

Montessori Pocket Lessons

Fifty lessons that fit in a pocket

by Nissa Newton · cosmicnissa

A pocket lesson is the smallest honest unit of Montessori work: one small object, carried in a pocket or a purse, one short presentation, and one good question. It is made for the moments that are usually lost - a waiting room, a line, a long car ride, the ten minutes before dinner. No special room, no special shelf. The child does the work; the adult brings the pocket.

How to use this booklet

The lessons are in an order that makes sense: subject areas alternate so a pocket day never feels like a school day, and the work grows across two parts - first lessons, then growing lessons. Every lesson here was chosen twice over: the things it needs are small enough to carry, and the work is kind to little hands. Nothing pours, nothing is too big for a pocket, and nothing has a hundred loose pieces. You do not have to follow the order. A pocket lesson works whenever a child is waiting and curious. Follow the child, not the numbering.

Each lesson has three parts. **In the pocket** says what to carry. **Present it** says how to show the work, slowly and with few words. **Ask** gives the one question that opens the child's own thinking - sometimes it says to ask nothing at all, because the work itself is the point.

The pocket kit

The whole kit fits in a small bag. Its heart is a bead organizer with small slots - the flat craft boxes sold for beads and embroidery floss, one compartment for each lesson's tiny things: counters, texture squares, letter tiles from the printable packet. One slot, one lesson, nothing loose in the bottom of a purse. The printable packet that comes with this booklet holds the cards and sheets the lessons call for; Appendix B lists every sheet. Appendix A lists everything in the full kit, lesson by lesson, so you can build it a few slots at a time.

A word about the questions: they are not a quiz. Ask once, then wait. Silence is a fine answer while a child is thinking. If the child hands the object back and runs off to play, the lesson is over and it still counted.

Part 1 · First Lessons (Lessons 1-25)

First touches, first sounds, first counts. Everything is new and everything is simple.

1. Geometric Solids

Sensorial

In the pocket: a marble (sphere). On other days: a die (cube), a small cone, a short tube (cylinder).

Present it: Pull out the marble. Let the child examine it and hold it. Roll it between your palms so the child sees it has no flat sides and never stops rolling.

Ask: What do you see that is a sphere?

2. Folding a Cloth

Practical Life

In the pocket: a small handkerchief or cloth napkin.

Present it: Lay it flat, smooth it, and fold it slowly - halves, then quarters, corners matched to corners. Unfold it and let the child do it.

Ask: Say almost nothing. The matching corners are the lesson.

3. The Mystery Object

Sensorial

In the pocket: one small familiar object - a key, a button, a shell.

Present it: Keep it hidden in your closed hand. The child feels it through your fingers, or with eyes closed, and describes it before guessing: hard or soft, smooth or rough, heavy or light.

Ask: What does your hand tell you? (Knowing by touch alone.)

4. Counting Stones

Math

In the pocket: five to ten small pebbles, dried beans, or pennies.

Present it: The child counts them into your hand one at a time, touching each one. Then count them back. Hide some in your fist - how many are hiding?

Ask: How many are in my hand? How do you know?

5. The Sound Game

Language

In the pocket: any small object whose name starts with a clear sound - a button, a penny, a key.

Present it: Show the object. Say: I spy with my little eye something beginning with /b/. The child finds things nearby that start with the same sound.

Ask: Nothing more - the game is the lesson. Sounds, not letter names.

6. A Stone from Nature

Science & Nature

In the pocket: a smooth river stone, an acorn, a small pinecone, or a feather.

Present it: Hold it out on your open palm and let the child take it, turn it over, and look closely. Name where it came from.

Ask: Is this made by nature or made by people? What else can you find that nature made?

7. The Listening Bell

Music & Art

In the pocket: a small bell.

Present it: Ring it once, softly. Both of you listen in silence until the sound is completely gone, then raise a hand when you cannot hear it anymore.

Ask: When did it stop? (Concentration and silence - a pocket Silence Game.)

8. Button and Snap

Practical Life

In the pocket: a short strip of fabric with one large button and buttonhole, or two big snaps.

Present it: Open and close it slowly so the child sees how the button turns through the hole. Then hand it over.

Ask: Can you open it? Can you close it?

9. Rough and Smooth

Sensorial

In the pocket: two or three small squares - sandpaper grades, a piece of silk, a bit of bark or a rough stone.

Present it: The child strokes each one with two fingertips, eyes open first, then closed. Put them in order from smoothest to roughest.

Ask: Which one is roughest? How do you know?

10. First Counting Cards

Math

In the pocket: Printable 2 (mini numeral cards 0-10) and ten small counters from the kit.

Present it: Lay out the cards 1, 2, 3. The child places the right number of counters under each card, touching each counter as it is counted.

Ask: Can you show me 3? What comes after 3?

11. Sandpaper Sound - m

Language

In the pocket: Printable 1 (mini sandpaper letters) - start with m, s, a.

Present it: Trace the letter m with two fingers, in the direction it is written, and say the sound: mmm. The child traces and says it too. Sounds, never letter names.

Ask: Can you hear mmm at the start of moon? Of sun?

12. Farm Animals - First Cards

Science & Nature

In the pocket: Printable 3 (mini three-part cards: farm animals).

Present it: Name each animal together first. The child matches each label to its picture, then checks with the control card that carries both.

Ask: Which animal lives on a farm near us? What sound does it make?

13. Color Hunt

Music & Art

In the pocket: a paint chip or a small card of one color (or Printable 9, color tablets).

Present it: Show the color. The child looks around and finds that exact color, then a lighter one and a darker one.

Ask: Can you find this color? Can you find it lighter? Darker?

14. Heavy and Light

Sensorial

In the pocket: two small identical containers, one filled with sand, one empty (or nearly).

Present it: One in each of the child's hands, eyes closed. The child says which is heavier, then trades hands and checks again.

Ask: Which hand is working harder? (Knowing by weight.)

15. Hide and Count

Math

In the pocket: ten small counters and your two hands.

Present it: Count out seven counters together. The child closes their eyes; hide some under one hand. The child counts what is left and works out how many are hiding.

Ask: How many are hiding? How did you figure it out?

16. Land or Water?

Geography & Culture

In the pocket: two photos or postcards - one of land, one of water (or the land and water cards from Printable 4).

Present it: Look at each picture together. The child sorts what they see: this part is land, this part is water. On a walk, do the same with the real world.

Ask: Is this land or water? How can you tell?

17. Smelling Bottle

Sensorial

In the pocket: a tiny vial, or a cotton ball in a small tin, with a drop of vanilla - or a fresh mint leaf.

Present it: Open it, smell it yourself first with a slow breath, then pass it. The child smells and names it, or says what it reminds them of.

Ask: What does it smell like? Can you find another smell nearby?

18. Bird Calls

Science & Nature

In the pocket: nothing to carry - or the bird cards from the Birds three-part set.

Present it: Stand still outside and listen. Count how many different bird sounds you can hear. Try to answer one call with a soft whistle.

Ask: How many birds can you hear? Can you tell them apart?

19. Magnet Hunt

Science & Nature

In the pocket: a small magnet and a paper clip.

Present it: Show the clip jumping to the magnet. Then the child tests what the magnet will pick up nearby - and what it will not.

Ask: What does the magnet like? What does it leave alone?

20. The Measuring String

Math

In the pocket: a piece of string or ribbon about as long as your hand.

Present it: Lay the string along something nearby - a book, a shoe, a table edge. The child finds things that are longer than the string, shorter than the string, and just the same.

Ask: Is it longer or shorter than the string?

21. Buttons to Sort

Math

In the pocket: four to six buttons, all different.

Present it: Pour them into the child's hand. The child sorts them - by color, by size, by number of holes - then sorts them a different way.

Ask: How did you sort them? Can you sort them another way?

22. Echo Rhythm

Music & Art

In the pocket: nothing to carry, or two small rhythm sticks.

Present it: Clap a short pattern - two slow, one fast. The child echoes it exactly. Take turns being the leader.

Ask: Can you clap back exactly what you heard?

23. What's Inside? (Sound)

Language

In the pocket: a small closed container - a film canister or plastic egg - with a few beans, rice, or paper clips inside.

Present it: Shake it gently near the child's ear. The child shakes it too and guesses what is making the sound. Open it together to check.

Ask: What do you hear? Carry a second container with something different and compare the sounds.

24. Untangle and Untie

Practical Life

In the pocket: a short cord or shoelace with a loose knot tied in it.

Present it: Show the knot. The child works it loose with their fingers - slowly, no pulling. Then tie a loose knot for you to undo, or let them try their own.

Ask: Nothing. Strong fingers and patience are the point.

25. The Mirror

Practical Life

In the pocket: a small unbreakable mirror.

Present it: The child looks, makes a happy face, a sad face, a surprised face, and names each feeling. Make a face and let the child copy it and name it.

Ask: What feeling is this? (Reading faces is where grace and courtesy begin.)

Part 2 · Growing Lessons (Lessons 26-50)

The same kinds of work, a step deeper: matching and grading, building and reading words, counting all the way to 100 - and at the end, the child makes the lesson.

26. Color Tablets - Matching

Sensorial

In the pocket: Printable 9 (color tablets) - one pair of colors at a time.

Present it: Lay out one tablet of each color. The child finds the matching tablet in the pile and pairs them. Add pairs as the child succeeds.

Ask: Can you find the one that is exactly the same?

27. Sandpaper Sounds - More Letters

Language

In the pocket: Printable 1 - add t, p, n, c in small groups, always with letters the child has met before.

Present it: Same presentation as the first letters: trace, say the sound, let the child trace. Mix one new letter with two known ones.

Ask: Which sound does cat start with? Which does dog start with?

28. Zoom Matching - Small Creatures

Science & Nature

In the pocket: Printable 10 (zoom matching cards: bee, katydid, snail, caterpillar).

Present it: Lay out the whole-creature cards. The child matches each close-up card to the creature it came from, looking for the exact detail.

Ask: How did you know this close-up belongs to this one?

29. Continents - Names and Colors

Geography & Culture

In the pocket: Printable 4 (continent three-part cards).

Present it: Name each continent together first, using the control cards - the shape in its Montessori color, with its name. The child matches each picture card to its control card, then matches the name labels and checks with the control cards. Play a listening game: hand me Asia ... hand me the pink one (South America).

Ask: Which continent do we live on? Which color is it?

30. Build a Word - cat

Language

In the pocket: Printable 1 (letters c, a, t) or the movable alphabet, and the cat card from Printable 3.

Present it: Sound the word out slowly together: c-a-t. The child finds each letter by its sound and lays them in order under the picture.

Ask: What sound comes first? What sound do you hear last?

31. Living or Non-Living?

Science & Nature

In the pocket: Printable 11 (mini sorting cards: living and non-living).

Present it: Sort the cards into two piles using the three questions: Does it grow? Does it need food and water? Can it make new living things?

Ask: Is a car alive? How do you know? Is a tree?

32. Sing Birdie Lullaby

Music & Art

In the pocket: the Birdie Lullaby words, carried in your head (lyric sheet in the music booklet).

Present it: Sing it slowly together. The child keeps a gentle beat on their knees. Talk about the bird in the song - Peanut, who stayed for 29 years.

Ask: What is the song asking the little bird to do?



Scan to hear **Birdie Lullaby** - the song on YouTube (also at birdielullaby.com).

33. Three-Letter Words - First Set

Language

In the pocket: the Three-Letter Word Cards (cat, dog, pig, hen, sun, egg) - six to start.

Present it: Name each picture. The child sounds the word out, builds it or reads it, and turns the card over to check - the word on the back is the control.

Ask: Can you read this word before you turn it over?

34. Counting Cards - Dog

Math

In the pocket: the Counting Cards - Dog set (picture cards and numerals 1-10) with its square face counters.

Present it: Lay the numeral cards in order. For each picture card, the child puts one counter on each dog as they count, then matches the numeral card.

Ask: How many dogs are on this card? How do you know when to stop counting?

35. Clouds - Three Kinds

Science & Nature

In the pocket: Printable 12 (cloud cards: cumulus, cirrus, stratus).

Present it: Match the card to the sky. Cumulus is the puffy one, cirrus is the wispy one, stratus is the flat gray blanket.

Ask: What kind of cloud is that one? What is it doing today?

36. The World in Colors

Geography & Culture

In the pocket: Printable 6 (mini continents map) or the continent picture cards from Printable 4.

Present it: Lay the map out. The child names each continent by its color first (the orange one is North America), then by name alone.

Ask: Which continent is below ours? Which one is an island continent?

37. Shake and Listen - Loud and Soft

Music & Art

In the pocket: two shaker containers - one with a few beans (soft), one with many (loud).

Present it: Shake each one. The child orders them softest to loudest, then shakes along softly while you sing, and loudly on the last line.

Ask: Which shaker is the quiet one? When should music be soft?

38. Cookie Spindle Box - 0 to 10

Math

In the pocket: Printable 5 (mini cookie sheets 0-10) and 55 small counters (the cookies).

Present it: The full set this time. The child reads each number, counts exactly that many counters onto the sheet, and ties each finished group with a twist tie or ribbon - a bundle you can feel. Zero still holds nothing.

Ask: Why does the 0 sheet stay empty, even now? What does a bundle of ten feel like?

39. Counting to 100 - the Color Chart

Math

In the pocket: Printable 7 (the color hundred chart).

Present it: Lay the chart flat. The child's finger walks the numbers row by row, counting aloud together - all the way to 100. The blue numbers at the end of each row are the tens; pause on each one. No tiles, nothing to lose: the chart does the holding.

Ask: What number comes after 59? How do you know?

40. Counting by Tens

Math

In the pocket: Printable 7 (the counting by tens chart).

Present it: Point only at the tens, down the edge of the chart: 10, 20, 30... to 100. Say them like a chant. Then let the child point while you chant, then trade.

Ask: What does every one of these numbers end with?

41. Counting by Fives

Math

In the pocket: Printable 7 (the counting by fives chart).

Present it: The orange numbers are the fives: 5, 10, 15, 20... The child points and counts them to 100. Five is a hand: count fingers on one hand, then two hands make ten - the chart and the hands agree.

Ask: Do the fives ever land on a ten? Which ones?

42. Counting by Twos

Math

In the pocket: Printable 7 (the counting by twos chart) and ten counters.

Present it: Set the counters in pairs - shoes, mittens, two by two. Count the pairs: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10. Then find the same green numbers on the chart and keep going to 20, then as far as the child wants.

Ask: Is 7 on the twos chart? Why not?

43. Addition with Counters - Sums to 5

Math

In the pocket: Printable 2 (numeral cards) and ten counters, plus two small mats or your two hands.

Present it: Lay out 2 counters, then 1 more beside them. Push them together and count all: 2 and 1 makes 3. Try the pairs that make 4 and 5. Combining is the whole lesson.

Ask: If we push them together, how many are there now?

44. Addition Stories

Math

In the pocket: ten counters and a small toy or two from the kit.

Present it: Tell a tiny story: three birds on the fence, two more land. The child acts it out with counters and says how many birds now. Stories first; written symbols come in Quarter 4.

Ask: How many birds are on the fence now? How did you count them?

45. Rhyming -at, Stage 1: Hear It

Language

In the pocket: your voice, and three picture cards if you have them (Printable 8): cat, hat, bat.

Present it: Say the words slowly: cat... hat... bat. They all end the same. Say a word that does not belong - dog - and let the child catch it. Hearing the sameness comes first.

Ask: Do cat and sun end the same? How can you tell?

46. Three-Part Cards - Read the Labels

Science & Nature

In the pocket: Printable 3 (farm animals) or any three-part set from the kit - now with the separate word labels.

Present it: The child reads each label - sounding it out if needed - and matches it to the picture, then checks with the control card. Reading is now part of the science work.

Ask: Can you read this label before you check the control card?

47. Beginning Sounds Basket

Language

In the pocket: three picture cards from the three-part sets and Printable 1 letters for their first sounds.

Present it: Lay out the cards. Say the first sound of one picture - fff for fish... use the farm and ocean cards. The child finds the picture and matches its letter.

Ask: Which picture starts with this sound?

48. Geo Art - Patterns

Music & Art

In the pocket: a Geo Art grid page and three crayons.

Present it: A repeating pattern this time: two squares of one color, one of another, across a whole row. The child predicts the next square before coloring it.

Ask: What comes next in your pattern? How do you know?

49. Lacing a Card

Practical Life

In the pocket: a lacing card (or a stiff card with punched holes) and a shoelace with a taped end.

Present it: In and out, around the edge, pulling the lace snug but not tight. Finish with the ends even. Then unlace it and store it for the next pocket day.

Ask: What happens if you skip a hole?

50. Make Your Own Pocket Lesson

Practical Life

In the pocket: one small object the child chooses, and everything they have learned.

Present it: This lesson belongs to the child. They pick an object, decide what to show you, and ask you a question about it - the pocket, the presentation, and the ask, all theirs. Write it down together and add it to the kit. The booklet ends; the pocket stays full.

Ask: What will your lesson teach me?

Appendix A · The Full Pocket Kit

Everything the 50 lessons call for, gathered in one list. Most of it is already in a kitchen drawer. Build the kit a few slots at a time; the lessons work with whatever part of the kit exists.

Part of the kit	What to gather
The container	Bead organizer with 100 small slots (flat craft box); a small pouch or bag for the day's lesson; a tiny cloth for spills.
Counters (at least 55)	Small pebbles, dried beans, pennies, or square tiles - one kind, all the same size. 55 lets the child build every number to 10 in pairs and bundles.
Practical life	Handkerchief or cloth napkin; button strip (fabric with one large button and buttonhole, plus two big snaps); a short cord; a lacing card with a taped-end lace; a small hand mirror.
Sensorial	A marble, a die, a small cone, a short tube; texture squares - silk, paper, sandpaper in two or three grades, a bit of bark; two identical small containers (one filled with sand); a smelling bottle; a magnet; a measuring string; paint chips or the color tablets (Printable 9).
Sound containers	Six small closed containers (film canisters or plastic eggs) with fillings: rice, beans, paper clips, sand, a few beads, and one empty. Two pairs should match for the matching game.
Music	A small bell; two shaker containers (soft and loud).
Mystery and nature	A key, a button, a shell (mystery objects); a smooth river stone, an acorn, a pinecone, a feather; leaves collected on walks.
Printables	The Supplemental Printable Packet (Appendix B): mini sandpaper letters, mini numerals, mini three-part cards, continent cards, cookie spindle sheets, mini maps, mini hundred board, rhyming -at cards, color tablets, zoom matching cards, living/non-living sorting cards, cloud cards.
From the cosmicnissa sets	Counting Cards (dog, horse, or pig) with their square counters; Three-Letter Word Cards; three-part card sets for ocean animals and sea creatures; Geo Art grid pages.

Appendix B · The Supplemental Printable Packet

Twelve printable sheets come with this booklet. Cut them out - everything is made to be very easy to cut - and keep them in the kit. Lessons refer to them as Printable 1 through Printable 12.

Sheet	What it is
Printable 1	**Mini sandpaper letters** - Lowercase letter tiles in the literacy forms. Vowels are blue, consonants are red. Trace with two fingers and say the sound.
Printable 2	**Mini numeral cards 0-10** - One numeral per card, including zero.
Printable 3	**Mini three-part cards - farm animals** - Picture cards, word labels, and control cards: cow, pig, goat, horse, chicken, dog.
Printable 4	**Continent cards - three-part** - For each continent: a control card (picture with its name), a picture card, and a name label, in the classic Montessori colors.
Printable 5	**Mini cookie spindle sheets 0-10** - One sheet per number; the child counts cookies (counters) onto each sheet. The 0 sheet holds nothing.
Printable 6	**Mini maps** - Land and water, the continents, North America, and South America in pocket size.
Printable 7	**Color hundred charts** - Four printed charts, no tiles: the hundred chart in color, and the counting by twos, by fives, and by tens versions with the pattern numbers colored in.
Printable 8	**Mini rhyming -at cards** - The ending card (__ at) and picture cards: cat, hat, bat - plus one that does not belong.
Printable 9	**Color tablets** - Five shades each of six colors, for matching, hunts, and grading light to dark.
Printable 10	**Zoom matching cards** - A close-up and the whole creature or plant it came from. Guess from the close-up first.
Printable 11	**Living and non-living sorting cards** - Sort by the three questions: Does it grow? Does it need food and water? Can it make new living things?
Printable 12	**Cloud cards** - Cumulus, cirrus, and stratus - match the card to the sky.

The full-size sets these pocket versions come from - and the music booklet, the geography packet, and Geo Art - are in the cosmicnissa shop. Mission: awareness, education, creating good in the world, and peace through children.