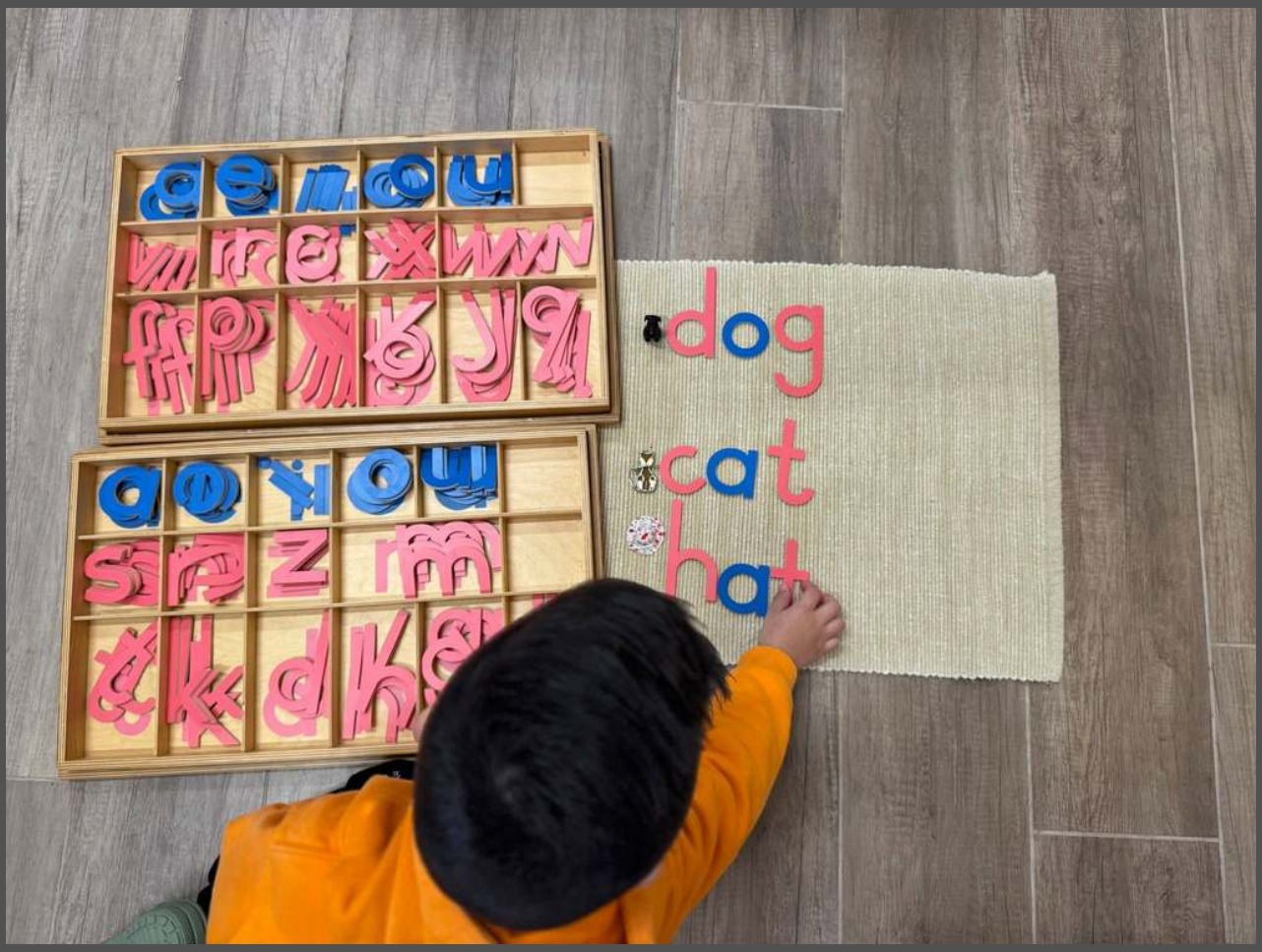
SKOLA-KNISJA

Literacy

IN THE MONTESSORI CLASSROOM

AT BISHOP'S CONSERVATORY JUNIOR SCHOOL



A Practical Guide to Teaching Language and Literacy in the Early Years

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... ALSO INCLUDED IN THIS MODULE

A video demonstrating how the Pink Series Sequence is presented to learners in practice.

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Introduction

LITERACY IN THE MONTESSORI CURRICULUM

This course explores various aspects of the Montessori approach to teaching and learning literacy in the early years, providing information on the main strategies underpinning the approach, on the main characteristics of the literacy materials and on how each child's progress is monitored and recorded.

Drawing on primary and secondary sources, together with research into how children develop an understanding of written communication and on our experience at Bishop's Conservatory Junior School Gozo, Malta, learners will examine the principles of scaffolding, auto-education and self-correcting, active and concrete learning and how the adult serves the child's innate tendency for order, for communication and socialisation to develop literacy skills.



Mr Elton Vella
Head of School
Bishop's Conservatory Junior School

Across the course, learners will explore the difference between language, literacy and literature; they will explore how strategies such as indirect preparation, phonetics, scaffolding and colour coding are embedded in the Montessori literacy activities; and they will also learn what the Montessori literacy curriculum covers and how the adult monitors academic progress.

By the end of the course, learners will explore why such an approach to literacy learning in early years education supports our children's learning and growth holistically and organically.

We invite you to begin by assessing your current understanding of the Montessori approach to literacy in the early years before undertaking the tutorial.

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Definitions and Distinctions

Human beings communicate with each other in a variety of ways:

- Verbally;
- With body gestures including sign language;
- With facial expressions;
- With tone of voice;
- In written form using alphabets and numbers;
- Through visual forms such as paintings and drawings, graphs, maps and logos;
- More creatively, such as through singing, dancing and all performing arts.

WHAT IS **LANGUAGE?**

Language is a structured system of conventional spoken, signed, or written symbols used by humans to communicate, express identity, and share complex thoughts. It combines grammar and vocabulary to create meaning.

How does Montessori explain the acquisition of a language in children?

Montessori viewed language acquisition as a natural conquest, a developmental process driven by an innate "absorbent mind" and that occurs within a specific time termed sensitive period (birth to age 6).

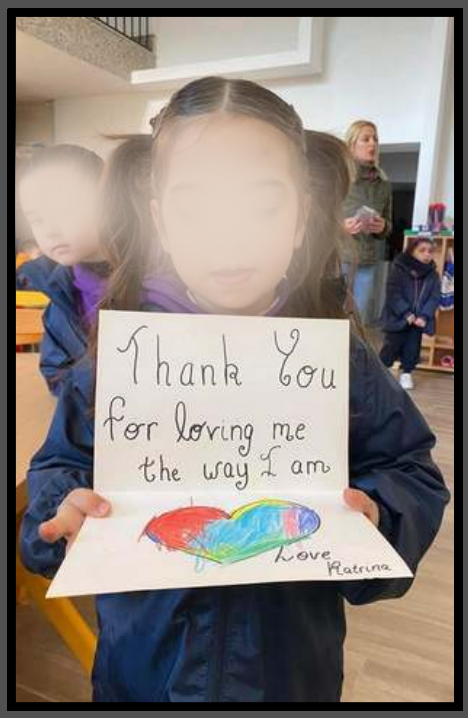


Since children unconsciously absorb sounds, vocabulary, and grammar from their environment, moving from sensory exploration to spoken language, the adult must provide a correct language model with plenty of opportunities to listen and speak.

WHAT IS **LITERACY?**

In the Montessori classroom, literacy relates to the ability to read and write the spoken language. It is essential for children to be competent speakers of the language before they are introduced to the formal learning of reading and writing.

> Writing does not come naturally, whereas spoken language does, and children have a need to develop their language. So the central interest came from the inner life of the child and that is why this phenomenon was so extraordinary. It showed that the development of spoken language is correlated with an inner sensibility which persists during a certain period of life which we call the sensitive period.
>
> Montessori, The 1946 London Lecture, p. 17



WHAT IS **LITERATURE?**

Literature is a broad term for written works, including fiction, poetry, drama, and essays. It serves to record, preserve, and interpret human experience and culture, ranging from classic, enduring works to contemporary creative writing.

Children's literature is a broad genre of stories, books, poems, and plays specifically created for readers ranging from infancy to early adolescence, designed to entertain, educate, and foster cognitive and emotional development. It includes various formats like picture books, fairy tales, fiction, factual books, often tailored to developmental stages.

Adults and children looking at a book together is a natural extension of early conversations.

Books that children love to have read again and again possess common qualities:

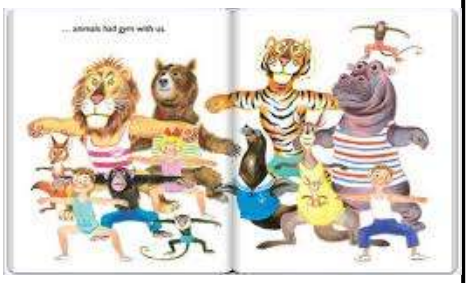
- Good illustrations, well connected to the story, event and words.
- Good balance between pictures and words.
- The theme is relevant to children's lives, events, people and therefore meets the interests of children.
- Characters are realistic in their main characteristics and the plot is meaningful and clear.
- Effective use literary devices.

Literary Devices

Literary devices are a variety of techniques that writers and illustrators use to grab and hold attention, to enhance the characters, the places, the natural events, and the plot.



Some of these devices are:

Literary Device	Definition	Example
Alliteration	Two or more words in a group that begin with the same letter or sound.	Big brown bears bounce back.
Anthropomorphism / Personification	The attribution of human traits, emotions, intentions, or behaviors to non-human entities such as animals, plants, inanimate objects etc.	
Rhyme	The repetition of identical or similar sounds at the end of words.	Hickory, dickory, dock The mouse ran up the clock.
Refrain	A short part of a song or poem that is repeated, especially at the end of each longer part, or any phrase that is often repeated.	*Twinkle, twinkle, little star, How I wonder what you are!*
Onomatopoeia	A word that phonetically imitates, resembles, or suggests the sound it describes. By using words that sound exactly like their sound descriptions become more vivid.	BANG! SPLASH! BOING! CRASHHHH! SIZZLING ...

Reading with children

Reading and storytelling are occasions where children strengthen their bond with adults and with peers, can rest and relax, while they are interested and entertained; they develop language and literacy skills, the develop attention and concentration, thinking skills and problem solving, they develop imagination, they learn about themselves and the world, they continue to be enthusiastic about life and learning.

Prepare some props, finger puppets, open-ended materials that can be adapted to elements in the story. The setting could have a dedicated box for these materials that can be selected and used in new ways according to individual story reading or storytelling.



Remember that children are active learners and they need to get engaged in this shared experience: invite them to find a specific detail on the page, follow their pace, stop and talk about what interests them, listen to their comments, to their questions, respond with interest, if possible and appropriate, with another question.



The book corner should be in a quiet area, calm and relaxed, protected, a place that will make you and the children ready to be taken into a journey, into an adventure.

There would need to be good light, natural light when possible or provided by well positioned lamps and comfortable sitting, with small armchairs, or simple cushions.



Strategies for Teaching and Learning Literacy

1 The Phonics Approach

This is the main strategy in the Montessori approach to literacy; it focuses on the one-to-one correspondence between sounds and letters (phoneme and grapheme) that appeals to the child's mathematical mind which searches for order in their experiences. Only after the child has developed reading and writing skills through the use of a logical strategy is s/he ready to tackle all the phonetic inconsistencies of the English language.

Phonetic awareness is what children develop, as they acquire language, using spontaneously and unconsciously their innate abilities to tune in to the many aspects of language. Activities that support and nurture these abilities provide the foundation for later learning of writing and reading.

Definitions

Phonetics - a system for describing and recording the sounds of spoken language objectively.

Phonics - the study of the different sounds (phonemes) present in the English language and how the written system of symbols (graphemes) represents these sounds. It is a way of teaching children how to read and write. It helps children to hear, recognise and use different sounds that form each word in the English language and to identify written letters and their corresponding sound.

Segmenting - the skill of separating sounds in the word, saying them slowly until they are said, heard and identified individually. (WRITING)

Blending - the skill of combining the individual sounds until the whole word can be said, heard and identified. (READING)

The Phonics approach, based on correspondence of sounds and letters, is a logical approach that appeals to children's mathematical minds and to their sensitive period for order.

The English language, however, has many more words that do not present this simple correspondence. The Montessori literacy curriculum is therefore designed to introduce to the child new elements of sound (phonemes) and the corresponding group of letters (graphemes), logically and gradually. You will look at the progression of children's learning, through the pink, blue and green series.

There are **44 sounds** (phonemes) in the English language, including:
- 24 consonant sounds
- and 20 vowel sounds.

There are **26 letters** (graphemes) in the alphabet, including:
- 21 consonants
- and 5 vowels.

The 21 Consonant Sounds

b - bun	k - kit	s - sat
c - cat (same as k)	l - leg	t - tip
d - dog	m - man	v - vet
f - fan	n - net	w - wig
g - gum	p - pan	x - (xylophone)
h - hug	q - (quick)	y - yak
j - jam	r - rat	z - zip

The Consonant Digraphs

These consist of two consonants joined together to make a new sound.

sh - shop	ch - chop	ng - song
th - thin th - that	zhn - television	nk - pink

The 5 Short Vowel Sounds

a - apple	i - igloo	u - umbrella
e -egg	o - octopus	

2 Scaffolding

The Montessori teaching approach to literacy is based on an ordered and systematic sequence of activities which scaffolds the child's skills and understanding through small and appropriate challenging steps.

Only when a step is fully consolidated will the child move on to the following one. Scaffolding is present in the sequence of the literacy series (pink, blue and green) and in the sequence within each series (see chapter 6 for the pink series sequence).

3 A multi-sensory approach

Children are active learners and they learn best when their senses are engaged; the use of the kinaesthetic, visual and auditory senses in the Sandpaper Letters activity is one of the best examples of this multi-sensory approach to teaching and learning.

4 Colour coding

Colour coding is another strategy that engages the senses, and particularly the chromatic sense. Colours within the Montessori method are not only used to enhance the beauty of the materials but are also a tool for teaching and learning. They help the child group items that have a connection and/or keep them separate from other groups.

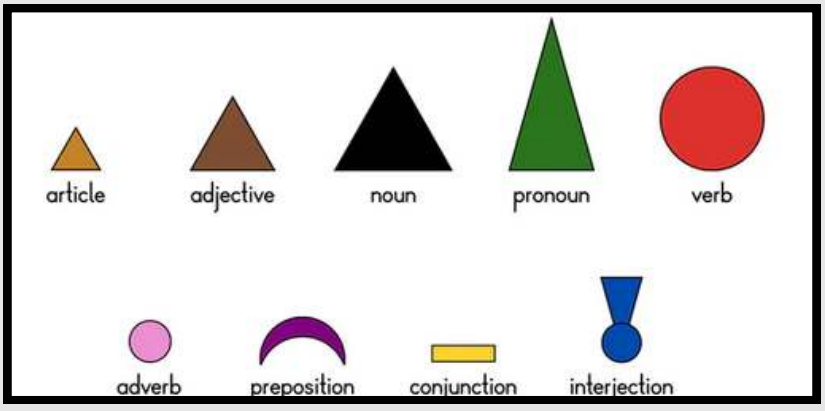
Consider these **benefits** of the use of colour within the literacy area of learning:



The Sandpaper Letters allow the child to separate vowels from consonants (although only at a sensorial level).

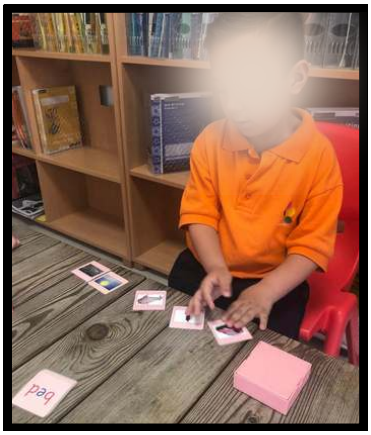


With the use of the Large Moveable Alphabet the child is able to see the CVC pattern by the use of colours.



In the grammar activities the child is able to group all the different parts of speech together and then eventually use colours to form a grammatically correct sentence.

5 Isolation of each new element



This strategy is very clear in the blue series; each new element (added to the child's knowledge of phonetics from the pink series) is introduced in isolation for better focus and attention. So, each digraph, each double consonant, the schwa vowel, etc. are introduced one at a time in isolation within different boxes.

6 Repetition

When each new element/challenge is introduced to the child, plenty of repetition is necessary for the knowledge to consolidate. Learning and developing within a Montessori classroom occurs at the child's pace, without rushing or holding back; it is the observant teacher that will determine the readiness of a child for the next step.

7 Writing before reading

Montessori observed that for children in the first plane of development, knowledge and skills to write develop before the ability to read. Why do you think this is?

This strategy always forms a good point of discussion between teachers and students and tutors.



It might be that writing is taught before reading because it is a natural, sensory expression of thought where the hand is engaged, whereas reading requires abstract interpretation.

By learning to "encode" (building words with sounds) before they "decode" (reading someone else's words), children build confidence, internalise phonics, and experience a joyful, organic transition into literacy.



Indirect Preparation for Literacy

THE READINESS OF THE CHILD

Songs, nursery rhymes and games

Children are born musical. Adults sing to infants, using gentle rhythms and melodies to soothe babies, to lull them to sleep (lullaby) or a more energetic tempo to catch their attention and engage them in play.

Pre-literacy games to introduce phonetic sounds

I SPY game – small groups



Have a variety of everyday objects, discuss their names with the children and emphasise the initial sound.

Then say: "I spy with my little eye something beginning with (say the phonetic initial sound of an object)".

The children should be able to identify the object which can then be removed. Do the same for all other objects.

This game introduces the children to phonetic sounds and enhances vocabulary.

Match the objects by their initial sound



Prepare objects that can be paired according to their initial sounds (see objects above: sock and star; button and bird; flower and Father Christmas etc.); explain the aim of the game to the children and support where needed.

Kim's game for memory and vocabulary enhancement



Name the objects, cover them with a cloth and take one away; the children have to guess what is missing.

This is a great game for memory and concentration.

The sequencing game for sequencing skills and memory



Select a few objects, start with one, name it then take it away; ask the first child to bring it out again and add 1 more item. Then both are taken away; the next child has to reconstruct the sequence again adding one more.... Ask the child to name each object every time.

Odd-one-out game (by the initial sound)



Ask the children to say the names of the objects. You can emphasise the first sound and ask the children which is the odd-one-out (the one object starting with a different sound).

As the child becomes more and more familiar with this concept, the criteria for the 'odd one out' can be changed. For instance, one object can have a different rhyme (sock, clock, rock, block and fish) or a different middle vowel sound (cat, mat, pan, can, box) and so on.

Opportunities for mark-making





In the Montessori classroom, children are given many opportunities to develop the skills needed for literacy through meaningful, hands-on experiences.

Mark making with a variety of media, including paint, crayons, coloured pencils, pens, chalk, water, blackboards, whiteboards, and sand trays, encourages children to explore movement, strengthen fine motor control, and develop hand–eye coordination.

These enjoyable activities build confidence, creativity, and the foundations for writing long before children are formally introduced to letters and words.





Indirect Preparation for Literacy

from the other areas of the Montessori Curriculum

Activities of Everyday Living

Transferring and sorting with tweezers



This activity supports the child in developing the pincer grip necessary to hold a pencil and the matching and sorting skills needed to in literacy to sort, for example, vowels and consonants and the different parts of speech in grammar.

Threading Beads following a Pattern

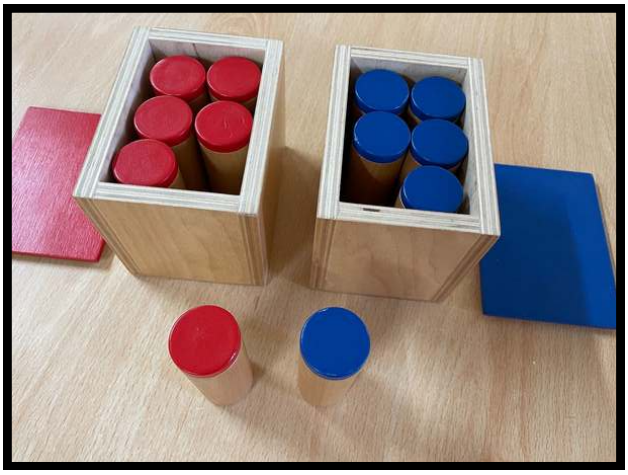


The child builds the pattern by placing each correct bead on the card and then threads the beads onto the shoelace in that order.

The child first practises a sophisticated form of matching; in early literacy, this exact cognitive mechanism allows a child to link an abstract spoken sound, or phoneme, to its physical printed symbol, the grapheme. Once the matching is secure, the act of threading the beads onto the shoelace shifts the focus to sequencing.

Reading and writing are inherently linear processes that demand strict adherence to order. By translating the pattern from the card onto the string, the child internalises the concept that elements must follow a specific, unalterable progression. This precise spatial sequencing directly transfers to written language, where letters must maintain a rigid order to form a word, and words must follow a structured syntax to construct a meaningful sentence.

The Sound Boxes



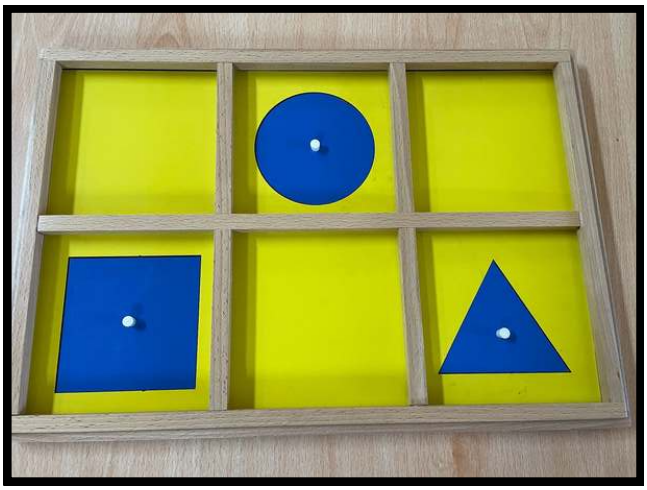
As the child shakes each bottle of one set and listens to the sound, they find the matching bottle in the other set. Before a child can link a written letter (grapheme) to a sound (phoneme), they must be able to hear distinct sounds clearly.

Sound bottles contain various hidden materials—such as rice, sand, beads, or bells—that produce distinct acoustic textures. Shaking and isolating these noises teaches the brain to pay close attention to auditory input. This deliberate focus directly translates to phonemic awareness, helping children pick out individual, subtle letter sounds within spoken words later on.

As an extension activity, children are asked to "order" the bottles from loudest to softest. This exercises sequential thinking and introduces specialised comparative language (e.g., loud, louder, loudest or soft, softer, softest).

Learning to sequence auditory stimuli from left to right across a workspace directly reinforces the structured, left-to-right spatial tracking rules required for reading and text layout.

The Geometric Presentation Tray



This material transforms the abstract mechanics of writing into a deeply tactile, spatial experience.

Long before a child ever grasps a pencil, the presentation tray serves as their primary canvas for linguistic orientation. The physical arrangement of the tray and the educator's careful demonstration introduces the child to the foundational rule of western print: everything flows systematically from

left to right and from top to bottom. As the child sweeps their eyes and hands across the tray to engage with the materials, they subconsciously internalise this directional habit, establishing the precise visual tracking patterns required for reading and writing. The physical posture required to trace inside the tray and each individual inset in an anti-clockwise direction (similarly to how many letters are written i.e., o, c, g. d, q, etc), coordinates the hand for the future mechanics of writing.

By encouraging the use of the dominant three fingers—the thumb, index, and middle finger—the activity develops the pincer grasp.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

The Life Cycle of a Frog



The study of life cycles in a Montessori classroom builds preliteracy skills by embedding complex language structures into visual, tangible timelines. When a child arranges three-dimensional figures—such as a tadpole, froglet and adult frog—they practice chronological sequencing, which mirrors the left-to-right linear progression of reading a sentence or placing letters in the right order or following a story plot.

Matching these concrete figures to detailed nomenclature cards introduces specialised vocabulary, directly expanding the child's oral language base and semantic understanding.

This process also refines visual discrimination, training the eyes to detect subtle physical changes in the images, a skill that directly helps with distinguishing between similar alphabet letters.

Ultimately, by discussing the transitions of life, children learn to predict outcomes and articulate cause-and-effect relationships, establishing the critical comprehension and narrative-building skills required for advanced reading.

THE MONTESSORI EARLY LITERACY CURRICULUM

an overview



Within the Montessori prepared environment, the child encounters a rich variety of carefully designed language activities that provide meaningful, hands-on experiences, fostering the development of early literacy skills. These materials support the gradual acquisition of oral language, phonological awareness, vocabulary, writing, reading, and comprehension through active exploration and purposeful engagement.

All language materials are thoughtfully organised on low, accessible shelves and presented in a logical sequence that follows the child's developmental readiness. The progression of activities is carefully structured to provide appropriate scaffolding, allowing children to build confidence and competence.

The following provides an overview of the Montessori Early Literacy Curriculum. While the activities presented represent the core sequence of Montessori language materials, Montessori educators often enrich the curriculum with carefully prepared extensions and handmade resources that respond to the unique interests, developmental needs, and emerging literacy experiences of each child.

Early Literacy Resources

Insets for Design

Objectives



- To refine fine motor control ready for formal writing
- Early experience in writing continues on from mark making opportunities
- In time, combinations or rotations of shapes can be used to create more complex compositions.

Use

The 'Easy shapes' or rounded shapes are introduced at the beginning for easier control. During the early stages, children simply trace around the outlines of the shapes. Later, children fill in the shapes using straight or curved lines.

Sandpaper Letters



Objectives

- To develop kinaesthetic and visual memory of each letter.
- To associate sound with the motor and visual memory of each letter. The tracing of letters follows the writing direction.
- The child is familiar with phonetic sounds from games; now the letter shapes are introduced via this effective multi-sensory approach in preparation for writing.

Use

Select 2 to 3 letters that are different in shape and sound, to facilitate discrimination. Encourage the child to trace throughout the presentation.

Large Moveable Alphabet - LMA



Objectives

- To consolidate and refine the knowledge of letters and the corresponding sound.
- To support transition from Sandpaper Letters to use of the Large Moveable Alphabet

Use

By selecting individual letters and arranging them on a mat, children build words, phrases and eventually sentences. This allows them to focus on identifying the sounds within words and matching these sounds to the appropriate letters, without being limited by their developing handwriting skills.



Literacy Resources
THE PINK SERIES

All words in this series are of two- or three-letter phonetic words: Vowel/Consonant and Consonant/Vowel/Consonant (CVC).

Pink Box 1

Objectives

- To build words with the Large Moveable Alphabet by segmenting the word for each object into their individual sounds (writing).



Use

The child is invited to explore the objects, name each of them and choose two or three.

The educator demonstrates how to sound out the first sound of the word and to find the corresponding letter in the Large Moveable Alphabet and continues to support the child to decode sounds in the correct order when necessary while the child finishes the activity.

Pink Box 2

This is the same as Pink Box 1 but uses picture cards instead of objects.

Objectives

- To build the word for each picture with the Large Moveable Alphabet

Use

Its use is the same as in Pink Box 1 but is introduced when the child is more independent.

Pink Box 3



Objectives

- This is the first reading exercise.

  The teacher supports the blending of the sounds.

Use

The child is allowed the objects in Pink Box 3. The objects are then placed in order on the table. The educator demonstrates how to cover the first letter and sound out the last two.

Pink Box 4

This is the same as Pink Box 3 but uses picture cards instead of objects.

Objectives

- To further practice reading

Use

The child is allowed to explore the pictures in Pink Box 4. The pictures are then placed in an order on the table.

The child should be more independent in the reading here, with the educator supporting as above if needed.



Pink Picture Card

Objectives

- Further reading of C/V/C words.
- Progression to page format with more pictures and words.



Use

The child is guided to look at and name each picture in order and agrees with the educator on the word to use.

The child then reads one card at a time and matches it to the corresponding picture.

Pink Box 5

Objectives

- To read without any visual prompt.
- To read silently.
- To read for comprehension.



Use

The educator demonstrates how to unfold the paper and read it quietly, showing movement of lips. The paper that has just been read is to be placed in the lid. As per the objectives, the child reads silently without any visual prompt for the purpose of comprehension.

Reading Lists

Material for this activity

- 11 cm x 25 cm pink card with a vertical list of CVC words.



Use

This activity is explained and the list is read from the top. Different lists can be created to reinforce onset and rime as well as to reinforce medial or final sound.

Sight Words

These are high-frequency words that are not phonetic and therefore the child needs to be supported in their reading. Some examples are: he, she, has, they, I, me, are, to, of… Sight words can be presented via a Three-Period Lesson*.

Perhaps the most frequent (and most indispensable to continue with the activities in the pink series – phrases and sentences) are the articles 'the' and 'a'. In the next page you can find an example of a game you can play to introduce these two sight words.

***Three-Period Lesson:** A teaching strategy used to introduce and reinforce new vocabulary or concepts in three stages:

1. naming the concept,
2. asking the learner to identify it, and
3. asking the learner to recall and name it independently.

Example: To teach the articles 'a' and 'the', the educator first introduces them ("This is a. This is the."), then asks the learner to identify each article ("Point to the." "Show me a."), and finally invites the learner to name them independently ("Which article is this?").

A / The

Things Needed:

- grey cards with the new words ‘a’ and ‘the’
- Objects which could include 3 rings, 4 clips, 3 lids, 4 flags, 1 mat, 1 bud and 1 dog

Objectives:

- to recognise the words, which cannot be read phonetically, by sight
- knowledge of these sight words prepares the child to read phrases and sentences

Method:

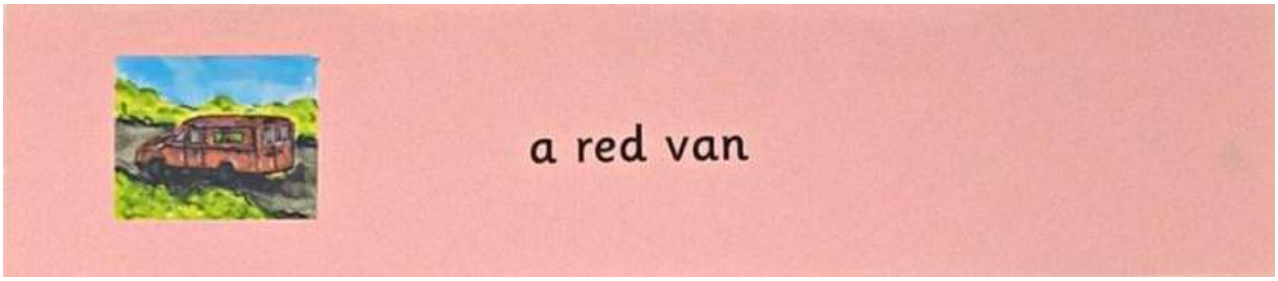
1. The child is invited to explore the content and take all objects out, suggesting grouping the same objects together to create order.
2. The child is asked to find a clip, the mat, a ring, the bud, a lid, etc.
3. The ‘the’ card and objects are placed in one group and the ‘a’ card and objects are placed in another group.

Remember: you use ‘the’ when there is only one object or to indicate a specific noun and use ‘a’ when it is one of many.

Pink Phrase Strips

A phrase is ‘a group of words that is part of, rather than the whole of, a sentence’ (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/phrase).

Materials for this activity include strips with phrases and a picture to aid comprehension.



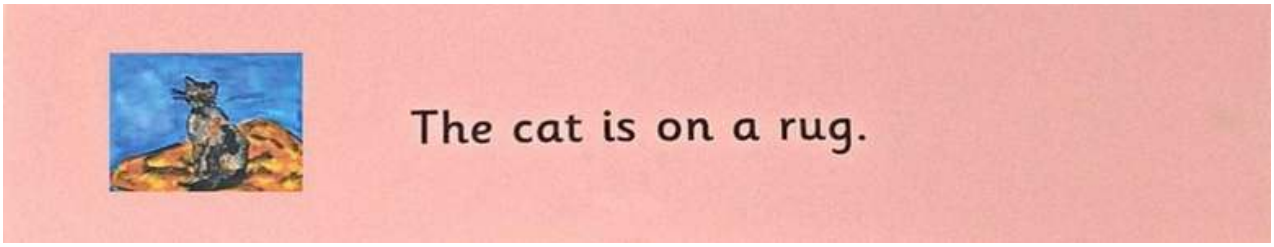
Capital Letters



Capital letters are introduced with Sandpaper Letters or anytime the occasion arises, for example the initial letter of their name, of their friends and family members' names, days of the week, and months. The child is prepared to encounter capital letters when using the next activity in the sequence, the pink sentence strips.

Pink Sentence Strips

A sentence is: 'a group of words, usually containing a verb, that expresses a thought in the form of a statement, question, instruction, or exclamation and starts with a capital letter when written.'



Pink Level Books

These first books introduce the child to reading books. By sitting together, the adult begins to read and encourages the child to read every word independently, using the pictures as a guide to the text. The story can be discussed, introduced to the child, to provide a meaningful context for reading and enjoying the experience as a 'reader'.



Literacy Resources
THE BLUE SERIES

Since English is NOT a phonetic language, when ready the child is introduced to the concept that letters may make a different sound (other than their usual phonetic sound) according to the position they hold within certain words or according to which other letter they are placed in conjunction with.

The blue series builds on the child's previous phonetic knowledge to scaffold reading and writing of longer phonetic words and to introduce consonant groups that make NEW (non-phonetic) sounds.

New phonetic elements:

Name	Definition	Elements
Double Consonant Blends	elements made up of 2 different consonants that keep each of their phonetic sounds.	Initial Blends: GL, BR, SC, FR, PL, CR, BL, SK, ST... Final Blends: FT, CT, ND...
Triple Consonant Blends	elements made up of 3 different consonants that keep each of their phonetic sounds	SPL, SPR, SCR, ...
Double Consonants	elements made up of 2 identical consonants that keep their phonetic sounds and are pronounced once	LL, BB, TT, MM and CK

Non-phonetic elements:

Name	Definition	Elements
Consonant Digraphs	elements made up by 2 different consonants that create a NEW sound	CH, SH, PH, TH, _NG, _NK...
Consonant Trigraphs	element made up of 3 consonants that create a NEW sound	TCH
Schwa Vowel	a non-stressed vowel sound	LEMON, KITTEN, FUNNEL, SANDAL,...

Other elements:

Name	Definition	Elements
Compound Words	words made up of two separate words and written as one	sandpit, lunchbox, rucksack, sunset, ...

Sequence of the Blue Series

The materials for each activity in the Blue series are the same as for the Pink Series.

Literacy Resources

INTRODUCTION TO GRAMMAR

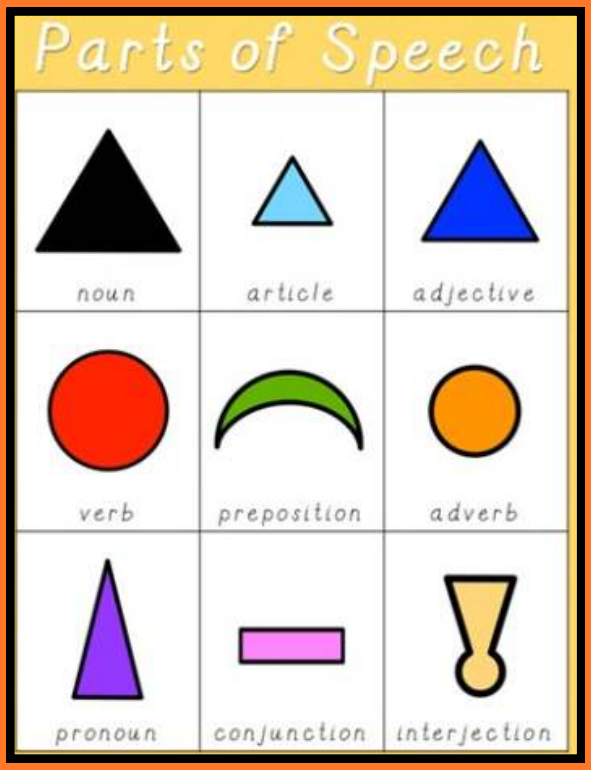
Grammar is defined as: 'The study or use of the rules about how words change their form and combine with other words to make sentences.' (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/grammar)

Children use grammar on a daily basis as they speak; they have an instinctive understanding of how sentences are structured as they acquire language and all their complexities in a very natural manner. With the grammar material, we are now helping the child to unpick those grammatical rules in a more formal way.

Now that the child has developed writing and reading skills s/he is introduced to the parts of speech and their function within a sentence; each one is colour coded, to help the child to classify them and to better perceive and remember the order in which these parts form the sentence.

The Montessori Grammar Symbols





Parts of speech and colour coding

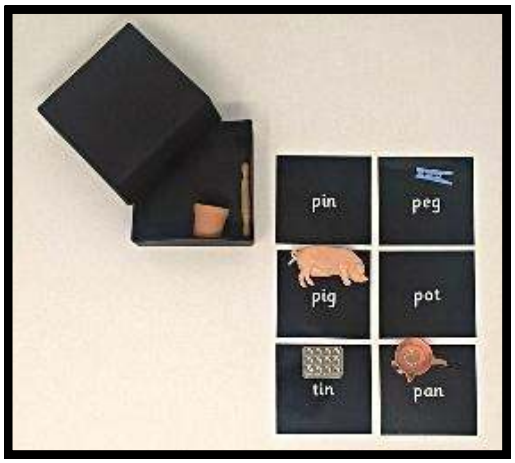
For each part of speech below, find a definition and record it here.

Part of speech with colour coding	Definition
Articles	
Adjectives	
Verbs	
Adverbs	
Conjunctions	
Prepositions	
Punctuation	

Noun Box 1

For this resource to be introduced, the child must be able to read cards from the pink and blue series.

Black Box 1 contains Pink level words while Black Box 2 contains Blue level words.



Objectives

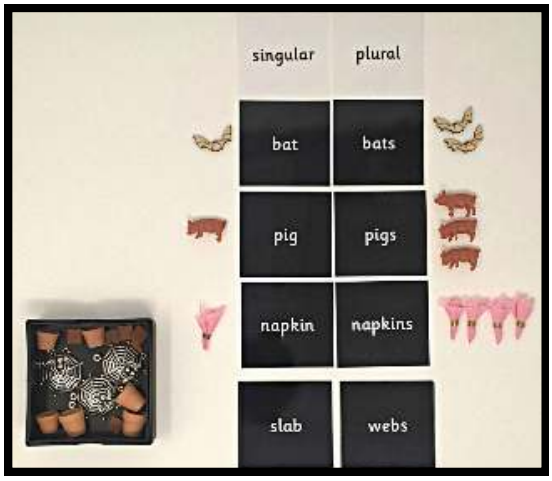
- To read the word and pair it with the object.

Use

The objects can be preselected and placed on a mat, in a box or left around in the environment. After the pairing is done, the educator is to point out that they are 'naming words' or 'nouns'.

Nouns - Singular and Plural

Now that the child knows what nouns are from the previous activity this common rule is introduced.



Objectives

- To introduce the concept of singular and plural and rule of adding 's' to a singluar word

Use

This activity must be presented in a very precise way in order for the child to identify the simple rule for plurals.

Adjective Boxes

This is the natural progression from nouns.



Objectives

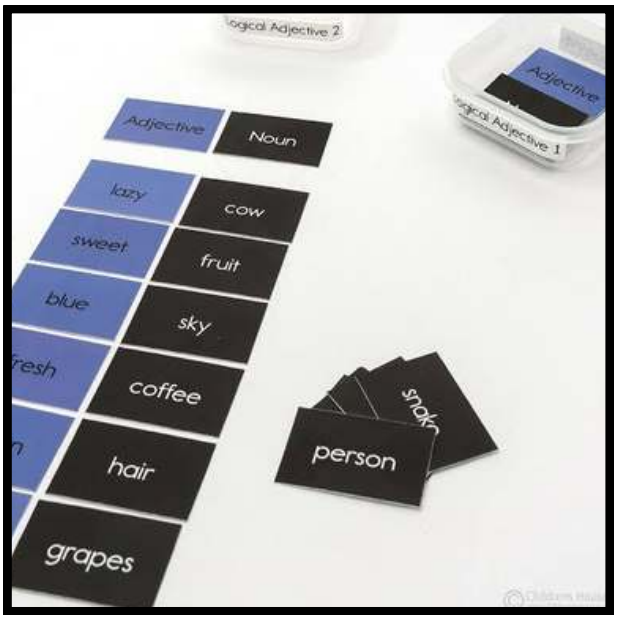
- To introduce the concept that adjectives describe objects.

Use

After reading the adjectives, the child is guided to place the card on the left of the object (in accordance with English grammar rules). The educator then explains that they are describing words that tell what is special about the object.

Noun and Adjective Box / Game 1

This resource helps the child to combine previous knowledge and consolidate. This box contains a set of adjective cards and a set of noun cards, both at pink and blue level. It also includes the header cards 'Adjectives' and 'Nouns'.



Objectives

- To use adjectives to describe nouns and to reinforce their position.

Hints

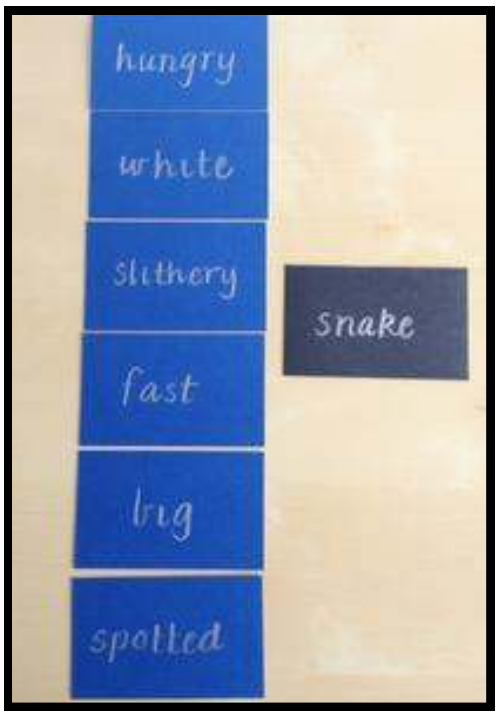
The educator must follow the child in exploring possible matches of words.

Noun and Adjective Box / Game 2

This resource is similar to the previous activity but the child is instructed to choose one noun only.

Objectives

- To use more than one adjective to describe an object



Hints

The child explores and chooses the describing words that they see fit for that noun.

The educator then invites the child to read the phrases and think about which adjectives sound right.

Verb Box

The next function of speech to be introduced is the verb. This activity is a game using a red box with red cards with verbs written on them. In Box 1 one can find Pink level words while in Box 2 one can find Blue level words.

Objectives

- To understand and use verbs as doing words or action words

Hints

This activity can be played with a small group of children. every child plays the action on their own picked up card, making sure other children ddo not see the card, so that the team mates guess the action / verb.

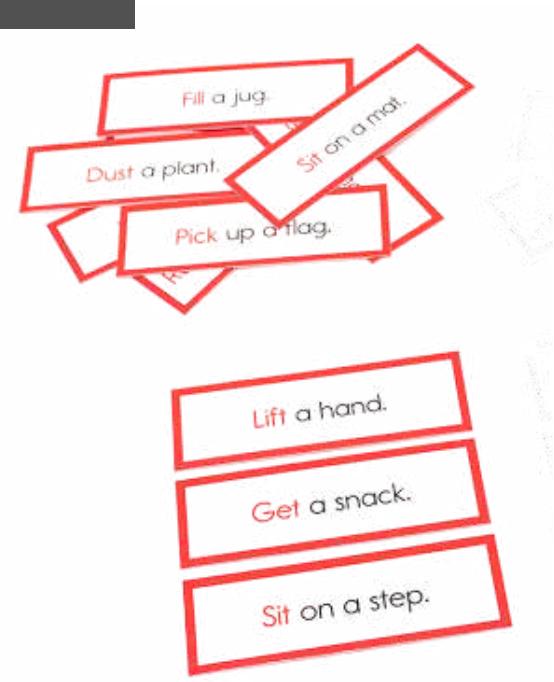


Verb Requests

This resource is similar to the previous activity but instead of one word, in the box the child will find phrases or sentences.

Therefore the child progresses from single words to use verb commands and request sentences.

Once again, this game can be played in a small group of children.

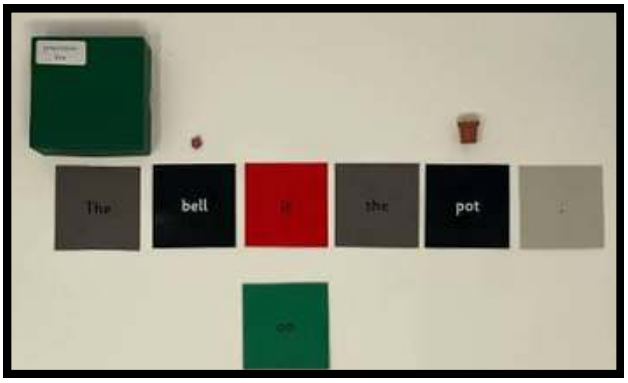


Preposition Box

The next part of speech in line is the preposition.

Objectives

- To introduce the function of prepositions
- To become familiar with the structure of a sentence



Hints

It is a fun game to play where each preposition changes the position of one of the objects in relation to the other. This can be seen more clearly in the video presented with this module.

The Farm Box

In this activity, the objects and animals are set on a table. Colour coded cards for nouns, adjectives, verbs, articles and prepositions are prepared as can be seen in the below picture. Words must be at pink and blue level to be accessible for children. In the final activity, the child uses all knowledge to build a grammatically correct sentence independently.

Objectives

- To consolidate understanding of each part of speech, their position in a sentence and to build full sentences.

Hints

The material is explored also by younger children, supporting them in extending vocabulary. It can also be used with each part of speech as it is introduced with other early grammar activities, for examply using only Black noun cards.



Literacy Resources

THE GREEN SERIES

The green series introduces the child to all other vowel sounds (phonemes*) and their corresponding combination of letters (graphemes), which form most of the English language.

***phoneme**: sound made up of vowels (and sometimes consonants are part of it too) that make a new sound, so, this element is non-phonetic.

Here are some examples of phonemes for some of the vowels:

Vowel o	Vowel a	Vowel e
oo	ar	ee
ou	ai	er
oa	au	_e
or/e	al/l	ea
oi	ae	ei
ow	a_e	
o_e		

You would notice that some phonemes have a different spelling for the same sound and some have the same spelling but a different sound. The young child needs support in making sense of all these inconsistencies: the Montessori method provides an ordered and systematic approach that tackles one element at a time, encourages plenty of repetition to consolidate understanding before adding something new.

Sequence of the Green Series

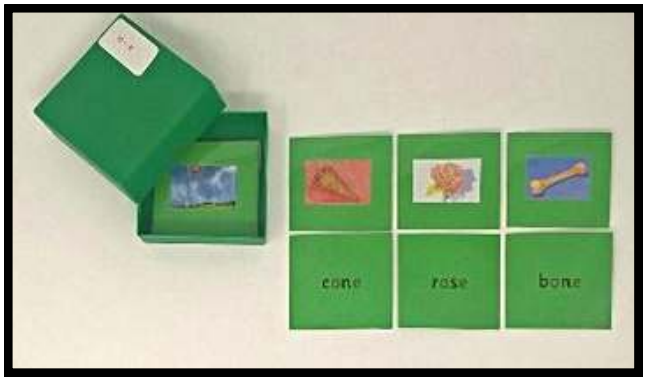
The green series starts with a reading activity, so that the new phoneme can be isolated and introduced to the child.

Phoneme Boxes

This is a reading exercise to introduce spelling for new a vowel sound.

Objectives

- To introduce spelling, grapheme for the new vowel sound



Hints

The new phoneme on the lid of the box is introduece to the child. The phoneme is highlighted in a different colour in every word.



Small Moveable Alphabets

Now that the child is familiar with the new sound and spelling, s/he can practise writing.

Objectives

- To build words with the same phoneme/grapheme introduced previously.
- To develop spelling strategies by identifying patterns

Hints

First, the child is to be reminded of the new phoneme introduced by referring to the lid of the phoneme box.

Then using the pictures in the phoneme box itself, the child is guided to hear the new phoneme and use their favourite colour to build it. The rest of the word is written in the other colour. The new element being highlighted supports learning and memorisation visually.



Verb Requests

Every list contains words with one spelling for each phoneme, for example 'ai' in train, rain, sail, etc. In these lists, the spelling of the new phoneme is written in a contrasting colour to reinforce learning and memory.

Writing Booklets

Children are invited to create a small booklet in the AEL area for each spelling for each phoneme, which is written on the cover. Children write their own words in the booklet they create.

Green Phrase and Sentence Strips

The Green Phrase Strips and the Green Sentence Strips follow the same methodology used in the Pink Series (pgs 27-28).

Phonemes in Envelopes

Consider the importance of being familiar with a variety of phonemes and graphemes, with which the child has worked separately. The materials required for this activity are a green envelope with a phoneme symbol written on it and lists of words for each corresponding grapheme.

Objectives

- To become familiar with the fact that same sounds can have different spellings



Hints

The child can work independently or with other children in this activity.

Literacy Resources
LATER GRAMMAR

The following are the differences between Early Grammar and Later Grammar in the Montessori Literacy Curriculum.

Early Grammar	Later Grammar
Pink and Blue level words	Green level words
All boxes have concrete objects	Some boxes do not need objects
Focuses on the function of the parts of speech	Focuses on precise terminology
Educator is to read the header cards and explain	Child is able to read header cards with understanding
	Adverbs are introduced

Sequence of Later Grammar

1. Nouns
2. Nouns Singular and Plural
3. Adjectives
4. Adjectives and Nouns
5. Verbs and Commands
6. Adverbs
7. Prepositions
8. Theme Box

Adverbs Box

This activity is made up of an orange bos and orange cards with adverbs written on them.



Objectives

- To offer a concrete physical experience to understand the concept of adverbs

Hints

A verb is chosen, for example 'walk'. Each child is invited to read in turn their own adverb card and perform the action. Other children are encouraged to try to guess the adverb. For example: slowly, confidently, gingerly, etc

Adverbs Box

This activity is similar to the Noun and Adjective Game (pgs 34 -35). It uses an orange box and orange cards for adverbs and red cards for verbs. The box also contains the headers 'Verbs' and 'Adverbs'.

Objectives

- To see the position of the adverb in relation to the verb

Hints

In the first game, all the material in the cards in the box are used and adverbs are placed next to the corresponding verb. In the second game, only one verb is chosen while a number of different corresponding adverbs are explored.

Conjunctions are also used between the adverbs.

Literacy Games

Games with the Sandpaper Letters

1. Hide the letters somewhere in the classroom / outside: ask the children to go and find one at a time. When they come to you with the letter ask them to trace them and to tell you their sound.

2. Give each child a letter and ask them to go find the object that starts with that sound from a tray you have made for this activity.

3. Have a child write a letter and, using tape, stick it to an object in the classroom that starts with that sound.

4. Place a few letters in a row with some distance between them; ask a child to throw a ball towards a specific letter.

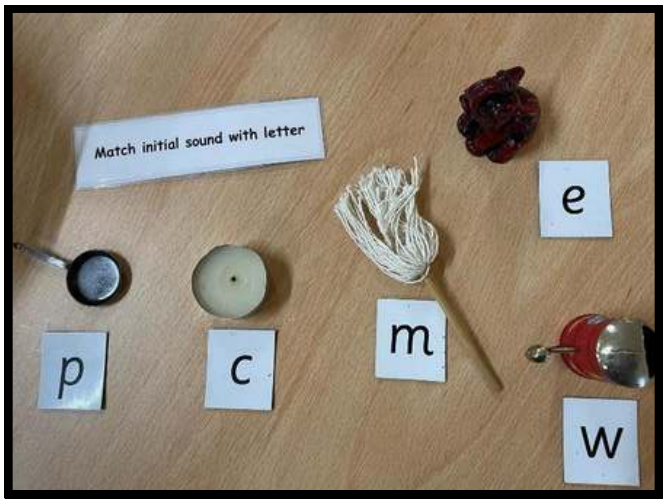
5. Think of more games with objects and movement to allow the child repetition and consolidation of phonetics.

Games with Letters

Matching game

- The child is to match the initial letter to the corresponding object.

For this game, the letters from the Large Moveable Alphabet can also be used.



Sorting game

In this game, the child is to sort the objects according to their initial letter.

For this game, Sandpaper Letters are used.





Letter lotto

For this game, pairs of cards similar to the picture on the left are needed. The cards are to be laid out on the table facing down. Children are to take turns turning two cards at a time. If the cards show the matching initial sound and picture, that child collects the cards.

This game also serves as a memory exercise.

Scavenger Hunt

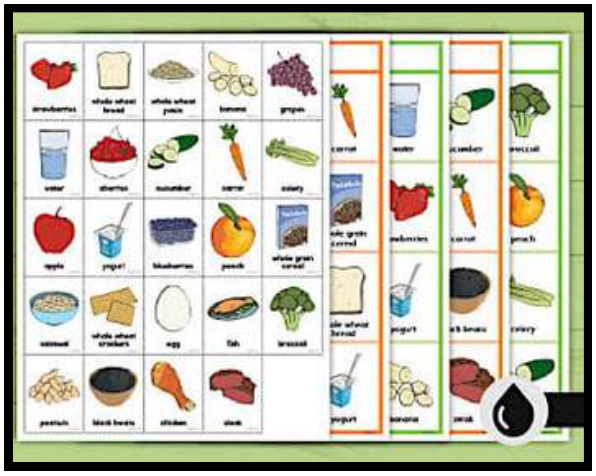
Another enjoyable activity for children is a scavenger hunt using the Large Moveable Alphabet. First, children are given the sandpaper letters to remind them of the letter sounds they need to look for. They are then encouraged to search for the matching moveable letters and pair them with the correct sandpaper letters. This activity can also be carried out outdoors, making the learning experience more engaging and interactive.



Letters with playdough

After the child has done some games with the Sandpaper letters, you can ask them to create letters with rolled playdough; you can do this in groups by placing a letter in the center of the table, asking the children to sound it and to make with the playdough.





Picture Bingo

Bingo papers may be printed from the internet as there are many available online. With the children, first name all the pictures, then say: "Do you have a food that starts with 'o'?" The child who has the orange places a counter on the photo.

Letter Bingo

This activity is similar to the previous game but instead of pictures, the children will ge given sheets with letters on them. It is played in the same manner as the previous game.

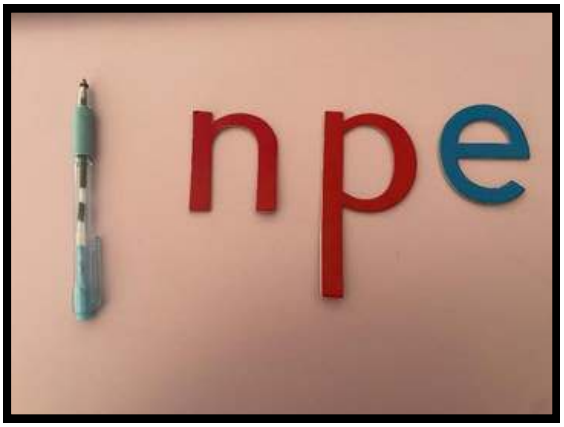


Word Building Games - Pink Box 1

Remember that this is a writing exercise, not a reading exercise. Help the child to find the letters that make a word by sounding out each of the 3 sounds separately. Do not decide for them.

Mixed Letter Word Game

Select the 3 letters that make up one word/object and ask the child to put them in the right order.





Vowel Changing Game

You can do this game with the initial and final letter of a word too, i.e. p e n/t/g... and h/p/m e n.

If you have, you can add the objects related to the words and have the child match them.

The same activities can be carried out for Pink Box 2 as well. However, the child should need little assistance in building words.

The Montessori Literacy Materials

CHARACTERISTICS SUPPORTING LITERACY STRATEGIES

The Montessori literacy materials are:

Concrete and sensorial

Montessori materials are intentionally designed as concrete, hands-on, and sensorial tools that allow children to explore, manipulate, and internalise abstract concepts through their senses. These materials enable children to learn through physical experience and self-correction rather than verbal instructions.

Reality-Based

All resources are real and functional as this will prepare the child for real life outside the classroom. Therefore, when objects or picture cards are found inside literacy boxes (such as miniature animal models, fruits and other everyday life objects) they are a true representation of the real thing.

> "Movement of the hand is essential. Little children revealed that the development of the mind is stimulated by the movement of the hands. The hand is the instrument of the intelligence. The child needs to manipulate objects and to gain experience by touching and handling."

Dr Maria Montessori,
The 1946 London Lectures, p 36



Reality Based ... continued

A child working within a Montessori environment would work with a cat model that looks like the first picture on the right as opposed to the cat in the second picture as it is more realistic.





Isolating one quality/concept and repetition

In Montessori education, isolation of one quality is a design principle where sensory materials focus on a single attribute—such as size, colour, texture, or sound—while keeping all other variables constant. This focus allows children to analyse specific sensations, fostering concentration, mental order, and cognitive discrimination by removing distractions.

In the literacy materials this principle is found in the isolation of each new literacy element that is first introduced. For example, in Blue Box 4, when the child is introduced to the digraph CH, every word card contains the sound CH and no other new element. Also, this new element is written in a different colour so that it stands out visually from the rest of the word. The repetitive nature of this activity, the isolation of the new concept and the colour coding enable the child to internalise learning more efficiently, both consciously and unconsciously.



Durable, aesthetically appealing and precise

All Montessori equipment is designed and manufactured with the utmost precision and attention to detail. The literacy material follows this principle too as the small objects found in boxes are attractive and interesting to the child, encouraging them to choose to work with the literacy boxes.

Each word card, strip, reading list and booklet follows precise measures for consistency and practicability. Each letter written follows a specific font for the same reasons.



> "...the brilliancy, the colours, and the beauty of gaily decorated objects are nothing more than "voices" which attract the attention of a child and encourage him to act."
>
> Dr Maria Montessori,
> The Discovery of the Child, p 85

Child-sized

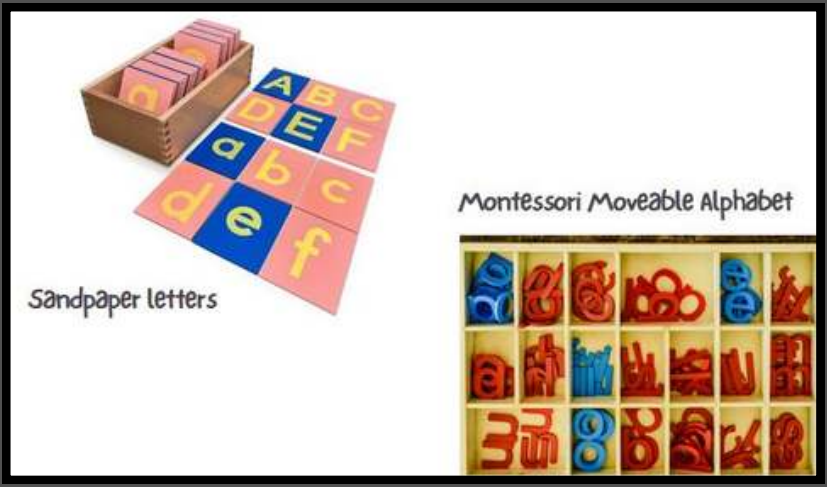
All Montessori materials are intentionally child-sized to foster independence, self-mastery, and concentration by matching the physical abilities of young children. The materials, furniture, and tools are scaled down for easy handling, manipulation, and access, reducing frustration and allowing children to work comfortably.

Colour-coded

The colours present in Montessori materials are a teaching and learning tool. Children in the early years still use their senses to gather information from their surrounding environment. Therefore, by using the chromatic sense, the children are able to classify objects and concepts more easily.

For example, in literacy, the colour coding strategy is present in these activities:

The Sandpaper Letters and the Large Moveable Alphabet where the consonants are in a different colour from the vowels.







The non-phonetic elements are written in a different colour from the rest of the word.

Each part of speech in the grammar materials is also written on different colour cards to enable categorisation







The different literacy levels have different coloured boxes so that the child can access activities at the appropriate level and see progressions.

Auto-didactic

Montessori materials are designed to be auto-didactic (self-teaching) and self-correcting, allowing children to learn independently without constant adult intervention, support and corrections.

Self-correcting

Materials also feature a 'control of error' mechanism, enabling children to recognise their own mistakes; this fosters independence, problem-solving skills, deep concentration and resilience. For instance, in literacy activities children are provided spell-check cards.

Scaffolded

Scaffolding in the Montessori approach is implemented in two ways:

1. Educators provide temporary assistance to help children master new skills when the child is ready; based on careful observation, the guide breaks tasks into smaller, manageable steps, modelling the action and gradually withdrawing help as the child builds confidence and independence.

2. Each concept is presented to the child through a variety of different activities that support learning and consolidation as a step-by-step process, where the child uses the knowledge acquired with the previous activity to work with a new exercise which will introduce a new skill.

Real-world applications

Real-world applications in learning bridge theoretical knowledge with practical experience, increasing student engagement, critical thinking, and retention; this way education becomes relevant to daily life and the future. This approach shifts learning from passive memorization to active learning. For example, the children are encouraged to use their emerging writing skills at every occasion during their day in the classroom.

They can write:

- Lists of ingredients for a cooking recipe
- Messages to teachers, family members and peers who are not in the classroom
- Wishing cards
- Informative signs within the classroom
- Names of animals, insects and plants







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This booklet provides a practical introduction to teaching and learning literacy through the Montessori approach. It explores effective strategies for developing language and literacy skills, the importance of indirect preparation, and an overview of the Montessori literacy curriculum and materials. Ideal for students, educators, and anyone interested in supporting children's language development through meaningful, hands-on learning experiences.

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