encourages, the hand that holds without holding back. A child who feels respected in their rhythm learns with their whole soul.

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