



# Independence *guide*

Helping your child  
become independent

BENCHMARKS TO AID IN THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF INDEPENDENCE IN YOUR CHILD.

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

*~Maria Montessori*

# Benchmarks of Independence

CARE FOR SELF				
	<b>Toddlers can...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• dress themselves.</li><li>• put on their shoes.</li><li>• carry their belongings (backpack, lunch, and coat) to class and place them in the cubby all on their own.</li><li>• open and close their lunchboxes.</li><li>• feed themselves without constant clean-ups.</li><li>• drink from a cup.</li><li>• eat while sitting in a regular chair (no highchairs).</li><li>• go to the bathroom independently as long as their clothes are not a hindrance.</li><li>• wipe their own noses.</li><li>• help to brush their teeth and hair.</li><li>• walk to class without being carried.</li><li>• play independently.</li></ul>	<b>Preprimary students can...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• help in making their lunch.</li><li>• brush their hair in the morning.</li><li>• dress themselves and put on their own jacket/coat.</li><li>• put on their socks and shoes. Even if they need help with tying, etc., they can make the effort.</li><li>• remember their backpack, jacket, lunch, work folder/binder, etc.</li><li>• carry their own belongings (backpack, lunch, snack, etc.) to class.</li><li>• walk into class from the morning car line by themselves.</li><li>• go to the bathroom independently as long as their clothes are not a hindrance.</li><li>• pour their beverages.</li><li>• clean up after themselves when finished eating.</li><li>• carry their plate to the kitchen after meals.</li></ul>	<b>Lower Elementary students can...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• wake to an alarm clock, get dressed, and be ready for breakfast.</li><li>• make their breakfast.</li><li>• fill their water bottle.</li><li>• pack their lunch with nutritious foods.</li><li>• remember to bring lunch, coat, and backpack to and from school.</li><li>• walk in from car line alone.</li><li>• carry their things.</li><li>• serve themselves.</li><li>• clean up spills and accidents.</li><li>• complete homework by themselves and turn it in when due.</li></ul>	<b>Upper Elementary students can...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• dress and prepare their own breakfast each morning.</li><li>• plan and pack their own lunch.</li><li>• be responsible for remembering homework, take-home folder, and other papers that are due.</li><li>• remember to wear/bring a jacket for outdoor recess.</li><li>• pick up after themselves.</li><li>• allot time, and manage until completion, their</li><li>• complete most of their work-plan most weeks.</li><li>• come up with original ideas for their projects and make a list of supplies needed to complete the projects.</li></ul>
CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT				
	<b>Toddlers can...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• clean up and put their toys away.</li><li>• prepare fruits and veggies.</li><li>• water plants.</li><li>• clean up spills.</li><li>• help to wash the car.</li><li>• help sweep the floor.</li><li>• put some laundry away.</li><li>• be respectful of other living creatures.</li><li>• feed the family pet.</li></ul>	<b>Preprimary students can...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• sort silverware after it has been washed.</li><li>• sweep floors.</li><li>• put away their toys.</li><li>• straighten their room.</li><li>• sort clean socks, fold towels, etc., on laundry day.</li><li>• have responsibilities in keeping the environment clean and tidy.</li><li>• help prepare veggies/fruit for meals at home.</li><li>• help plant flowers, weed flower beds, water plants, etc.</li><li>• be involved in healthy food choices.</li></ul>	<b>Lower Elementary students can...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• make their bed every day.</li><li>• fold laundry and put it away.</li><li>• feed and care for pets.</li><li>• put away toys, games, and books.</li><li>• set the table for meals.</li><li>• help to do the dishes.</li><li>• sort their trash (recycling and compost).</li><li>• take out the trash and recycling.</li><li>• sweep and vacuum the floors.</li><li>• read a book to parents, siblings, and by themselves.</li></ul>	<b>Upper Elementary students can...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• pick up after themselves (they do at school).</li><li>• clean their rooms and help out daily around the house.</li><li>• take out the trash and recycling.</li><li>• care for pets.</li><li>• put away groceries.</li><li>• help wash the car (it transports them everywhere).</li><li>• help with yard work.</li></ul>
INTERPERSONAL SKILLS				
	<b>Toddlers can...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• let others finish a sentence before interrupting to ask a question.</li><li>• ask for a drink/snack when desired, rather than walking around with a bottle, sippy cup, or snack.</li><li>• learn to deal with frustrations without having an adult solve every problem for them.</li><li>• use words rather than whine.</li></ul>	<b>Preprimary students can...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• show respect for others.</li><li>• wait patiently without interrupting conversations.</li><li>• use nice table manners.</li><li>• understand not to take or use things that belong to others without asking for permission.</li><li>• begin to solve problems with little or no interference from adults.</li><li>• feel empathy for others.</li></ul>	<b>Lower Elementary students can...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• say please and thank you.</li><li>• help others with work.</li><li>• solve problems with friends.</li><li>• take advantage of peer mediation when necessary.</li></ul>	<b>Upper Elementary students can...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• write thank you notes for gifts received.</li><li>• exhibit grace and courtesy.</li><li>• use conflict resolution skills.</li><li>• help others problem solve.</li><li>• respect authority.</li></ul>

## The road to independence is not always easy. We want you to know it is okay...

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### Toddler

- if your child complains a bit (or a lot) about doing what they have been asked to do; stand your ground!
- if your child cries to be carried; tell them that they can do it.
- if your child is crying or upset when they come into class; we will support them and we will call you in the event they do not settle down.
- if your child makes mistakes; it allows them to learn on their own.
- to allow them to dress themselves even if their clothes do not match.
- if your child cries to express sadness, anger, or disappointment.

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### Preprimary

- if your firm limits disappoint, anger, or sadden your child.
- if your child is crying or upset when they come into class. It is helpful that you are confident at this separation. We will call you if needed.
- if your child's clothing is not perfectly matched. It shows that they have been given the opportunity to make their choice independently.
- if your child makes mistakes. It allows them to learn on their own.
- if your child's hair is not perfectly coiffed and/or groomed.
- if your child spills when pouring, drops when carrying, or does not clean up "perfectly."
- if your child misspells words and writes letters and/or numbers backwards.
- if your child forgets his backpack, lunch, folder, etc. on occasion. The natural consequences that occur may keep it from happening in the future. (The teacher will make your child a lunch.)
- if you let your child try to solve their conflicts on their own before intervening.
- if your child is brought to school in their pajama's if you have had a particular difficult time that morning.
- if your child brings leftovers for lunch.
- if your child is not eager to do academic work when they get home.
- if your child does not want to share about the days events with you.

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### Lower Elementary

- to eat whatever the teacher can find at school for lunch because lunch was forgotten at home or in the car.
- if the laundry is not folded perfectly or in just the right place in the closet or drawer.
- if your child feels some frustration at having to figure something out on their own.
- to miss a favorite television show so there is time to wind down and read before bed.
- to go to bed early to keep from being too tired to get up on time in the morning.
- to make two trips to move all of their belongings from one place to the next.
- to spill.
- for your child to feel disappointed because they were told "no."
- for your child to search for something that has been lost.
- for your child to complain about doing homework and using the dictionary.
- for your child to complain about taking care of their belongings.
- to not be able to explain all of the work done at school and why.
- to not watch television or play video games before school.

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### Upper Elementary

- if their school projects look like they did it, and not their parent.
  - if they do not meet 100% of their weekly goals each week.
  - to forget their lunch (occasionally).
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