

# **Practical Life**

**A Manual for Early Childhood (Ages 3 to 6+)**

**Instructor's Album**



PREVIEW

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## Using a Pail



*Storage*

*Photo by Veritas Montessori Training Residency Residents (2018)*



*Layout*

*Photo by Veritas Montessori Training Residency Residents (2018)*



*Pouring*

*Photo by Veritas Montessori Training Residency Residents (2018)*

## Using a Pail

<b>Age</b> 2.5 and up	<b>Prerequisite Lessons</b> Pouring water: Pitcher & container; Rolling a drying cloth
<p><b>Purpose:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To show the child how to use a pail without spilling</li> <li>• To help the child achieve exact muscular control</li> <li>• To show the child how to exercise judgment on when to stop pouring</li> <li>• To help the child develop controlled movements, independence, and confidence</li> </ul>	

### **Materials:**

- Small pail (approx. 2 quarts); pitcher; sponge with holder; drying cloth; apron; underlay

### **Presentation**

1. Invite the child to work with you. Say, "Let's have a lesson on using a pail. You are going to love this!"
2. Walk together to get the materials and name the work. Model the carry and then allow the child to carry it to a table of his/her choosing. Guide the child to place the pail on the floor, just to the left of the table.
3. Say, "We'll stand up for this work but first we have to set it up." Stand on the side of the table that has no chairs (or move the chairs to the side).
4. Say, "I'll have a turn and then you can have a turn. First, we'll need to put on our aprons."
5. Guide the child to wear the apron included in the pail. Go and get your adult apron while they do.
6. Remove the underlay from the pail and spread it on the table. Take the pitcher from the pail and place it on the right-side of the underlay. Place the sponge in its container to the left of the pail. Place the drying cloth next to the pitcher.
7. Invite the child to fill the pitcher at the sink.
8. Place your hand on the table to the right of the pail to guide the child to place the full pitcher back in its original location.
9. Lift the pitcher's handle with your right hand and stabilize under the spout with your left hand.

10. Slowly pour the water directly into the center of the pail. Use the sponge to dab the last drop. Place the pitcher back in its location.
11. Lift the handle of the pail with your right hand and secure the bottom with your whole left hand.
12. Walk slowly to the sink maintaining awareness of the stability of the water in the pail (point of interest).
13. Lift your left hand to tilt the bucket and begin emptying it into the sink. As it empties, move the handle with your right hand down to the pail and grasp the pail rim along with the handle.
14. Holding the pail rim and handle with your right hand, use your left hand to use the sponge to dab any drips off of the rim and/or side of the pail.
15. Say, "Now I'll get it ready for your turn."
16. Place the pail on the underlay and grasp the pre-rolled drying cloth.
17. Dry the inside of the pail (bottom and sides) in a clockwise motion. (You may need to put the pail on its side as you do so). Turn it upside-down when you are done.
18. Take the drying cloth and unfold/refold/roll to expose a dry side of the cloth.
19. Dry the outside in a clockwise fashion on the sides and bottom. Place the dry pail on the table above the underlay.
20. Repeat for the pitcher, and underlay to ensure all items are dry. Return each one to the pail when it is ready.
21. Notice that the cloth is wet. Go together to hang the wet one on the drying rack and fetch a new one from the cloth supply. Place it in the pail. Place the prepared pail on the floor.
22. Give the child a turn.
23. Fade and observe, offer to take a turn if needed. Encourage repetition.
24. When they are done, say, "Let's put this away so carefully." Go together with the child to return the work to the shelf.
25. Free the child to repeat. Say, "You can use a pail anytime you like. Will you do it again now?"
26. Guide them towards work.

**Points of Interest:**

- Watching for the last drop of water
- Watching the flow of water from one vessel to another
- Wiping excess water off of the pail
- Finding water to dry off on the underlay or pitcher
- The feel of the damp cloth

**Control of Error:**

- The size of the containers and the volume of liquid
- The size of the underlay
- The breakability of the materials

**Notes**

Be sure the pitcher can hold only enough water to fill the pail about  $\frac{2}{3}$ s full. An extension would be to use a larger pitcher so that they have to control volume.

If you have a child who needs fewer steps, you can do this work without an underlay but the underlay is preferred.

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## **Grace & Courtesy: Rationale**

Human beings are driven to belong to our social group. We adapt to the customs, traditions, and norms of our time, place, and community. Just as the customs of our grandparents differ from our own customs, so too will the customs of our children/students differ from ours. These “ways of being” vary from era to era and location to location. Our role as trained adults is to aid the child in becoming a member of his society by teaching him the social behaviors of his culture that are considered the most gracious and polite.

The young child is exquisitely interested in how people act, the words they use, their bodily position, their tone, the volume of their voice, and more. They are in a sensitive period for learning manners. Because they have an absorbent mind, most children effortlessly soak in and mimic the behaviors they witness in others. But this takes time. Adults, however, tend to be impatient with behavior.

While the process of learning expected behaviors is quite complex, it is rarely taught explicitly. Instead, adults lecture and expect behaviors to be displayed even if they themselves don't display them! On the other hand, the child may have primarily vague role models and low expectations to behave well. Both of these situations can create a very difficult and even hostile situation for the young child. Grace and courtesy lessons free children from constant scolding and correction while preparing them to be elegantly and skillfully engaged in society.

Grace and courtesy lessons analyze desired behaviors and present them to the child in brief, concise, and replicable activities. Rather than enforcing polite behavior, we encourage, model, present, and provide opportunities for playful practice. We wait and watch for the moment that the children spontaneously act appropriately from their own, genuine desire to do so. We are waiting for the internal development that occurs on a unique timetable for every child. We cannot force it any more than we can force an infant to walk. Instead, we prepare the causes and conditions so that the child's friendly, kind, and compassionate nature can manifest.

Remember that humans are not born knowing what is right from wrong. What is right and what is wrong differs from age to age and society to society. We must be taught which behaviors, words, and actions are skillful and which are unskillful within our culture.

All adults in the environment should be intentionally and explicitly involved in establishing a warm and welcoming classroom culture. When we make mistakes, we model a light-heart and resilience; we acknowledge, smile, self-correct, and move on. When we see someone in need, we gently offer help and respect if it is declined. The absorbent mind effortlessly absorbs this spirit of love and cooperation. It firmly fixes these attitudes and mannerisms into the child's psyche and the physical architecture of his brain.

Before school starts, make a list of what you expect from the children in terms of their behavior and then, break this down into grace & courtesy lessons. They will succeed if you set the right expectations and show them the steps to take.

## Procedure for Role Plays

Grace & Courtesy lessons follow a special procedure as outlined below. All grace and courtesy lessons should be practiced with a cooperating adult in advance. All behaviors should also be modeled and used consistently by adults in both the classroom and whole-school environments. These are great lessons to share at staff meetings.

1. Invite the children to the lesson and sit together around a work rug.
2. Name the lesson.
3. Introduce the scenario (describe a situation where this new behavior would be used).
4. Say, “Let’s pretend” and explain the role play.
5. Role play with a prepared, cooperating adult.
6. Encourage the children to role play:
  - a. Ask one child to role play the scenario with you.
  - b. Ask a second child to join the first child in role playing the scenario.
  - c. Continue in this fashion until all children have the opportunity to take a turn playing both roles.
7. Fade and observe during each role play taking mental note of which children may need repeat presentations of this lessons or more opportunities to practice this desired behavior.
8. Summarize the gracious behavior.
9. Free the child to use the behavior whenever it is needed.



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## Organizing in Line



*Photos by Veritas Montessori Training Residency Residents (2018)*

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## Organizing in Line

<b>Age</b> 2.5 and up	<b>Prerequisite Lessons</b> None
<p><b>Purpose:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To help the child become aware of his/her movements and how they affect others</li> <li>• To help the child know the right thing to do in common social situations</li> <li>• To prepare the child to exist harmoniously in the larger school community</li> </ul>	

### **Materials:**

- A few children

### **Presentation: Forming a line**

1. Invite a few children to work with you. Say, "I'd like to give you a lesson on forming a line." Sit together around a work rug.
2. Introduce the scenario. Say, "At school when we have to leave the classroom, we always walk in lines. I'll teach you how to make a line."
3. Role play. Say, "I'll show you where to stand and then you have to stay right in that spot. Don't let your body touch anything at all! Kaleigh, you stand right here. Dawn, you stand here and Melissa, you stand here."
4. Stand in front of the line and say, "Now everyone, turn and face me. We're in a line! You should see someone directly in front of you, but your body shouldn't be touching anything at all. Let's do it again!"
5. Guide the children to sit back around the rug and then form a line many times. Let them change positions. Remind them not to let their body touch anything or anyone.
6. Summarize the lesson. Say, "Whenever we need to line up at school, you will do it just this way. You can practice forming a line anytime you like. Are you going to do it again right now?"
7. Guide them towards work if needed.

**Exercise #1: Walking in line**

1. Invite the children to the lesson. Say, “I want to show you something new to do when you’re in line. First, let’s line up. Remember not to let your body touch anything or anyone. Your body is just for you.”
2. Once everyone is in line, say, “Now, we’re going to walk and still stay in line! Follow the person in front of you slowly and carefully. Don’t bump into anything and stay directly behind the person in front of you.”
3. Slowly and elegantly lead the children on a brief walk around the classroom. Come back to the same spot and say, “We just walked in line! Let’s do it again but this time, Markisha you can be in front.”
4. Give each child a turn in many different positions in line. Fade and observe.
5. Free them to repeat. Say, “You can walk in lines in the classroom with each other anytime you like. Will you do it again right now?”
6. Guide them towards work if needed.

**Exercise #2: Making room for someone**

1. Invite four or five children and your cooperating adult to the lesson. Gather together around a rug. Say, “I want to give you a lesson on how to make room for someone in line.”
2. Set up the scenario. Say, “Sometimes our line gets crowded and we need a little more room. Let me show you what you can do if that happens.”
3. Role play. Say, “Let’s pretend that when we are in line, I am getting squished in between Tequila and Ms. Riley. I’ll show you what I can do. Ms. Riley and Christina, let’s line up.”
4. The lead guide stands facing the door. The cooperating adult stands too close to the lead guide. The lead guide says, “Ms. Riley, I’m being squished. Can you please move a little to make more room?”
5. Cooperating guide says, “Of course. I’ll take a small step to make some room.” Ms. Riley doesn’t have enough room to take a small step, so she has to ask Christina to take a small step.
6. Lead guide says, “Now let’s try it again but we’ll add more people to our line. Tequila, please stand behind Christina.”
7. Continue the role play until everyone has a chance to get a little squished and ask others to move a little to make room. Keep it lively by reforming the line and, ultimately, including all the children and adults in the line. Have fun (like playing a game of telephone).
8. Free them to repeat. Say, “Anytime that other people are bumping into your body in line, you can ask them to please move a little to make more room. You can practice making room for someone in line anytime you like.”
9. Guide them towards work if needed.

**Points of Interest:**

- The space (or lack of space) between your body
- The visual appearance of the line

**Control of Error:**

- Visual disharmony
- Bumping into someone

**Notes:**

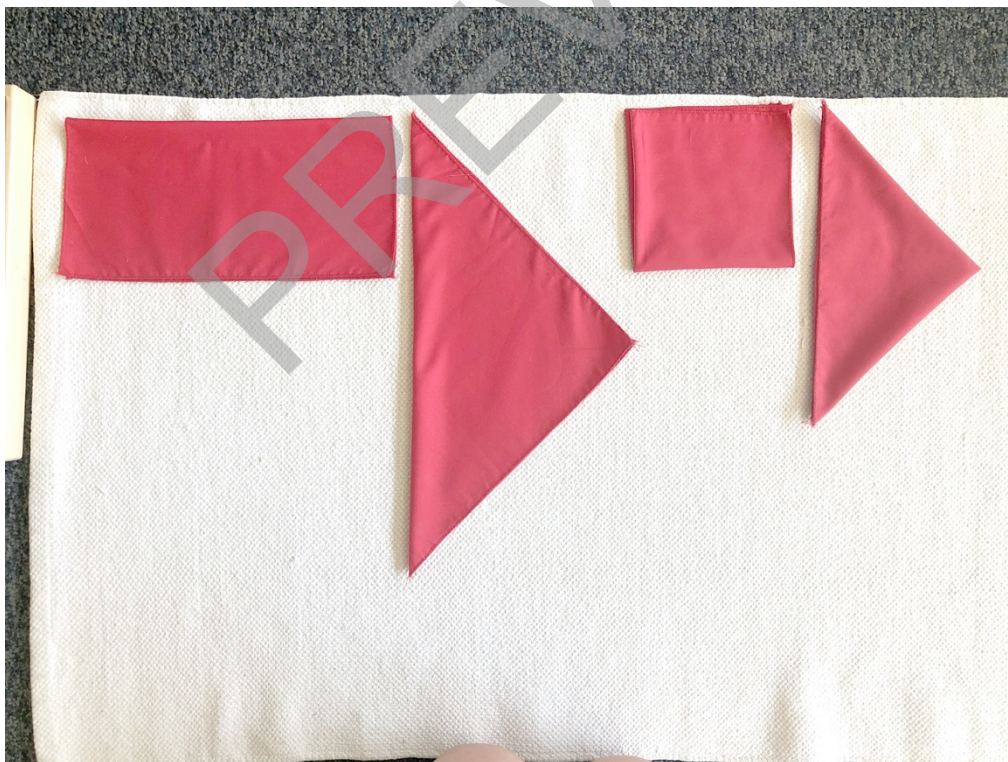
It is difficult for young children to succeed in line (kind of like herding cats when you first begin). Be patient and have reasonable expectations. Give these lessons again and again; you don't want to correct children (they are going to make mistakes at first), just keep those children who cannot yet succeed in line close to you (never say aloud that someone is not ready to be on their own, just invite them to hold your hand or walk right with you).

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## Folding



*Folding cloths setup (in tray)*  
*Photos by Veritas Montessori Training Residency Residents (2018)*



*Folding cloths folded*  
*Photos by Veritas Montessori Training Residency Residents (2018)*

## Folding

<b>Age</b> 3 and up	<b>Prerequisite Lessons</b> Carrying a tray
<p><b>Purpose:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To improve the child’s muscular control of the fingers</li> <li>• To indirectly prepare the child for geometry</li> <li>• To aid the child in developing coordinated, synthetic movement</li> <li>• Indirect: To teach the child how to fold cloths</li> </ul>	

### **Materials:**

- Lined cloths: A box containing 4 square clothes with different stitching to indicate: single diagonal; double diagonal; single median; double median
- Classroom cloths: Cloths in the environment (clean laundry to be put away)

### **Presentation: Lined cloths**

1. Invite the child to do the work with you and go together to get it. Say, “Sybil, I have something very special to show you, the folding cloths! We have so many things to fold here and I’ll show you how.”
2. Have the child take the basket to a table. Put the basket on the top right corner of the table.
3. Sit on the child’s dominant side. Say, “I’ll have a turn and then you can have a turn.”

#### Single Diagonal

4. Take this cloth from the basket (it should be on top) and turn it so that the line is parallel with you.
5. Trace the line with your fingers.
6. Put one hand on the top of the material to stabilize it.
7. Pick up the corner closest to you and fold it over along the line.
8. Take your other hand and press down the crease—smooth it out.
9. Slide it to the top of the table, nicely folded.

Single Median

10. Take out the cloth (this should be next in the stack) and place it so the line is parallel to you.
11. Trace the line.
12. Put your fingers on each bottom corner. Fold it up so the corners meet.
13. Smooth it out.
14. Slide it to the top left of the table.

Double Diagonal

15. Take out the cloth (this should be next in the stack) and place it so it looks like a diamond before you.
16. Trace the horizontal line.
17. Place one hand on the top half of the cloth to stabilize it. Then, fold up the bottom corner. Smooth it out and crease it.
18. Turn the cloth so the remaining line is parallel to you. Trace the horizontal line.
19. Place one hand on the top half of the cloth to stabilize it and fold the bottom corner up.
20. Smooth the crease.
21. Slide it to the top left of the table.

Double Median

22. Take out the cloth (this should be next in the stack) and place it so it is like a square before you.
23. Trace the horizontal line.
24. Pick up the bottom corners and fold them up.
25. Smooth out the crease.
26. Turn it so the line is midway away from you. Trace the horizontal line.
27. Pick up the bottom corners and fold it up.
28. Smooth the crease.
29. Slide it to the top of the table.
30. Say, "You can have a turn as soon as I put them all away."
31. Take them in reverse order and unfold them carefully (exactly reversing the folding steps). Flatten each one out and return it to the basket. Repeat for all.
32. Give the child a turn. Fade and observe, offering to take a turn if re-presentation is needed.
33. Complete the lesson: Encourage repetition, return the work to the shelf together, free them to repeat in the future, and guide them towards work if needed.



**Exercise #1: Classroom cloths**

1. Invite a few children to work with you. Say, “We have a wonderful basket full of fresh clean laundry. We need to fold these cloths and put them away. Come with me and I’ll show you how.”
2. The laundry basket should be placed next to a work rug.
3. Pick up a cloth and demonstrate the double median fold (as above).
4. Invite the children to take a turn. Fade and observe.
5. Once everyone has a folded cloth, go together to the cloth supply shelves to put them away.
6. Return to the laundry basket and repeat for as long as the children like (they are not required to do the whole basket).
7. Fade and observe, offering to take a turn if re-presentation is needed.
8. Complete the lesson: Encourage repetition, return the work to the shelf together, free them to repeat in the future, and guide them towards work if needed.

**Points of Interest:**

- Seeing the different shapes once they have been folded
- Tracing the line
- The orderly cloth supply shelves

**Control of Error:**

- The lines sewn into the cloths

**Notes**

You may need to present only one cloth or only two lined cloths depending upon the child. It is fine to start with one or two and then present the others in a second and/or third presentation. Follow the child and do what is necessary for them to succeed. Its best to have cotton or linen but you must look after it weekly to keep it clean and cared for. Synthetics do not hold the fold as well. The material must be solid in color so that they are not distracted. The material must fit perfectly into its container (you may want to buy the basket first and then cut the material to fit). If you make them yourselves, you must hem the edges so that they do not fray.

Turn the cloth as necessary so that you are always folding upwards. When folding up two corners, use one hand to hold each corner.



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