

# Parenting Tip of the Month

## August



Lower Elementary Teachers

Babies, children, and teens need significantly more sleep than adults to support their rapid mental and physical development. Most parents know that growing kids need good sleep, but many don't know just how many hours kids require, and what the impact can be of missing as little as 30 to 60 minutes of sleep time.

One of the reasons it's so hard to know when our kids are getting insufficient sleep is that drowsy children don't necessarily slow down the way we do—they wind up. In fact, sleepiness can look like symptoms of [attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder](#) (ADHD). Children often act as if they're not tired, resisting bedtime and becoming hyper as the evening goes on. All this can happen because the child is overtired.

There are some underlying psychiatric conditions, such as attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), that can cause sleep loss in children. Researchers and clinicians are also finding that sleep apnea—which most people tend to think of as an adult sleep disorder—is relatively common in children as well. A person who has sleep apnea wakes up many times every hour, very briefly, as they struggle to breathe. Most people do not know they are experiencing these events unless they are told or have a test to confirm sleep apnea. Children who snore may be at risk for or currently suffering from sleep apnea, which is why the American Academy of Pediatrics recently recommended that pediatricians ask about and screen for this sleep disorder in children at routine well visits.

If you suspect your child isn't sleeping enough, it's important to talk to your pediatrician. If there is an underlying sleep disorder or another medical condition at play, your doctor may refer you to a sleep specialist to discuss various treatments options. In many cases, though, sleep deprivation in children can be helped with changes to the environment and habits surrounding bedtime. Research shows that an early bedtime (between 7:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. works best for babies and kids through school age) and a consistent, soothing, wind-down routine with no screen time—such as TVs, tablets, and the like—will lead to better sleep.

While every child is slightly different in terms of how much sleep they need, most require the following to be fully rested:

<b>Age</b>	<b>Recommended</b>	<b>May be appropriate</b>	<b>Not recommended</b>
Newborns <i>0-3 months</i>	14 to 17 hours	11 to 13 hours  18 to 19 hours	Less than 11 hours  More than 19 hours
Infants <i>4-11 months</i>	12 to 15 hours	10 to 11 hours  16 to 18 hours	Less than 10 hours  More than 18 hours
Toddlers <i>1-2 years</i>	11 to 14 hours	9 to 10 hours  15 to 16 hours	Less than 9 hours  More than 16 hours
Preschoolers <i>3-5 years</i>	10 to 13 hours	8 to 9 hours  14 hours	Less than 8 hours  More than 14 hours
<b>School-aged Children</b>  <b><i>6-13 years</i></b>	<b>9 to 11 hours</b>	<b>7 to 8 hours</b>  <b>12 hours</b>	<b>Less than 7 hours</b>  <b>More than 12 hours</b>
Teenagers <i>14-17 years</i>	8 to 10 hours	7 hours  11 hours	Less than 7 hours  More than 11 hours
Young Adults <i>18-25 years</i>	7 to 9 hours	6 hours  10 to 11 hours	Less than 6 hours  More than 11 hours



## Is My Child Getting Enough Sleep?

Many children go through their days sleep-deprived. When children do not get enough sleep their actions can be wrongly classified as "behavior problems." Due to lack of sleep, they may have trouble controlling their emotions. This happens because the part of the brain that helps us regulate our responses and actions is greatly affected by the amount of sleep we get.

Parents are sometimes unsure of actually how much sleep a child needs. The chart below was created using data from the University of Michigan Health System. It shows you a ballpark amount of sleep a child needs.

The goal is to ensure that your child is getting the right amount for him/her. Ask yourself these questions to determine if your child is sleep-deprived:

- Can my child fall asleep within 15 to 30 minutes?
- Does he wake easily from his sleep?
- Is she awake and alert throughout the day?
- Does my child often fall asleep in the car?
- Does he seem irritable, very emotional, aggressive or hyperactive during the day?

If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, your child may be sleep-deprived.

Here are some tips that can help your child get that much-needed rest:

- Pick a natural bedtime when your child gets physically tired and begins to slow down.
- Create a consistent, simple bedtime ritual. Include quiet activities such as a song, a story, a bath and calm, quiet cuddling. End the routine with turning the lights down and saying, "goodnight."
- Allow only two comfort items for sleeping - any more could be distracting.
- Be consistent and firm about the purpose of bedtime. Bedtime is for lying in the bed and falling asleep.
- Use bedtime as an enjoyable, resting, cuddling and sleeping time, never as punishment.
- Use dim lights for sleeping times and brighter lights during awake times.
- Avoid foods and drinks that contain caffeine throughout the day.

Sleep deprivation can cause behavior-related problems that affect your child's daily interactions with others. Children who get enough sleep are better prepared to regulate their emotions, think clearer and enjoy their day.

# Material of the Month

## August



Lower Elementary Teachers

## Teaching Reading and Writing in Montessori Classroom

Reading and writing are sometimes taken for granted by adults who have mastered the skills—but looking at them from a child’s perspective, they are skills of Herculean difficulty. Literacy is a complicated, integrative process that involves the association of symbols with sounds, sounds with words, and words with ideas. It means learning to fluidly encode ideas into symbols and decode symbols into ideas. And, on top of everything, it involves acquiring complex physical production skills, such as the fine motor skills involved in writing with a pen or pencil.





The Montessori approach uses a distinct set of practices that nurture a positive, natural learning experience to teach reading and writing. The Montessori curriculum is thoughtfully built around teaching children the many elements of reading and writing one by one, in a way accessible to and enjoyable by a child. Here are a few of the steps in the sequence used in a Montessori environment to ensure that children master literacy with joy.



Children in a Montessori environment learn to write first, before they learn to read. This approach is organic, as children are able to put the letters for the sounds they know together into a word before they are ready to interpret and string together the sounds of a word on a page. Children begin learning the letter sounds using sandpaper letters, which incorporate the sense of touch to further reinforce learning. While the child learns the letter sound, they trace the letter with their fingers on a textured sandpaper inscription of the letter, learning the strokes used eventually to write that letter on paper.

Once a child has mastered the sounds associated with each letter, she'll be shown the moveable alphabet, which will allow her to easily put letters together, sounding them out to spell simple, then progressively more complex, words. Children love to move, and learn by doing. They learn best by physically interacting with the world, so why not take advantage of their natural tendencies to do so? The moveable alphabet allows children to begin “writing”—even before they develop the fine-motor skills to control a pencil.

Writing is a hands-on process, and the Montessori approach fully leverages the fact that children are naturally hands-on learners. In the Montessori classroom, children develop hand strength early on during activities that encourage use of the “pincer grip”, such as the cylinder blocks. The hand position used to pick up the blocks is the same as the one used in holding a pencil!

Once foundational hand strength is developed, we begin direct work with pens and pencils by introducing children to our beautiful collection of colored pencils and the metal insets. Instead of plodding through tedious handwriting worksheets, they are intrigued by the colored pencils and start using them to trace shapes, draw parallel lines or make patterns. Children love to color and create artwork, practicing a skill that they will later use to write letters and words. Through doing this, the child learns to use and control pencils while expressing herself in a creative way. When the child combines this skill with the previously mentioned ones, she joyfully discovers that she is now able to write letters on paper.

Once a child has learned how to use the letter sounds to construct words, she progresses towards joining words together into sentences of her own construction, and from there, there is an explosion of writing ability and enthusiasm. After mastering the skills associated with producing written letters and words, reading naturally comes as the next step. She discovers that she is now able to see printed words on a piece of paper and decode their meaning. Children will suddenly show a new, heightened interest in the written word. By learning to read, a whole new world is opened to them. Just watch them start to read the side of a milk carton or the label on their shampoo bottle, and you will see the excitement that can come from learning this essential skill!

Teaching children to read and write is an incredibly rewarding experience. Our guides follow your child through these and other steps, guiding them through a process carefully designed to encourage enthusiastic producers and consumers of the written word. We take pride in growing these fundamental roots of each child's education—the foundation that will support their learning for the rest of their lives.