



101 Things Parents Can Do to Help Children

Adapted by Barbara Hacker from
Redirecting Children's Behavior by Kathryn J Kvals

1. Read about Montessori education and how it applies to your child.
2. Subscribe to The Montessori Society. The Montessori Society promotes the work of the Association Montessori International in the UK and distributes the AMI journal as well as producing the excellent quarterly magazine 'Directions'.
3. Take the time to stand back and observe your child carefully and note the characteristics he/she is displaying.
4. Analyse your child's clothes and build a wardrobe aimed at freedom of movement, independence, and freedom from distraction.
5. Make sure your child gets sufficient sleep.
6. Make both going to bed and getting up into a calm and pleasant ritual.
7. Teach grace and courtesy in the home. Model it. Use courtesy with your child and help your child to demonstrate it.
8. Refrain from physical punishment and learn ways of positive discipline.
9. Have a special shelf where your child's books are kept and replaced after careful use.
10. Make regular trips to the public library. Become familiar with the librarians and how the library works, and enjoy books together. Borrow books and help your child learn the responsibility of caring for them and returning them.
11. Read together daily. With younger children, stick to books with realistic themes.
12. See that your child gets to school on time.
13. Allow sufficient time for your child to dress herself/himself.
14. Allow your child to collaborate with food preparation, and encourage your child to take at least some responsibility for preparing his/her own lunch.
15. If possible, allow your child a plot of land, or at least a flowerpot, in which to experience growing things.
16. Take walks together, at the child's pace, pausing to notice things and talk about them.
17. Help your child be in a calm and prepared mood to begin school rather than overstimulated and carrying toys or food.
18. Eliminate or strictly limit TV watching and replace it with activities that involve the child rather than making her/him a passive observer. When the child does watch TV, watch it with her/him and discuss what you see.
19. From the earliest age, give your child the responsibility to pick up after herself/himself: e.g. return toys to their place, put dirty clothes in the laundry basket, clear dishes to the appropriate place, clean off the sink after use, etc. This activity requires preparing the environment so that children know where things go.
20. Hug regularly but don't impose affection; recognise the difference.
21. Assign regular household tasks that need to be done to maintain the household to your child as age-appropriate. (Perhaps setting silverware and napkins on the table, sorting, recycling, dusting, watering plants, etc.)
22. Attend school parent education functions.

23. Arrange time for both parents to attend parent-teacher conferences. Speak together in preparation for the conference and write down questions to ask.
24. Talk to your child clearly without talking down. Communicate with respect and give the child the gift of language, new words, and new expressions.
25. Talk to your child by physically moving to her/his level; be still and make eye contact.
26. Sing! Voice quality doesn't matter. Sing together regularly; build a repertoire of favorites.
27. Refrain from over-structuring your child's time with formal classes and activities. Leave time to "just be"—to play, explore, create.
28. Teach your child safety precautions. (Deal with matches, plugs, chemicals, stairs, the street, how to dial 999, etc.)
29. Teach your child her/his address, phone number, and parents' names.
30. Count! Use natural opportunities that arise.
31. Tell and re-tell family-based stories. For example, "On the day you were born..."
32. Look at family pictures together. Help your child be aware of her/his extended family, names, and relationships.
33. Construct your child's biography, the story of her/his life. A notebook is ideal, so that it can be added to each year. Sharing one's story can become a much-loved ritual, which can also be shared with the child's class at birthday time.
34. Assist your child to be aware of her/his feelings, to have a vocabulary for emotions and to be able to express them.
35. Play games together. Through repetition children learn to take turns, to win and lose.
36. Together, do things to help others - take food to a house-bound neighbour, contribute blankets to a homeless shelter, give toys to those who have none, etc.
37. Speak the language of the virtues. Talk about patience, cooperativeness, courage, ingenuity, cheerfulness, helpfulness, kindness, etc and point out those virtues when you see them demonstrated.
38. Refrain from giving your child too much "stuff." If there is already too much, give some away or store some and rotate the selections.
39. Memorise poetry, teach it to your child, and recite it together.
40. Put up a bird feeder; let your child have responsibility for filling it. Together, learn to be good watchers and learn about the birds you see.
41. Whenever you go somewhere with your child, prepare her/him for what is going to happen and what will be expected of her/him at the shop, restaurant, doctor's office, etc.
42. Express appreciation to your child and others, and help your child to do the same. Send thank-you notes for gifts. Young children can dictate or send a picture; older children can write their own. What is key is learning the importance of expressing appreciation.

43. Help your child to learn to like healthful foods. Never force a child to eat something he/she does not like, but also don't offer unlimited alternatives! Make trying new things fun. Talk about foods and how they look, or describe the taste. Introduce the word "savour," and teach how to do it. Engage children in food preparation.
44. When food shopping, talk to your child about what you see—from kumquats to lobsters. Talk about where food items come from. Talk about the people who help us by growing, picking, transporting, and displaying food.
45. Provide your child with appropriately sized furniture: her/his own table and chair to work at; perhaps a rocker in the living room to be with you, a bed that can easily be made by a child; a stool for climbing up to sink or counter.
46. While driving, point things out and discuss them—construction work, interesting buildings, vehicles, bridges, animals.
47. Teach the language of courtesy - Don't let your child interrupt; teach how to wait after saying, "Excuse me, please."
48. Analyse any annoying behaviour of your child and teach from the positive. For example: door slamming suggests teaching how to close a door; running in the house, teaching how to walk; a runny nose, teaching how to use a tissue.
49. Spend quality time with people of different ages.
50. Teach your child about your religion and make her/him feel a part of it.
51. Help your child to have positive connections with people of diverse ethnicities, languages, and beliefs.
52. Laugh a lot. Play with words. Tell jokes. Help your child to develop a sense of humour.
53. Share your profession or occupation with your child. Have her/him visit at work and have some appreciation of work done in the world.
54. See that your child learns to swim — the younger the better.
55. Have a globe or atlas in the house and, whenever names of places come up, locate them with the child.
56. Make sure your child has the tools he/she needs—a child-size broom, mop, dust pan, whisk broom, duster, etc —to help maintain the cleanliness of the household.
57. Learn to say "no" without anger, and with firmness and conviction. Not everything children want is appropriate.
58. Arrange environments and options so that you end up saying "yes" more than "no".
59. Refrain from laughing at your child.
60. Alert children to upcoming events so they can mentally prepare, e.g., "In ten minutes, it will be time for bed."
61. Help children to maintain a calendar, becoming familiar with days and months, or counting down to special events. Talk about it regularly.
62. Get a pet and guide your child to take responsibility for its care.

63. Refrain from replacing everything that gets broken. Help children to learn the value of money, and the consequences of actions.
64. Take a night-time walk: listen to sounds, observe the moon, smell the air.
65. Take a rain walk: wear coats and boots to be protected, but then fully enjoy the rain.
66. Allow your Children's House-aged child (0-6) to use her/his whole body and mind for active doing. Save computers for the Primary years (6-12) and later, when they become a useful tool of the conscious mind.
67. If you must travel without your child, leave notes behind for her/him to open each day you are gone.
68. Expose your child to all sorts of music.
69. Talk about art, visit statue gardens, and make short visits to museums to look at a couple of pictures. Make it meaningful and enjoyable; don't overdo.
70. Help children learn to sort: the laundry, silverware, etc.
71. Help them become aware of sounds in words. Play games: what starts with "mmm?" "What ends with 't'?"
72. Organise the child's things in appropriate containers and on low shelves.
73. Aid the child in absorbing a sense of beauty: expose her/him to flowers, woods, and natural materials, and avoid plastic.
74. Help your child start a collection of something interesting.
75. Talk about the colours (don't forget shades), textures, and shapes you see around you.
76. Provide art materials, paper, appropriate aprons, and mats to define the workspace. Provide tools for cleaning up.
77. Evaluate each of your child's toys. Does it help her/him learn something? Does the child use it? Does it "work," and are all pieces present? Is it safe?
78. Refrain from doing for a child what he/she can do for himself/herself.
79. Provide opportunities for physical activity: running, hopping, skipping, climbing. Teach them how. Go to a playground if necessary.
80. Teach children how to be still and make "silence." Do it together. Children love to be in a meditative space if given the opportunity.
81. Teach your child her/his birthday.
82. Read the notes that are sent home from school.
83. Alert the teacher to anything that may be affecting your child: lack of sleep, exposure to a fight, moving, a relative visiting in the home, a parent out of town, etc.
84. Provide a place to just dig. Allow your child to get dirty sometimes, without inhibitions.
85. Refrain from offering material rewards or even excessive praise. Let the experience of accomplishment be its own reward.

86. Don't speak for your child to others; give space for the child to speak for herself/himself, and if she/he doesn't, it's okay.
87. Apologise to your child when you've made a mistake.
88. Understand what Montessori meant by sensitive periods. Know when your child is in one and use it.
89. Learn to wait. Some things people want to give their children or do with them are more appropriate at a later age. Be patient; the optimal time will come. Stay focused on where they are right now.
90. Play football together: mums and dads, boys and girls.
91. Tell them what you value in them. Let them hear you express what you value in others.
92. Always tell the truth.
93. Go to the beach and play.
94. Ride the bus, take a train.
95. Watch a sunrise. Watch a sunset.
96. Share appropriate "news" from the newspaper: a new dinosaur was discovered; a baby elephant was born at the zoo; a child was honoured for bravery; the weather forecast.
97. Evaluate your child's hairstyle. Is it neat and not a distraction, or is it always in the child's eyes, falling out of headbands, etc?
98. Let your child help you wash the car and learn the vocabulary of the parts of the car. With this and other tasks, take time to focus on the process for the child more than the end product.
99. Talk about right, left, straight, turns, north, south, east, west, in a natural way so your child develops a sense of direction and the means to talk about it.
100. Place a small jug of water or juice on a low fridge shelf, and a glass in a low place, so your child can be independent in getting a drink.
101. If your child is attached to things like dummies, start a weaning process.