

HOMEWORK AT CASA MIA

In general, in traditional schools, homework is given to gauge whether a child has understood a particular lesson. This is necessary when a teacher gives a lesson to twenty or thirty students at a time.

Our teachers work with children individually or in groups of three or four students and Montessori materials are designed to be self-correcting. These two factors combined ensure that the teacher is completely in touch with the child's individual comprehension of work and on-going requirements and therefore, homework is generally not necessary.

However, homework, in a Montessori sense, is work that the child does at home as an extension of his or her own interests and as a member of the family. This work should be meaningful and preferably of high interest to the child; it should have a purpose. Living as a family has rights and responsibilities and it is reasonable to expect that children help with the chores.

Homework may include a variety of activities, including household chores. It can help the child develop language skills, cultural awareness, make mathematics a real part of the home environment, and give the child a voice in family decisions.

No education system can be successful in preparing children for a place in society without parental support. Education is, in fact, a cooperative effort that begins at home and is supplemented by the school. For these reasons it is assumed and expected that parents take an active part in choosing homework, or home activities, appropriate for the child.

Your child's teacher may request activities that are related to the memorisation of maths facts or spelling and other typically academic activities, but this is a minor facet of homework.

Homework is best, through the primary years, when it consists of "real life" activities. In addition to these activities that interest your child, homework may also consist of activities that have a great deal of meaning to you. Sharing that kind of activity with your child may be a way to expand your child's horizons and build a bond around that shared activity. Activities that you enjoy together add to your child's repertoire of enjoyable activities which may serve to enrich your child's entire life.

The following is a brief list of real-life activities that may provide homework activities for you and your child:

- letter writing (invitations, thank you notes, etc.)
- writing stories
- weekly library trips
- reading aloud to your child (Research has shown that children who are read to on a regular basis learn to read more easily than children who have not had this experience.)
- scanning the newspaper for headlines and discussing new topics
- drawing objects in the home environment or neighbourhood

- doing simple science experiments together
- setting up a lunch money jar so your child can count out what's needed
- involving your child in planning the dinner menu and writing out a shopping list
- comparing newspaper ads for food prices
- doing the grocery shopping together
- preparing food together
- setting the table and cleaning up afterwards
- recycling
- using maps to plan outings
- taking walks together: look for leaf shapes; identify plants, animals, birds; look for different kinds of architecture
- visit the zoo together
- visit museums together
- attend musical events together
- make music together as a family

Parents can help their children be successful in life by helping them develop a positive attitude about work – whether it be for doing chores or for doing other activities together. This will only occur if the activities are done in a fun way and not as a drill. Let your child know that you believe he or she will be successful – in doing the chores, in doing other activities together, and in doing work at school. What you believe about your child is exactly what your child will believe about him or herself, and that is one of the most important factors in school success.

As all Montessori education is an aid to what is to come, homework may be given at the senior end of the school to prepare the children for high school. This is usually in the form of a project to be completed over a period of time. In order to be successful with homework children need to be organised with their time, skilled at prioritising and able to focus. Because the Montessori environment utilises these same skills on a daily basis, the child, if able to exercise these skills at school, should be well equipped to manage their homework.