



An Introduction to Practical Life

I CAN DO IT
**Let me do it
myself**



Practical Life: An Introduction

The Lesson aim and objectives:

1. To know the characteristics of Practical Life Exercises and Materials.
2. To understand the role of the teacher in the Practical Life exercises curriculum
3. To have a working knowledge of the Practical Life environment
4. To know the important presentation sequence in the Montessori setting.
5. The structure of recording a Montessori presentation



The Characteristics of Practical Life Exercises and Materials

1. Child-sized- It is important that the materials used for these exercises are the right size for the child. If the broom for example is too big for their little hands it would be much more challenging for the child to learn how to manipulate the broom and sweep properly. The goal is to help them to learn skills and develop their motor skills. So make sure your materials are always appropriately sized for their little hands.
2. Only one set out- Put out only one set of an activity even if it is a popular one. Let's say you have 2 tweezers, you may put the two out only if you have 2 different activities and at different difficulty levels. The children need to learn about delayed gratification and this is a great place to start. They can't have what they want when they want it always, they must learn to wait their turn, it will also teach them about respect, they will be better prepared to care for a material they had to wait their turn to work on, than if it was made readily available in several quantities.
3. Orderly- The items should be placed on the tray or basket in order, the activities on the shelves should be placed in order of difficulty from left to right and top to bottom. Keep the items for care of self, together, the items for care of the environment also arranged in order together. Be orderly, it is this external orderliness that the child would internalize and be able to imbibe the habit of being orderly.
4. Reality based- Give them activities based on real life exercises, for example no play acting, actually washing plates, sorting, and sewing things even if it is with shoe laces for the toddlers before you work on needle and thread with the older children. Do not put them in a child sized toy kitchen pretending to cook. Instead give them a tray of beans and stones and get them to pick out the stones. Ewedu to pick for the 3 year olds, and to cut with a real knife for the 5 year old.
5. Culturally relevant- Give the children activities that are done in the culture you exist in. The utensils used for sweeping in Europe are different from those used in Africa. Use the right utensils and show them how to do things the way we do them. That is why I used the example of picking stones from beans and ewedu or other vegetable leaves that we would pick from the stem.
6. Easy to clean- The materials used should be easy to clean, everything should be kept tidy. Show the children how to clean the shelves as well and clean them. It will help with keeping things in order.
7. Safety first- Make sure that all items are in working order, anything spoilt or broken should be removed from the shelves. Use the correct utensils, a real knife for cutting fruits and vegetables, but show the children the correct way to use the utensils. There is safety in being real. If you fail to show them how to use it then they will fail to use them safely if they do come in contact with the tools.
8. Not limited- There are thousands of activities you can use for Practical Life, your classes should never be limited to whatever list I give you or you find on the internet, activities abound around you that a child can learn from. Let's ensure that in every way we use these activities to foster a better understanding of the environment, language development, motor skills and better interaction and social skills for the child.

The Role of the Teacher

It is important to come to the classroom prepared, prepare yourself, prepare the environment and prepare daily. Know what and how to present the materials with grace and economy of movement. Show them only what is needed to get the task done. Presentation time is not the time to scratch an itch, or your children

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Ensure that the materials are clean, and appealing to the children, be patient have faith that these children will do the activities; accept that they won't do it as well as you would.

The Practical Life Environment

The environment should be:

- Organized so that the Practical Life materials are displayed in one area
- Materials should be kept within the reach of the child's hands and eyes, i.e. on low level shelves.
- They should be arranged in such a way that there is enough space for each activity.
- The furniture should be practical and easy to clean
- All aspects of safety must be considered and adhered to.

The Montessori Presentation Sequence

This is called the work cycle: There is always a beginning middle and end when you present materials and activities to the children. This is important because the child need order and will learn to do things sequentially if all your interactions and presentations are orderly. The steps are as follows:

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- You invite the child to work with the material
- Then take the child to the shelf, show him the material and name it, e.g. “This is the Velcro dressing frame”
- Invite the child to choose a place to work – show him how to hold the material and carry the material to the chosen place e.g. a table.
- Sit next to the child, wherever the child has the fullest view, taking into consideration if you and the child are right or left-handed.
- Place the material in front of the child and demonstrate the exercise.
- Invite the child to carry out the exercise.
- Ask the child if he wants to repeat the exercise. If not explain to him that he can take the material from its place on the shelf at any time he likes and work on it himself.
- Show the child how to put the materials back in the same place and emphasize that they should be returned back for someone else to use.
- You must be firm about work being completed and returned to the shelf. The children will eventually develop the good habit of returning their materials to the proper place and will gain a lot of satisfaction from the activities they do.

The Montessori Presentation – Structure of recording the Lesson:
(Lesson Notes)

The **Materials** - This is the list of items needed for the lesson.

The **Aims**- These are the objectives for an activity or exercise. They are the goals that a specific presentation is helping to achieve and support in the child.

The **Presentation** – This is a set of steps which helps to break down the lesson, so that the children can understand the sequence. You should practice giving a presentation, before actually giving the children a presentation.

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The **Control of Error**- This gives the factor that helps the child know if they are doing the activity right. The control of Error is usually built into a typical Montessori activity so that the exercise can be self-corrected, the child would see the natural consequence and they would practice so that they would avoid the error next time. In the Montessori setting, the teacher must try to not be the "Control of Error". As a Montessori teacher, you do not need to stop the children and tell them that they are doing something incorrectly. It's not necessary the activities control of error will take care of that. Correction should be left to situations where they may injure themselves, others or damage things in the environment.

The **Points of Interest**- These are interesting facts that the children may notice about the activity.

The **Variations and Extensions** - Will give a teacher other ways to approach the same presentation, or expand it.

Sometimes it takes a child longer to learn certain skills. So, instead of letting them become bored before they actually master the skill, you can do other variations which they can practice until they acquire the skill needed. They are used to support the initial presentation.

The **Language**- This is usually listed at the bottom of the lessons. It is not there for you to use while you are giving a presentation to a child. Initial presentations are often done without words. Because English for most is a second Language though I suggest that you use these words, maybe at a second presentation, and then hold conversations purposely with the children using these words. The proper language for each exercise

The **Age**- This is listed at the bottom of the lessons. It is the age at which you should start to check to see if a child is ready for a specific activity. E.g. "3 years and up."

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Activity Sheet:

You may submit this activity if you wish.

(I have given you this option so that you can get feedback about the work you will be doing with your main projects)

Write out in full the presentation (Lesson notes) for 1 care of the self activity.