

How and Why to Observe Your Child in Montessori

Written by [Stacy Jones](#) in [Montessori Lifestyle](#), [Montessori Parenting](#)

Observation is an important element of the scientific process because it lets us see the results of an experiment and assess what can be changed. According to the Montessori method, observation is necessary for the classroom for the same reasons.

Observation is an important part of the Montessori curriculum. Through observation, parents and teachers can gain an understanding of the individual needs of each child. Observation without interference can also help children gain a sense of independence and competence.

Observation in Montessori involves following the child and meeting them where they are. But what exactly does that entail? Here is everything that you need to know about observation and Montessori.

What Is Montessori Observation?

Humans rely on observing for many activities. Early humans relied on observation to understand and adapt to their new environment. They also used observation for survival and connection with others. Observation is no longer crucial for our survival. However, many benefits come from taking the time to observe children.

Observation is the process of objectively monitoring children to understand what they know and how they function. Being objective requires the observer to get rid of any

preconceived notions about the child they are observing. The observer should also note and write down everything that they observe.

In [the Montessori classroom](#), observation is a tool to assess children's abilities, determine the environment, and allow the child to play independently.

Why You Should Observe:

Observation helps the parent or teacher (also [called a guide](#)) understand their child/children better. When they observe the child in an uninterrupted setting, they learn about their child's capability and skill set. Parents and teachers also discover things they would have been unable to identify if they were directly involved with the child.

Observing children also helps the parents and teachers identify the [development](#) and achievement that the child has made. For example, they can note that a child is holding their pencil differently than they were before. They can note whether or not the child is interacting with different toys at a higher level.

Observation also helps teachers and parents observe their children as they are, not just how they expect to behave. Instead of the parents or teachers telling the child what they should be learning, their child can show their interests. When the child expresses interest, the teachers note it to utilize that interest in setting up the environment or planning lessons.

The Montessori Philosophy of Observation

Maria Montessori and Observation Maria Montessori is the founder of the [Montessori curriculum](#), which emphasizes individuality and independence in children. Montessori

believed that observation is necessary to understand children as individuals. She also believes that the child needs to be able to express themselves without interference.

[Maria Montessori](#) was a medical doctor and a scientist, so she was trained in observational skills. Maria observed children playing with crumbs on the ground in a bare room for her first assignments. After this, she sought to develop educational materials that children can manipulate and learn from. She developed these materials by observing how the children interacted with them. Montessori saw immense value in observation.

“Even when helping and serving the children, she (the teacher) must not cease to observe them because the birth of concentration in a child is as delicate a phenomenon as the bursting of a bud into bloom.”

—Maria Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*

Not only did Montessori stress the importance of observing, but she emphasized observation *without judgment*. An effective observer accepts their child and follows their direction. If a teacher applies judgment, they will be unable to assess the skills of the child. If they cannot make an objective judgment, they will not be able to meet the child at the child’s level.

Why Observation Is Beneficial: Observation has many benefits, to both the teachers and the children. [Teachers in Montessori](#) use observation to help them set up the

environment. According to the Montessori Philosophy, the [prepared environment](#) is vital for children to learn. The role of the teacher is to set up the environment to encourage individualized learning.

To properly set up an environment, the teachers use observation to determine what the children want to learn. They also use observation to determine what skill level they are currently capable of. The environment then reflects this observation and is set up to help the children succeed.

Observation also allows children to foster their sense of competence and independence. During observation, the teacher persuades the child to explore on their own and follows their direction. The child is in charge, so they get to learn and discover at their own pace. This freedom gives them a sense of competence and helps [fuel their independence](#).

Following the Child:

As briefly addressed above, part of the importance of Observation in Montessori is learning to follow the child. When you follow the child, you allow them to be in charge of their environment. You do not interrupt them or correct them. Instead, you let the child show you their world and their perspective.

When you follow the child, you gain an understanding of the inner workings of their mind. You learn to empathize with them and gain a greater understanding of their behavior and motives. Learning from and following the child means meeting them where they are, not where we expect them to be.

“Follow the child, they will show you what they need to do, what they need to develop in themselves, and what area they need to be challenged in. The aim of the children who persevere in their work with an object is certainly not to ‘learn’; they are drawn to it by the needs of their inner life, which must be recognized and developed by its means.”

Maria Montessori

However, following the child and observing them does not mean that they can do whatever they want all the time without consequence. It is more about observing and following the pattern of the child. If a child needs to spend more time on a skill or in a specific area, we allow them the time in that area. On the other hand, if they have mastered a subject, we present the opportunity (without forcing) for them to move on to a new area.

