



Western Pennsylvania  
Montessori School



# Parent Guide *for Distance Learning*





## **WPMS Parent Guide for Distance Learning**

*This is a printable file created by Angela Chang, MOMtessoriLife, for the exclusive use of Western PA Montessori School staff and students.*

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## Introduction

*Well, here we are – about to embark on a distance learning experience! These are strange times, and none of us really knows the best way to go about this. We’ve worked hard to put together a curriculum to use in case distance learning becomes a necessity for a couple of weeks, and we want to provide as much support to you as possible. We put together this guide to help provide direction, but it doesn’t need to be a strict rule book. There will be some parts of this that you are already doing at home, and others that will be completely new to you. Read it with an open mind and adopt the parts that make sense for your family life and the good of your child. As with any new experience, there will be a learning curve for all of us, and it will take some time to navigate the new normal. But you can do it! We can do it together.*

## Table of Contents

<b>HOW TO NAVIGATE OUR GOOGLE CLASSROOM.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>MONTESSORI CRASH COURSE.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>SETTING UP YOUR DISTANCE LEARNING PREPARED ENVIRONMENT .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>A DAY IN THE LIFE WITH SAMPLE SCHEDULES.....</b>	<b>14</b>

## How to Navigate Our Google Classroom

Each morning, you will need to log in to your Google Classroom in time for your Live Circle Time video call. This is how your teachers will take attendance each day, and it will be a chance for your child to see her entire class together. The link to the video call will be the first Assignment listed for that day.

The screenshot shows the 'Sample Class' interface with the 'Classwork' tab selected. A list of assignments is displayed for 'Day 1' through 'Day 10'. The first assignment for Day 1, 'Circle Time Zoom Video Call at 9:00am', is circled in red. All assignments have a 'No due date' status.

Day	Assignment	Due Date
Day 1	Circle Time Zoom Video Call at 9:00am	No due date
Day 2		
Day 3	A Day in the Life of a Farmer	No due date
Day 4	Create a Barn	No due date
Day 5	First year : Cards and Counters	No due date
Day 6		
Day 7	Second year: On the Farm number cards	No due date
Day 8	Third year: Skip Counting Puzzle	No due date
Day 9	Optional Assignments	No due date
Day 10	One-on-One Meeting Sign Up	No due date

The screenshot shows the details for the 'Circle Time Zoom Video Call at 9:00am' assignment. The assignment is by Angela Chang, posted at 12:40 PM, and is worth 100 points. The assignment description includes a Zoom meeting link: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/xxxxxx/xxxx/xxx/x>. The meeting ID is XXX XXX XXXX and the passcode is XXXXXX.

**Circle Time Zoom Video Call at 9:00am**

Angela Chang • 12:40 PM

100 points

Join us for virtual Circle time at 9:00am with this link:

Topic: Circle Time  
Time: Sep 7, 2020 09:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/xxxxxx/xxxx/xxx/x>

Meeting ID: XXX XXX XXXX  
Passcode: XXXXXX

After the video call, your child will have several assignments to complete. If your child is not in the Kindergarten or Toddler classes, some of the assignments will be broken up by first, second, or third year.

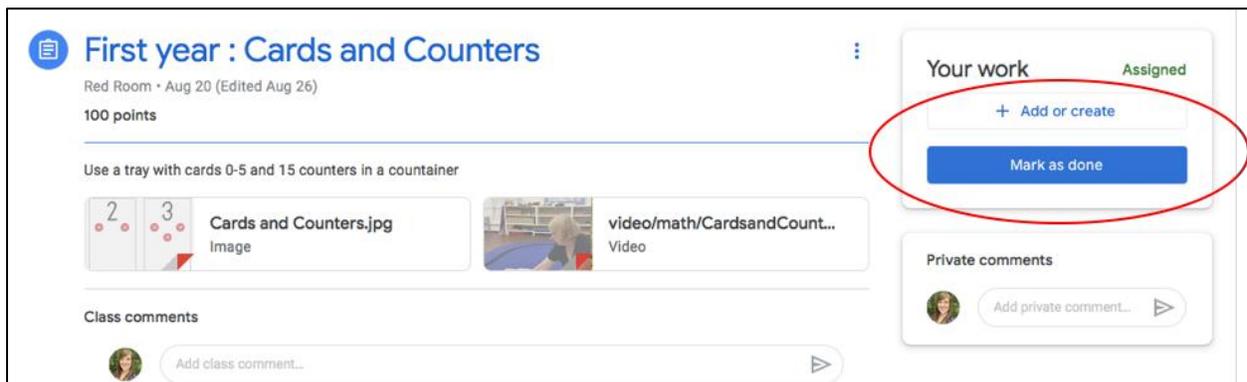
The screenshot shows a classwork page for 'Sample Class' with tabs for 'Stream', 'Classwork', and 'People'. The 'Classwork' tab is active, displaying a list of assignments for 'Day 1' through 'Day 10'. A red oval highlights the assignments for 'Day 5' through 'Day 8':

Day	Assignment	Due Date
Day 1	Circle Time Zoom Video Call at 9:00am	No due date
Day 2		
Day 3	A Day in the Life of a Farmer	No due date
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Day 9	Optional Assignments	No due date
Day 10	One-on-One Meeting Sign Up	No due date

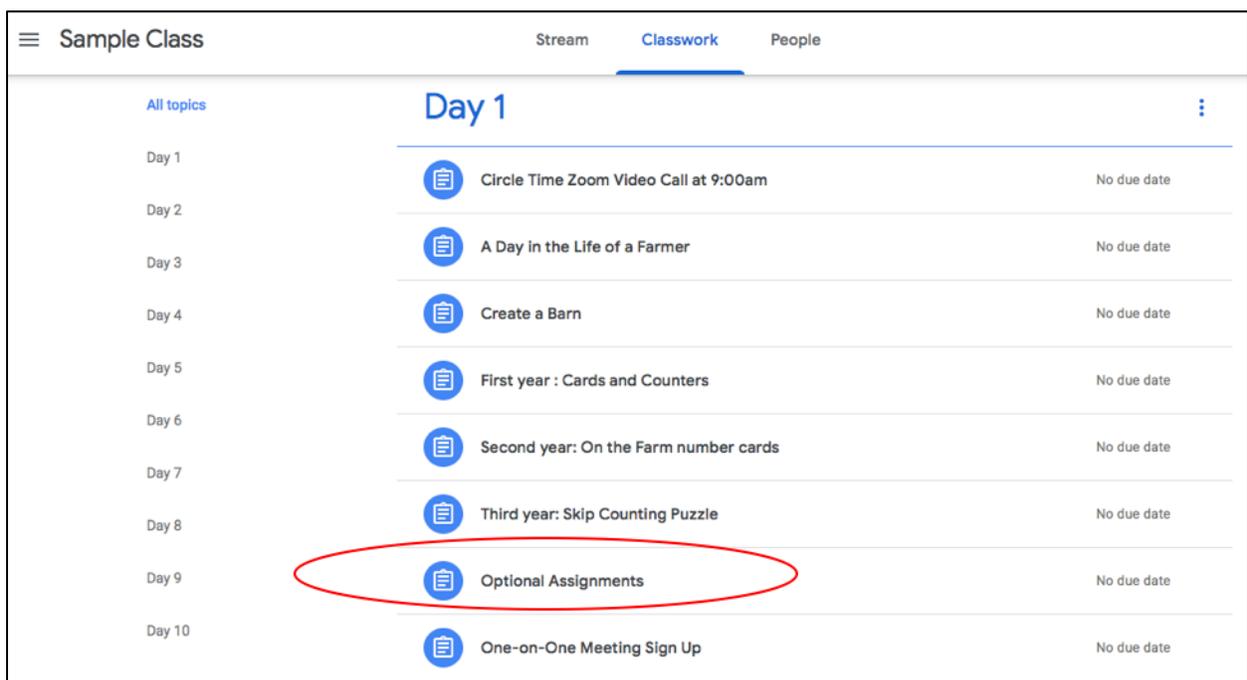
Each assignment will contain a photograph of the work so you can find it in your Materials Packet as well as written instructions or a video lesson.

The screenshot shows the assignment page for 'First year : Cards and Counters'. The assignment is titled 'First year : Cards and Counters' and is worth 100 points. The instructions are: 'Use a tray with cards 0-5 and 15 counters in a container'. The assignment includes two attachments: an image titled 'Cards and Counters.jpg' and a video titled 'video/math/CardsandCount...'. A red oval highlights the instructions and the attachments. On the right side, there is a 'Your work' section with 'Assigned' status, a '+ Add or create' button, and a 'Mark as done' button. Below that is a 'Private comments' section with an 'Add private comment...' button.

You can take a photo or video of the work and upload it by clicking the “+ Add or create” button, or just click the “Done” button when it has been completed. [TIP: If you are having trouble getting your child to do his work, help him get excited about it by saying, “When you finish, we can take a picture to show Ms. \_\_\_\_\_!” You can even let your child take his own picture.]



Then your child may choose a couple of the “Optional Assignments” to complete each day.





## Optional Assignments



Angela Chang • 12:39 PM

1. The Farm in Art: Winslow Homer- Cultural Studies Find the cows in the pictures
2. Patterns: What comes Next Tractor kinder 2
3. Sensorial: Find things around your house or outside and put them in order of length
4. Farm Lacing cards: Practical Life



The Farm in Art Winslow Ho...  
Image



Patterns with Tractor.JPG  
Image



video/sensorial/length.MOV  
Video



Farm Lacing Cards.JPG  
Image

Your teacher would love to see your child individually during the week! You can sign up for a one-on-one video call through the link listed under “One-on-One Meeting Sign Up.” During this time, the teacher can provide an individualized lesson presentation or simply chat or answer any questions you may have about the materials.



## One-on-One Meeting Sign Up



Angela Chang • 12:40 PM

100 points

I would love to see your child individually during the week! During this time, I can provide an individualized lesson presentation or simply chat or answer any questions you may have about the materials.

[signupgenius.com/xxxxxxx/xxx](https://signupgenius.com/xxxxxxx/xxx)

## Montessori Crash Course



Maria Montessori noticed how young children observed the world around them and learned things without anyone “teaching” them in the ages from birth to age 6. This is called the “first plane of development,” and Montessori described it as the time of the “absorbent mind.” Rather than needing to be taught new concepts, children under the age of 6 simply absorb everything in the environment by experiencing it. This is why the Montessori materials and lessons include so many hands-on activities – the children learn by doing.

Within your Google Classroom, you may see some subject areas that are unfamiliar to you. Let’s take a look at some of the main areas of

learning in a Montessori classroom so you can understand why this work is important for your preschooler.

Practical life exercises instill care for self, for others, and for the environment. These activities include some of the daily routines the child has already observed at home: preparing food, washing dishes, dressing oneself, and practicing accepted societal rules of grace and courtesy. Practical life activities serve to refine muscular coordination and to develop powers of concentration and control in the child that he will need for other work in the classroom.

Sensorial materials are designed to develop cognitive skills and to help children classify and order impressions by touching, seeing, smelling, tasting, listening, and exploring all the physical properties of their environment.

Language development is vital to all human development. The Montessori classroom is rich in oral language opportunities, allowing the child to experience conversation and stories. Children effortlessly link sound to symbol while tracing sandpaper letters with their fingers, thus encouraging the natural progression of written expression and reading skills.

Mathematical activities help children learn and understand the concepts of math by manipulating concrete materials. The work helps children acquire a solid understanding of basic mathematical principles and prepares them for later abstract reasoning.

Science, Geography, and Cultural activities serve as an introduction to begin to allow the young child to understand the world around him. This in turn allows the child to be able to care for the Earth and its inhabitants.

You may have noticed that the way we speak to and interact with young children in a Montessori environment can be quite different from the way you may be more accustomed to doing it. This is because Maria Montessori made the case for offering the child our deepest respect as we work to guide him along in the world, and the words we use to do that matter. Here are some terms and phrases you may hear in the Montessori environment – these can easily be used in your home, as well!

**"Work"**  
All materials for the children's use are called work. Each object has a specific purpose and the child takes joy in choosing his own work.

Rather than telling a child what he is *not* allowed to do, tell him what you *would* like him to do. For example, say, "Put your feet on the floor," rather than "Do not stand on the chair."

**"Positive Redirection"**

**"You may..."  
"You can..."**  
"You may" places the emphasis on the child and his ability to make decisions. This is preferred over "You may not." It does not leave the child guessing what he may or may not do. For example, "You may clean up when you are finished." If you say, "You may not throw your food on the floor," the child is left to wonder what he may do instead.

When things are not permitted, they are usually referred to in neutral terms. For example, "The button work is not available right now. Please choose another work."

**"Not available"  
"Not a choice"**

**"No thank you"**  
When it is necessary to say "No" to a child, we say, "No thank you."

## Setting Up your Distance Learning Prepared Environment



We need to be at home for a while doing distance learning the Montessori way, so how can you set your child up for success during this time? Find a small area in your home to use as the learning space, then create a prepared environment. A prepared environment is another Montessori term which simply means the space has been designed to meet the needs of the child. How can you do this at home?

Find a small shelf, bench, coffee table, or other area that can hold your child's work for each day. Make sure it is a space that your child can easily reach on his own. Set up each work for the day on its own tray (more on that in a bit) so it is clear what pieces go together, and line them up on the shelf. Make sure there is room on the floor to spread out a work rug (DIY version below) or for a table and chair that your child can sit in without assistance. This is the basic prepared environment that you can use for distance learning.

But you don't need to stop there! You can also prepare other parts of your home to allow your child to be more independent. In the kitchen, put self-serve snacks in a low cupboard along with your child's dishes, cups, and silverware. Invite her to get out her own dishes when it's time for a meal! Keep a small water dispenser or pitcher on a low shelf so she can pour her own drink when she's thirsty. Don't forget about spills! Make sure you have a few washcloths or a small mop available for her to clean up any water that misses the cup.

In the bathroom, make sure your child has a stepstool so she can climb onto and off the toilet without assistance. Teach her how to wipe, flush, and wash hands – and don't forget to provide access to that sink with a stepstool. If this is something you think your child has never done independently before, I bet your child's teacher can prove you wrong – if you face resistance, say, “Show me how you do this at school!”

There are many things that your children do at school that you may have never tried at home. Here's how you can get started at home to try to keep distance learning as familiar as possible for your child:

1. The prepared environment: You've already worked on that a bit, but we were missing a few key elements.
  - The tray! Shop your home to find serving trays or baskets that can be temporarily re-purposed to hold school materials. Check the Google Classroom for the next day's lessons, gather the materials needed from your Materials Packets, and set each work up on its own tray or basket.
  - The work rug! You probably don't own a Montessori work rug, but you can use a bath towel or small rug instead. This

is used when the child is working on the floor rather than at a table, and it helps to define the work space.

## 2. Restoring the Work

- At school, your child is expected to bring her work from the shelf to a work space, complete it, and then return that work to the shelf before choosing another. This is definitely a concept that can be applied at home! If your child is struggling with this, make her work space smaller so there's just not enough room for her to have more than one material out at the same time.

## 3. Uninterrupted Work Cycle

- It's quite difficult to get your work done when you are constantly being interrupted, and this is as true for children as it is for adults. Decide when you'll do your distance learning time, and stick with it until the work is done rather than doing one work in the morning and another in the evening. Having a consistent schedule can help your child to understand, "This is the time for work, and after that we'll do..."

## 4. Education for the Whole Child

- Even if your child attends school all day, she's not doing academic work that **whole** time! Much of her day is spent in practical life tasks, observing others, practicing social interactions, and moving her body. Your "work cycle" at home won't be 6 hours long – just an hour or an hour and a half should be enough for her to complete her academic assignments for the day.

## A Day in the Life of a Montessori Distance Learning Family

Here is a sample schedule or flow to your day that you can use while distance learning (there are two alternatives at the end). This is here to serve as a guideline, not an exact rule or timeline, so there are no specific times listed in the graphic. Something that takes you an hour one day may take just 45 minutes the next, and that’s fine! You don’t need to have consistent timing in order to follow this schedule – just find an order of activities that works for your family, and try to keep that general order consistent.

Early Morning Routine	Practical Life
Morning Exercise	Focused Movement Activity
Work Cycle	Live Circle Time & Assignments
Free Play	Build, Bake, Create, or Play Outside
Lunch	Practical Life
Quiet Time	Nap or Independent Reading/Rest Time
Chores	Practical Life
Outside Play	Free Movement
Dinner	Practical Life
Family Time	TV / Read Aloud / Board Games
Bedtime Routine	Tuck In, Prep for Tomorrow

Here's what each part of this schedule could look like:

### **Early Morning Routine: Practical Life**

Follow your normal routine up to when you would normally go to school. Involve your child in those practical life tasks! Examples of some things you can invite your child to take part in:

- *Making the Bed*: Using slow and exact movements, take the sheets and pull them all the way up to the pillow. Repeat with the bedspread. Tidy any stuffed animals or extra pillows.
- *Self-Dressing*: Model self-dressing in a way that your child can replicate with his own clothes. Place the pants flat on the floor. Sit down. Put one foot all the way through until your foot pokes out the end. Repeat with other leg. Stand and pull pants up. Put shirt on the floor or bed. Open the bottom and lift over head. Pull down until head comes out the top. Put one arm in, then the other.
- *Brush Teeth*: Is your bathroom set up for success? Make sure your child can reach the sink, his toothbrush, and the toothpaste.
- *Brush Hair*: Look in the mirror. Notice that your hair is tangled. Pick up brush (place one where your child can reach), brush hair until smooth. Older children can put in a barrette or ponytail.
- *Eat Breakfast*: Let your child help you scramble some eggs or mix up some pancakes. Invite her to set the table with the dishes she'll need for that meal.
- *Unload the Dishwasher*: Let your child put her own dishes away in a low cupboard. Show her that your silverware has a special drawer, and let her sort the utensils into the correct places.

- *Animal Care*: Make sure your pet has enough food and water.

### **Morning Exercise: Focused Movement Activity**

If you have a little bit of time left before your scheduled Circle Time call with your teacher, do some kind of focused movement activity together. Go for a walk or do a Cosmic Kids Yoga video. This helps to get out some wiggles and let the body settle in for some work. Connecting before school will help make the whole day go better!

### **Work Cycle: Live Circle Time & Assignments**

Log on to Google Classroom and join the class video call for Circle Time. After that, you can complete the assignments for the day in your prepared environment. While the rest of this schedule can be switched around, it is recommended that your child completes her assignments right after the group call to keep up the momentum and let that uninterrupted work cycle take place distance-learning style. Remember, at home this should only take an hour or a bit more.

### **Free Play: Build, Bake, Create, or Play Outside**

Clean up your learning space and get creative! Build with open-ended toys like blocks, LEGOs, or magnet tiles. Bake cookies or banana bread together. Do an art project. Go outside for some free play.

### **Lunch: Practical Life**

This is another opportunity to involve your child in some practical life tasks around the meal time. Here are some things she can help with:

- *Food Prep*: Give her a cheese spreading knife or a butter knife and let her make her own peanut butter & jelly sandwich. Give her a small colander and allow her to choose fresh fruits and vegetables from the fridge to rinse in the sink before eating.

- *Setting the Table*: Show her how to carefully carry her plate, cup, and utensils to the table and where to put them at her seat.
- *Dirty Dishes*: Show her how to put her dirty dishes in the dishwasher.
- *Sweeping*: Give her a crumbing brush for the table or use a dustpan and brush to sweep crumbs up on the floor.

### **Quiet Time: Nap or Independent Reading / Rest Time**

After lunch is a good time to take a bit of a break to reset for the rest of the day. If your child usually takes an afternoon nap, that can happen now. If your child no longer naps, she can still have a quiet time of rest in her room for an hour or so. Set her up with some books or quiet things to play with. If you're working from home during this distance-learning experience, save the tasks that require the most focus and attention for this time.

### **Chores: Practical Life**

Here is another opportunity to involve your child in some practical life tasks around the house! Think about some daily/weekly chores that you usually do alone – and then adapt them to include your child. Choose one task each day to do together to “bless the house.” Some ideas:

- *Laundry*: Show your child how to put the clothes in the washer, add detergent, and press the right buttons to start the machine. When it's finished, show him how to transfer the wet clothes to the dryer and start that. And when it's all done, what a wonderful opportunity to practice folding!
- *Dusting*: Give your child a feather duster or a dusting cloth and find all the flat surfaces in your house to dust.
- *Scrubbing Furniture*: This is a particular favorite for most young children, because it involves the magical substance of

water! Fill a bucket with some soapy water. Dip a sponge or small scrub brush in it, then scrub the table using small circular motions. When it's all clean, dry it off with a dish rag or bath towel.

- *Mopping*: Scrubbing furniture with soapy water often results in a wet floor! Show your child how to mop up the mess.
- *Vacuuming*: Choose a couple of rooms to vacuum, then show your child how to run the vacuum over every section of carpet. Handheld vacuums are the easiest for small children to use.

### **Outside Play: Free Movement**

Young children need to move! Head outside for some free play in your backyard or at a local park. Let your child set the pace and come up with her own games to play.

### **Dinner: Practical Life**

I bet you never realized how many practical life tasks you actually complete in a day before you started this schedule! Dinner is full of opportunities for involving your child in this:

- *Meal Prep*: Children are more likely to taste new foods if they've had a hand in preparing it! Invite your child to help you with simple tasks as you prepare dinner together, like scrubbing potatoes, cutting vegetables, dredging meat in flour and breadcrumbs, etc.
- *Setting the Table*: Your child can easily set her own place setting if she has access to her own dishes in a low cupboard. You can also get out the adult dishes and let her carry those to the table.

- *Loading the Dishwasher*: Which dishes go on the top rack and which in the bottom? This is a sorting exercise and practical life all in one.
- *Washing Dishes*: Not all of the dishes can go in the dishwasher, so here's another fun water activity! Pull up a chair or a helper tower so your child can reach the kitchen sink, then show her how to wash each dish, rinse it, and put it on a drying rack.

### **Family Time: TV / Read Aloud / Board Games**

What did you do after dinner before distance learning began? You can keep those same activities here, or do other quality family time activities like watching a short TV show together, reading a book aloud, or playing a board game.

### **Bedtime Routine: Tuck In, Prep for Tomorrow**

Follow your normal bedtime routine, then start preparing your child's work space for tomorrow! Log in to Google Classroom and see which assignments will need to be prepared for the next day, then put them on the work trays and make sure your child will have everything she needs to do her work.

This looks like a lot of extra work on your part, but it all boils down to simply inviting your child to participate in the practical life tasks you do around the home anyway. It doesn't have to be completely planned out – you just need to think about what would make it easier for your child to participate in that task.

But **WHY** involve your child in all of that practical life work throughout the day? We all know it would go so much quicker and be done exactly to your specifications if you just did it yourself, right? That may be true, but let's put it in perspective:

You are raising a **whole** child – not just one who can read and write and knows her numbers. **A whole child.** That child, especially during her younger years, is calling out for independence; to be allowed to do everything “by myself!”; to feel part of your family community. And you have the opportunity to help make all of that happen. To raise a whole child -- who can participate in self-care, community care, and sees the value in completing these tasks. That will be much more difficult to teach during the teenage years, so take advantage of your little one's eagerness to help now!

Not only that, but practical life tasks involve so much more than simply chores. Putting away the silverware and dishes involves sorting into the right categories. Sweeping and mopping involves full body movement and coordination. Scrubbing a table until it is squeaky clean involves focus and repetition, lengthening that attention span. There are benefits to every part of the body and mind – every part of the child – when she is participating in practical life tasks around the house.

Here are some other ideas of “chores” your toddler or preschooler can do:

## CHORES YOUR

## TODDLER & PRESCHOOLER CAN DO

- Put dirty clothes in hamper
- Put clothes in washing machine
- Push buttons on washing machine
- Transfer clothes from washer to dryer
- Fold laundry
- Put away clean laundry
- Set the table
- Put dirty dishes in dishwasher
- Unload the dishwasher
- Handwash dishes
- Put away groceries
- Restock snack drawers
- Food prep
- Feed pets
- Restock toilet paper holders
- Clean the bathroom
- Make the bed
- Dust
- Vacuum
- Sweep
- Mop
- Clean up toys
- Wrap presents
- Stamp envelopes
- Put mail in mailbox
- Bring in mail/newspaper
- Fill bird feeders
- Water plants
- Pull weeds
- Scrub outside toys
- Rake leaves
- Shovel snow
- Put out recyclables

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Throughout your day, you can also incorporate extensions of academic work into your daily life:

- When you're interacting around the dinner table, practice saying "Please" and "Thank You" as you're passing the food around the table.
- Count the steps as you walk up or the dishes as you put them away. Try counting by 2s!
- Make a point of noticing the beginning sounds that are within your natural conversation: "Let's go for a walk. /w/ /w/ walk! Walk starts with /w/! Can you think of anything else that starts with /w/?"
- Encourage further exploration with phrases like, "I wonder..." or "How can you..."

Check the next page for a couple of alternative daily schedules if the first one doesn't fit your usual family rhythm!

Alternate Schedule #1

Early Morning Routine	Practical Life
Chores	Practical Life
Work Cycle	Live Circle Time & Assignments
Free Play	Build, Bake, Create, or Play Outside
Lunch	Practical Life
Quiet Time	Nap or Independent Reading/Rest Time
Afternoon Exercise	Focused Movement Activity
Outside Play	Free Movement
Dinner	Practical Life
Family Time	TV / Read Aloud / Board Games
Bedtime Routine	Tuck In, Prep for Tomorrow

Alternate Schedule #2

Early Morning Routine	Practical Life
Morning Exercise	Focused Movement Activity
Work Cycle	Live Circle Time & Assignments
Free Play	Build, Bake, Create, or Play Outside
Lunch	Practical Life
Chores	Practical Life
Quiet Time	Nap or Independent Reading/Rest Time
Outside Play	Free Movement
Dinner	Practical Life
Family Time	TV / Read Aloud / Board Games
Bedtime Routine	Tuck In, Prep for Tomorrow