

Freedom of Choice in the Early Education Classroom

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Montessori Education, developed by Italian psychologist Maria Montessori, emphasizes independence and the freedom to choose in young children. The importance in choice stems from the ability to have safe limits, while also allowing children to explore the world around them through all their senses on their own.

Everything has a particular place in a Montessori classroom. The toys returned after use to the same shelves, have an educational purpose, and are sturdy enough to withstand the children interacting with them. Toys returning to their same shelf not only helps the kids know when to clean up and how, but it also emphasizes to the children that the item will be in the same place they put it the day before. Children are guided and led in a Montessori environment to activities rather than given one or two items to choose from.

This freedom of choice also ensures that everything has an educational purpose. There are no electronics and plastic toys are usually not present in a classroom. This is important because it enhances the learning environment by only including natural objects, like wooden toys.

Furthermore, a toy may teach a child object permanence, how to manipulate objects through fine motor skills, and are designed specifically to teach a child a skill or concept. Some of these types of toys include, but are not limited to:

- Wooden building blocks
- Abacus
- Wooden puzzles
- Instruments (like maracas, tambourines, small drums)
- Number and alphabet construction set

And many more!

Use this information to teach your children the importance of Montessori style toys in their environment and limit their exposure to electronics. This is a great way to keep your young toddlers and infants engaged, while teaching them responsibility and independence!