

# THE MAGIC of Montessori

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Tidy-up tips that will change your life

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# Children!

...they might be little, but their stuff is EVERYWHERE!

In my home, I have used 5 Montessori magic steps to organize all of my children's stuff (including outgrown clothes, school work, gifts (birthday, goodie bag etc), kids' meal toys, and all the other STUFF) that is involved in children's lives.

Maybe your child is so young that papers and school work are not even in the picture for you...this is the BEST time to start! Getting on top of the influx of STUFF now is a great way to go...the stuff only increases over time!

I'm a busy working mom with 2 children, and

**I know what you're feeling...**

And I can totally relate.

Like you, my home can accumulate school work, toys, outgrown clothes, and so much more stuff!

**So I've prepared some tips and suggestions that are easy to try and can really make the positive change in your home life that you are looking for.**

It's simple

It's clean

And it works like a charm

## **Now Let Me Breakdown How It Works...**

**Here is the foundation:**

### **The Five Montessori Steps to Success**

1. Limit the number
2. Basket, tray or bin
3. Rotate
4. Access
5. Order

### **And please note...**

Dr. Montessori was really on to something: based on her deep understanding of children, she figured out that adults play a **KEY** role in setting up the home environment where the child can pursue their interests and cultivate their skills.

In the Montessori world, we know that the set-up matters: how the space is set up can make or break the opportunity for independence.

## You Can See How It All Works Right Here.

### 1. Limit the number



- Young children truly enjoy an activity when it is limited in number. This allows them to really explore the toys and inspires creativity to work with them in different ways.
- Limiting the number of items in an activity also gives the child a better chance to put the activity away without any frustration or complication.
- If a game or activity comes with lots of parts, only put out the fewest number of parts needed and store away the rest.

## 2. Basket, tray or bin



- Once you've limited the number of items in an activity, it's time to place it in a self-contained basket, tray, or bin.
- Putting an activity on a tray or in a basket puts the focus and interest on the activity itself, not the packaging it came in.
- Easy-to-carry baskets, trays, or bins makes it a breeze for children to clean up and put away!

### 3. Rotate



- Once you limit items in an activity, use storage bins to store the extra pieces and parts.
- Now that the activities are limited you can rotate the contents regularly.
- Regular rotation keeps activities interesting to the child and keeps them engaged

## 4. Access



- Homes with siblings can still have activities available for each child within the same space.
- Once the activities have been limited and kept in a tray, bin, or basket, keep the older child's activities in a place where only they can reach, and keep the younger child's materials lower to the ground for easy access.
- If your home doesn't have ways in which to raise the activities of an older child, you can put their toys in a container that the younger child cannot open.



## 5. Order



- Once your child's items are in smaller quantities and in easier-to-handle containers, it's important to organize the space and determine where each activity will go: a place for everything and everything in its place.
- Children have a strong sense of order, and providing designated and consistent places for activities to be stored is directly linked to developing a logical mind.
- Also, the consistency of putting things in their place will avoid frustration and opposition when clean-up time comes around.



**Now!**

**Let's take a look at some simple tricks for powerful tidy-up tips for your home –**

With these 5 steps, timing is essential...

I realized, there are at least 5 categories of STUFF that constantly need putting away.

**Have you ever noticed: the stuff just keeps coming...and coming...and coming!**

I feel like every time my daughter leaves the house, she comes back with something MORE!

Here are some general categories of STUFF that comes:

1. School work – paper, art work, etc.
2. Toys – of all shapes and sizes
3. Books – library books and ones you own
4. Gifts – goodie bags, birthday gifts, holiday gifts
5. Clothes – outgrown, no longer fit

## **This Is Where It All Starts...**

**This is my overall organizing area in the garage.**

This is the place I immediately put things to be sorted out.

By having this area in the garage, I catch things BEFORE they get into the house.



On the small table, the left basket is for little objects that do not have a place in the home.

The basket on the right is a place that collect outgrown clothes or clothes I want to donate.

If I come across one piece of outgrown clothing, I immediately take it to the garage instead of keeping them in the closet – each item that leaves brings more joy for us.

And the container in the back is where I store paper goods.



When the baskets are full, I take action.

- the clothes get donated
- the small object collection: some are discarded, and some get recycled – i.e. for use in The Sound Game (“Can you bring me an object that starts with ‘ruh’?...the child selects ‘ring’...)



- paper goods ...

## **What to do with all the PAPER!**

Drawings, writing work, worksheets, and much more...

My first step is to examine the piece of paper/artwork/writing, and ask myself “Does this ‘spark joy’?”

The is the all-important question I learned from the book “The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up.”

As a parent, I know you want to keep EVERYTHING. This is a question that helped me to manage that urge.

So this is where I keep their precious work – the special ones that “spark joy”: I purchased a large folder/portfolio for each child to store the saved work.





## Books!

The main thing to keep in mind is ROTATION.

Let your local library help you to keep a rotating fresh collection of books for your kids.

We have a designated return-to-library basket where books go when they children are done with them.

Each of my daughters has a bag for our library trips that has a spot for their library card.

Of the many books that might be available, keep rotating to highlight different books over time.



**Another situation: what to do with goodie bags from birthday parties, trinkets, and freebie toys (i.e. from Kids Meals)?**

Here's the solution that has worked well for me:

I have a designated tray to place little things on a temporary basis.

For example, when my daughter comes home from a birthday party with a goodie bag: she came home and wanted to play with it right away.

When she was done playing with it that day, she put it on the tray – she can manage this step and getting it to the tray all by herself.

After a few days, I toss the items or find a good way to recycle them (i.e. The Sound Game), or put them in the object basket in the garage to figure out later.





## **Now for the gifts from your child's party....**

This year, Chelyn (age 9) invited 11 friends and received 11 gifts.

That's lots of things all at once! But thanks to our insanely-powerful managing system, we immediately processed all 11 gifts and enjoyed each one of them in turn.

Here's how it worked: Chelyn chose 3 gifts that she wants to play with and put them in the 3 baskets below. These three baskets are where items of current interest are stored.



## **...And where did the remaining 8 gifts go?**

The other toys go to the big storage bin in the garage where she keeps her things.

She rotates 3 items into these 3 baskets from the big storage bin - she is old enough to manage this system on her own.

## **Here's The Best Part...**

I usually revisit the girls' spaces and "things" once or twice a year.

I only have to spend 45-60 minutes each time I do this thanks to the systems in place.

I keep all of the things that I think the girls would like to use in the future in plastic bins in the garage. Everything I think they have outgrown I give away right away.

It is a constant weeding-out process, but well worth the effort. You will also start to look at the things you purchase differently.

We rarely buy "toys" and stick more to supplies and open-ended materials that will last over time.

## **And the good news is this...**

All of these systems for keeping things organized and tidy didn't come overnight.

It's been years of fine-tuning to figure out what works and what continues to work as my children's interests and needs change.

**You can start with just a small tiny step.**

## **The most important thing is to START.**

**You can do it** – you can overcome the constant influx of STUFF and maintain a peaceful home environment!

**Everyone wins when there's less clutter and more space for the things that truly spark joy.**

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