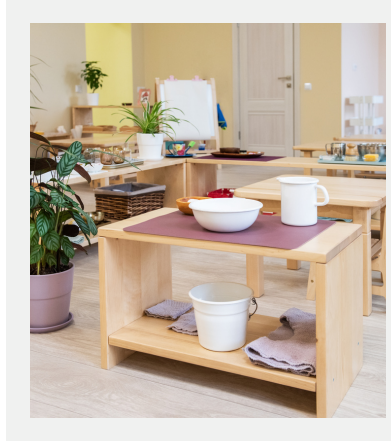


# How Set-Up Your First Montessori Shelf

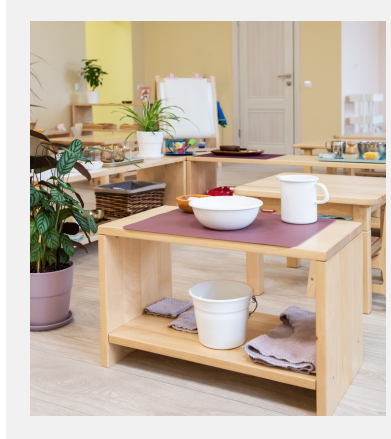


*If you are new to the Montessori philosophy, setting up your first Montessori shelf can seem daunting. My hope is that this guide allows you the confidence you need to create a purposeful space for your child to engage in and learn from. Here is what I think you should know:*

**Set up a shelf that is low to the ground, and easily accessible by your child.** Each material should be at eye level, and/or easily accessible with their hands. The shelf does not have to be fancy, and you can probably find something at your local thrift store. If you are using a cube storage, only place one activity, per cube.

**Less is more.** Each material should sit on the shelf, with 5-6 inches in between each material. The rest of the materials should go into storage until it's time to rotate new materials into your prepared learning space. We want our children to feel calm and free to explore in their space. If there are too many materials, the child's internal sense of order will be scattered, and therefore their space will reflect that.

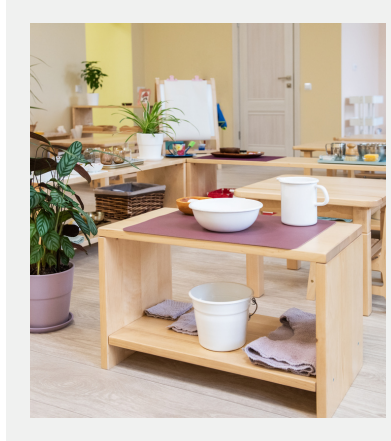
# How to Set-up Your First Montessori Shelf



**Select developmentally appropriate activities, or activities that align with their interests.** If you are unfamiliar with what developmentally appropriate activities are for your specific child, the best thing you can do is **follow your child**. This means observing and noticing your child's interests and capacities. A good rule of thumb is to put various activities out, to see what they are naturally drawn to. These materials should include activities such as fine/gross motor, sensory, music, practical life, books, and maybe even arts and craft materials. Each infant activity should include one to three pieces, and present no more than one single concept at a time. Each toddler activity should include no more than five pieces, and present no more than one single concept at a time.

**Properly display the activities.** Typically, the materials are natural (woven and wooden), and neutral in color. If you have a two tier shelf, the easiest activities are on the top shelf, while the harder activities are on the bottom shelf. They also move from easiest to hardest, left to right, on each shelf. Try to notice what is easy and difficult for your specific child, and not what you perceive to be the easiest or the hardest.

# How to Set-up Your First Montessori Shelf



**Cont..** Each work should be placed in its own storage cube, or separated by 5-6 inches of space. Multiple part activities are placed in a basket, or on a tray. Present the materials incomplete/undone. If the work is finished, the child will notice that, and they will likely avoid it, because there is no work for them to do.

**Rotate the activities on the shelves.** Every so often, observe your child. If the child is still exploring and engaged with a material, leave it on the shelf. If they have not used it in the past two weeks, replace it with something else. If they are still engaging with a material, but it seems too easy for them, replace it with something a little bit more challenging. If it seems too hard, replace it with a similar activity that they have mastered (this gives them their confidence back!). Only introduce up to three or four new materials at a time. Any more than that can be very shocking and overwhelming to the child.

**Make sure the materials are complete.** If an activity is missing a piece, or needing repair, always remove it from the shelf until it is completely functional. If the child is unable to be successful because a material is missing a part, they will then feel unsuccessful and disempowered in that experience.