

# Aiding Independence Lessons

Presented by Julia Volkman

Montessori Schools of Massachusetts Conference, January 2018

## Procedure for Grace & Courtesy Role Plays

Grace & Courtesy lessons follow a special procedure as outlined below. All grace and courtesy lessons must be practiced with a cooperating adult in advance. All behaviors must 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 at the beginning of the school year. Be sure you demonstrate how much fun it is to behave elegantly!

1. Invite the child 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.
  - d. 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.
7. Summarize the gracious behavior.
8. Free the child to use the behavior whenever it is needed.

## How to Get Someone's Attention

1. Invite the children to the lesson. Sit together around a work rug.
2. Name the lesson. Say, "This is a lesson on how to get someone's attention."
3. Introduce the scenario. Say, "Sometimes people are busy and we don't want to interrupt them but we want to get their attention. This is how you can get their attention politely."
4. Role play. Say, "Let's pretend Ms. Riley is busy working. I'll come and stand near her and place my hand so gently on her so she knows I want her attention."
5. Cooperating guide pretends to be doing invisible work on the work rug. Lead guide stands up and elegantly walks over to her and places her hand so gently upon her shoulder.
6. Cooperating guide continues to pretend work for a few seconds and then turn to look at lead guide and says, "Did you want my attention?"
7. Lead guide says with a smile, "Yes!"
8. Cooperating guide says with a smile, "You have it!"
9. Lead guide says, "That was fun. Now Jenay, let's pretend that you want my attention. I'll pretend to be busy." Encourage Jenay to have a turn.
10. Say, "Now let's pretend that Markisha wants Jenay's attention. Jenay, pretend that you're busy working at the rug."
11. Continue in this fashion until all of the children have at least one turn. Fade and observe each role play but step in as necessary to engage all of the children in role playing.

12. Summarize the lesson. Say, “Sometimes we want someone’s attention but we don’t want to interrupt them. When that happens, we can so politely and gently place our hand on them and wait for them to turn their attention to us. We know we have it when they look right in our eye.”
13. Free them to repeat. Say, “Thank you for playing the how to get someone’s attention game with me. You can play it anytime you like. Are you going to play it again now?”
14. Dismiss them to work.

### How to Observe

1. Invite the children to the lesson. Sit together around a work rug.
2. Name the lesson. Say, “This is a lesson on how to observe work.”
3. Introduce the scenario. Say, “Sometimes you want to watch what someone is working on. But we don’t want to distract them from what they are doing. I’ll show you how you can observe work without bothering the person who’s working!”
4. Role play. Say, “Let’s pretend that Ms. Riley is really busy working and I’ll come observe her. Watch how I stand behind her so she doesn’t even notice me!”
5. Cooperating guide pretends to work on invisible materials at the rug. The Lead guide observes behind and to the side of her, out of the Cooperating guide’s line of sight. After about 10 seconds, the Lead Guide returns to her seat.
6. Say, “That was fun! She didn’t even know I was observing her! Dawn, let’s pretend that you want to observe me while I’m working!” Encourage Dawn to have a turn.
7. Say, “Now let’s pretend that Molly wants to observe Dawn while she is working.”
8. Continue in this fashion until all of the children have at least one turn. Fade and observe each role play but step in as necessary to engage all of the children in role playing.
9. Summarize the lesson. Say, “When you want to watch someone who’s busy working, just stand so quietly behind them without even making a sound!”
10. Free them to repeat. Say, “Thank you for playing the observing work game with me. You can observe work anytime you like.”
11. Dismiss them to work.

### How to Respond when someone Forgets How to Observe

1. Role play as above but add in what to do if you are interrupted by someone observing unskillfully.
2. The lead guide will model working while the cooperating guide will model unskillfully observing the work by touching it.
3. The lead guide will gently turn to the cooperating guide, look her in the eye, and say, “I’m trying to focus on my work right now. See if you can observe me without touching my work.”