



AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY®

Children at the Elementary Level (Ages 6 – 12)

This handout will give you a general idea of the characteristics of children ages 6 – 12 and their “sensitive periods,” along with thoughts about what you, as a parent, can do to support them at home.

Sensitive periods are the times during human development when children are biologically ready and receptive to acquiring a specific skill or ability, and are therefore particularly sensitive to stimuli that promote the development of that skill. A Montessori teacher prepares the environment to meet the developmental needs of each sensitive period.

Main Characteristics/Sensitive Period	Implications for Home
Writing - Learning to express ideas and thoughts on paper as well as the rules of grammar and punctuation in order to more clearly express oneself.	Do: Encourage expression in writing and celebrate the act. Give your child a chance to share what they have written and be curious about their thoughts. Don't: Correct grammar and spelling mistakes in the early Elementary years. If your child is in the older Elementary years, ask them to go back over their work and see if they can find any errors.
Reading - Finishing up the last stage of learning to read and transitioning into reading for the sake of learning and researching new ideas or being captivated by a story.	Do: Value time and space for reading in your family's schedule. Model taking time yourself to read a book for a few minutes. Don't: Make reading a chore they despise.
Mental Arithmetic - Related to abstraction, this is the ability to memorize math facts and basic math processes.	Do: Have fun playing memorization of facts games with your child—especially

	<p>for processes they've learned to do with materials and on paper.</p> <p>Don't: Get frustrated if they are struggling to commit certain facts to memory. It is a process. This may be a sign that they just need a little more concrete experience.</p>
<p>Age of Reason/Abstraction - Sensory experiences as a younger child allow the child to begin to use logic and reason to create new ideas and make connections between concepts.</p>	<p>Do: Invite your child to engage in problem solving processes that involve real life dilemmas you are trying to solve in your family's day to day.</p> <p>Don't: Discourage them from sharing ideas by being critical of what they share. We know the idea might be crazy. But idea sharing can be a vulnerable act. Be careful with how you respond.</p>
<p>Morality and Intellectual Independence - The process of being curious about what is right and wrong and developing a system for determining such. The desire to develop their own unique ideas separate from the adults in their life.</p>	<p>Do: Discuss current events and evaluate what the right thing is to do and why.</p> <p>Don't: Force them to blindly accept your morality. They will have a better chance of developing strong morals if they are given an opportunity to question and own it for themselves.</p>
<p>Acquisition of Culture - The child is especially open to adopting the societal norms that are a part of their culture and are fascinated by traditions and why they exist.</p>	<p>Do: Invite them to help uphold family traditions and ceremonies and explain to them why you do what you do.</p> <p>Don't: Overlook the impact that our actions have on passing culture on to them. They are watching us so very closely.</p>
<p>Herd Instinct - The tendency to need to be together with others in order to process ideas.</p>	<p>Do: Understand the importance of them being able to think out loud with peers. Help facilitate this if at all possible.</p> <p>Don't: Take it personally if they stop listening to your input as much. It is a part of their development to become</p>

	more aware of what their peers are thinking and less interested in what their parents are thinking.
Repetition via Variety - The desire to develop their own unique ideas separate from the adults in their life.	Do: Talk with them about how there are different ways to learn an idea or concept and share with them your favorite ways to learn something. Don't: Get frustrated with them if they aren't understanding a concept or if they are working on the same concept they were working on last week. They may be learning it in a new way or with a new material.