

THE EVERYDAY MONTESSORI *Toddler*

FREE BONUS
PRINTABLES

ROUTINE CARDS
24 ACTIVITY CARDS
WHAT-TO-SAY POSTER

SIMPLE WAYS THROUGH THE "NO,"
THE TANTRUMS AND THE "ME DO IT"



18 MONTHS TO 3 YEARS

YOUR FREE SAMPLE

Welcome to *Montessori Toddler*

These pages are taken from *The Everyday Montessori Toddler*, a practical Montessori guide for parents of children from 18 months to 3 years.

Read them in one go, or start with the part you need today. Every idea in here works in an ordinary home, with what you already have.

This book shares a parenting approach. It doesn't replace your pediatrician or your own judgment. When something worries you about your child's health, development or safety, ask a professional.



INTRODUCTION

Your Child Isn't Giving You *a Hard Time*

They're having one. Hold on to that sentence. It changes how you stand in the room with your toddler.

WHERE YOU ARE RIGHT NOW AS A PARENT

"I thought it would get easier once they could walk and talk. Somehow it's harder."

You're not imagining it. The baby months wear you out physically. The night feeds, the constant carrying, the work of keeping a tiny person alive. The toddler years ask something else of you. Your child is becoming a person right in front of you, and that process is loud, contradictory and sometimes spectacular. You need a different set of tools. This book is that toolbox.

Somewhere around 18 months, your child discovers something enormous. They are a separate person, with a will of their own. And that will has opinions.

Strong ones. About the spoon. About which shoe goes on first. About whether the sandwich is cut in triangles or rectangles (triangles, always, except on the days when it has to be rectangles and you should have known). You’re watching a self appear, and it doesn’t arrive quietly.

The gap is what makes it hard. Your toddler can now want things clearly, but their brain is years away from handling the distance between what they want and what they get. The parts of the brain that manage frustration, wait and plan keep developing well into early adulthood. At two, they’ve barely started.

That’s why the “terrible twos” label does toddlers a disservice. A two-year-old melting down because they can’t say what they need isn’t being terrible. They’re doing exactly what two-year-olds do. Your job isn’t to stop that development. It’s to keep everyone safe while it happens, and to help it along.

What Your Toddler Is Actually Doing

Almost every “difficult” toddler behavior has something sound underneath it, happening in a body and brain that don’t yet have better ways to express it. The behavior looks like the problem. Most of the time, it’s the message.

WHAT YOU SEE · WHAT’S GOING ON

<i>“They say no to everything, even things they want.”</i>	They’re practicing having a will. The “no” is the point, not the thing they’re refusing.
<i>“They want to do it themselves, then can’t, and explode.”</i>	They understand more than their hands can do yet. That gap is agonizing.
<i>“They want the same book fifty times in a row.”</i>	Repetition is how toddlers master things. They’re working.
<i>“They fall apart over tiny things.”</i>	Their sense of order is strong and their brakes are weak. The small thing is big to them.

"They hit, bite or throw when they're frustrated."

The feeling is bigger than their vocabulary, so their body says it.

"They're fine at daycare and fall apart when they see me."

You're their safe place. They held it together all day, and you get the release.

What Montessori Gives You

Montessori isn't a set of activities, a shelf or a look. It's a way of seeing your child, and of deciding what to do next based on what you see. For the toddler years, it rests on four ideas.

FOUR IDEAS TO HOLD ON TO

1 Watch before you step in.

Before you help, correct or redirect, take a breath and look. What is your child actually trying to do? Do they need help, or room? More often than you'd think, the answer is room.

2 Freedom inside clear limits.

Toddlers need both. Too few limits feel frightening, because they need to know where the edges are. Too many feel suffocating, because they need room to practice being a person. The Montessori way is neither strict nor permissive. It's clear, warm and consistent.

3 Independence as the direction.

Everything in this approach moves toward your child doing things for themselves. A toddler who can hang their own coat or pour their own water feels capable, and a capable toddler has fewer reasons to fight you.

4

A home that works with you.

A home set up only for adults means constant help and constant “no.” A few changes, like a low hook, a drawer they can open or a step stool at the sink, let your toddler run more of their own day, and you spend less of yours negotiating.



18–24 MONTHS

Saying no

2–2½ YEARS

Doing it myself

2½–3 YEARS

Asking why

MODULE ONE

The Explosion

“No,” “Me,” “Again”

Your child has discovered they’re a person. That’s excellent news, even on the days it doesn’t feel like it.

WHERE YOU ARE RIGHT NOW AS A PARENT

“It happened overnight. They used to be so easy. What changed?”

Nothing went wrong. This is the leap your child has been building toward since birth, the moment they realize they’re separate from you, that they have a will, and that they can try to use it. It’s loud and it’s relentless, and it’s completely normal. It gets easier to live with the moment you stop trying to make it go away.

Between 18 and 24 months, three things change everything. “No” becomes a tool, “me do it” becomes a mission, and repetition becomes the main way your child learns.

None of these is a phase to get through. Each one is a skill being born. “No” is the first exercise of a will. “Me do it” is where competence starts. Repetition is how a young brain locks in anything new. Knowing this won’t make your mornings effortless, but it changes what you’re aiming for.

What Your Child Is Working On

Under the noise, your toddler is doing some of the hardest work of their life. Here’s what’s happening across these six months.

DEVELOPMENT SNAPSHOT · 18 TO 24 MONTHS	
<div>SELF AND INDEPENDENCE</div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using their own name, then “me” and “mine”• “No” with real intent, sometimes to things they want• A strong drive to do things alone• Recognizing themselves in a mirror• Fierce ideas about who owns what</div>	<div>LANGUAGE</div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• From a handful of words to many more (the range is huge)• First two-word combinations, often near the second birthday• Pointing to name things and to ask for words• Understanding far more than they can say• Frustration when the word won’t come</div>

MOVEMENT AND HANDS

- Walking steadily, starting to run
- Climbing everything they can
- Carrying the heaviest thing they can lift
- Kicking and throwing a ball
- Turning pages, stacking, opening lids

FEELINGS AND RELATIONSHIPS

- Playing next to other children, not yet with them
- Separation protests that may come back for a while
- First signs of empathy, like offering a toy to a crying child
- Frequent, intense, mostly short tantrums
- Big affection, given on their terms

The Three Milestones of This Age

1 · THE “NO,” AND WHY IT’S PROGRESS

Before this stage, your child mostly responded to the world. Now they’ve discovered they can start things. They want something and try to make it happen, refuse something and try to stop it. That’s the beginning of agency, and of the ability, years from now, to say no to a friend pushing them toward something they don’t want to do.

This doesn’t mean “no” never meets a limit. It means you’re not trying to get rid of it. When your child refuses their coat, the coat still goes on, because it’s cold and you’re going out. But you hold that limit without a battle, and without making them feel that having a will is a problem.

WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE

“I know you don’t want your coat. It’s cold outside, so the coat is coming with us. Do you want to put your arm in first, or should I hold it open for you?”

You didn’t ask whether the coat goes on. You offered a real choice about how. The limit is clear and the independence is real, both at once.

2 · “ME DO IT,” AND WHERE COMPETENCE COMES FROM

When your toddler says “me do it,” they’re not being difficult. They’ve spotted something they can’t do yet and they’re closing the gap through practice. Every try, every fail and every try again builds the skill.

The urge to help, to zip the zipper or pour the water, is loving and natural. It also takes the practice away, and quietly tells your child you don’t think they can manage. So wait before you help. Watch. Offer help when they ask, or when they’re clearly stuck and getting upset. The phrase to practice is “Would you like some help?” Then respect the answer.

“Never help a child with a task at which he feels he can succeed.”

A LINE OFTEN ATTRIBUTED TO MARIA MONTESSORI

3 · “AGAIN,” THE WORK THAT LOOKS LIKE ANNOYANCE

Read it again. Do the puzzle again. Fill and pour, fill and pour, until the water is everywhere and your patience isn’t. Repetition isn’t stubbornness, boredom or a plan to wear you down. It’s how toddlers master things, the way a musician plays scales. When your child repeats something with the same focus every time, they’re working. When they stop, usually suddenly, the work is done.

The Montessori response is to let it happen. Don’t redirect (“Let’s try something new”), don’t sigh (“Again? Really?”). Let them repeat, and do something of your own nearby while they do.

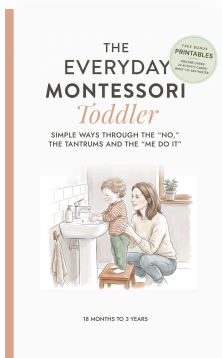
A ROUGH TIMELINE

AROUND 18 MO

The first real “no.”

Your child refuses things as an act of self-assertion, not just dislike. They may refuse something they actually want. The “no” is the point.

18–20 MO	<p>“Mine” takes over.</p> <p>Your child is working out ownership, and overdoing it. Everything might be theirs. Sharing is very hard at this age, because it asks them to imagine another child’s point of view, a skill that’s only starting to form.</p>
18–24 MO	<p>Language frustration peaks.</p> <p>They understand nearly everything and can say little of it. This gap is behind many tantrums. Every new word gives them another way to be understood.</p>
20–24 MO	<p>“Me do it” gets insistent.</p> <p>Dressing, feeding, opening doors, carrying bags. The wish almost always runs ahead of the ability. Your job is to give more time, not more help.</p>
AROUND 24 MO	<p>Words start to catch up.</p> <p>Two-word phrases arrive and grow. Frustration eases a little as your child can name more of what’s happening. Keep naming feelings out loud. They’ll start borrowing your words.</p>



KEEP READING

The whole book, one hard moment at a time

This sample is a small part of the book. Here is what the full guide covers.

- 7 Montessori myths that keep toddler parents stuck
- Tantrums, a practical guide, and limits without punishments or rewards
- Doing it myself, dressing, eating and tidying
- Language, the explosion and the frustration
- The prepared home room by room, and 24 activities that cost almost nothing
- Straight answers on daycare, screens, siblings, biting, sleep and the potty
- Free printables, picture routine cards, 24 activity cards and a what-to-say poster

SEE THE BOOK →

FREE GUIDES & PRINTABLES →

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