

# The most common Montessori myths

“Montessori teaching methods are too unstructured—kids are allowed to do whatever they want.”

Montessori environments give children the freedom to do what they want within limits. The child is allowed to choose an activity from a number of available activities. Adults must guide behavior, directing the child towards available activities and intervening when a child's behavior is damaging. Children are encouraged to make their own choices and become self-reliant, but they are only given as much freedom as they can handle.

“The Montessori teaching method is outdated.”

The Montessori Method was introduced in the early nineteenth hundreds and unlike hundreds of other trends and education fads, it has stood the test of time. But the reason behind the popularity of the method, which has only increased over the years, is simple. Dr. Montessori observed the way that humans learn and that hasn't changed in the last century, nor is it likely to change for thousands of years to come. In fact, there is a huge body of modern scientific research in support of what Maria Montessori had to say over a century ago. Now that's an idea ahead of its time.

“Montessori should stay in the classroom. At home, kids need time to be kids.”

When you imagine what your home would look like as a Montessori Home, what do you see? If you picture a traditional classroom, then you've got it all wrong. You see, bringing Montessori into the home isn't about cramming a child's brain full of useless information or trying to prepare her to take her SAT while she's still in diapers. Instead, Montessori is an “aid to life”. It's a way of nurturing your child's success, not just academically, but also physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

“Montessori is only for gifted children.”

Montessori is for all children, including those who are gifted and learning disabled. The approach is unique for every child—that was Maria Montessori's original intention and it remains today. The fact that Montessori kids score better on standardized tests and often appear to be advanced for their age is evidence that this approach works to bring out the actual genius in every child. Maria noticed that children have an intense appetite for learning and she set out to optimize that learning by nurturing the inherent individuality of each and every child.

“Montessori kids aren't allowed to play: they spend all their time working.”

The Montessori program does not differentiate between “work” and “play”. Instead, children are encouraged to enjoy themselves and learn through meaningful activities. Although it may seem like a strange system in contrast to having a designated “playtime”, it encourages a future where work is goal-oriented and purposeful. Montessori kids don't work because they have to, they find joy in working.

# Differences between Montessori and Traditional Education

Montessori Education	Traditional Education
Based on helping the natural development of the human being	Based on the transfer of a national curriculum
Children learn at their own pace and follow their own individual interest	Children learn from a set of curriculum according to a time frame that is the same for everyone
Children teach themselves using materials specially prepared for the purpose	Children are taught by the teacher
Child is an active participant in learning	Child is a passive participant in learning
Understanding comes through the child's own experiences via the materials and the promotion of children's ability to find things out for themselves	Learning is based on subjects and is limited to what is given
Child can work where he/she is comfortable, move around and talk at will while not disturbing others	Child is usually assigned own chair and encouraged to sit still and listen during group sessions
The teacher works in collaboration with the children	The class is teacher led
The child's individual development brings its own reward and therefore motivation	Motivation is achieved by a system of reward and punishment
Environment and method encourage internal self-discipline	Teacher acts as primary enforcer of external discipline
Child works as long as he/she wishes on chosen project	Child generally given specific time limit for work
Uninterrupted work cycles	Block time, period lessons
Mixed age groups whereby students learn "horizontally" from observation of other people's work, directly or indirectly	Same age groups with the teachers' pre-planned class lessons
Working and learning matched to the social development of the child	Working and learning without emphasis on the social development of the child
Shared emphasis on intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual development	Main emphasis on intellectual development
Shared focus on the acquisition of academic, social, practical and life skills	Main focus on academics
Respect for individual differences	Emphasis on the group
Assessment is applied routinely when the individual is ready, and aims at self-correction, repetition and competence	Scheduled testing does not take into consideration the preparation of each individual
Students practice while in school with the supervision and assistance of the teacher as needed	Students practice on their own and are graded on home work