



Parent Page Newsletter

For the parents of children in the CGS Atrium
January 2025

A Prepared Environment at Home: The Work Rug

The younger children (ages 3 to 6-years-old) may prefer to work on the floor instead of sitting at a table. In the Atrium, we have rugs or mats that can be rolled and unrolled as needed. The designated rug provides a clear workspace for the child to arrange their materials, acting like a dedicated 'table' on the floor, encouraging focused activity within a defined area. For your home, the rug or mat can be a small piece of carpet or even a placemat.

In the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd atrium the unrolling and rolling of a mat is a significant part of a child's work cycle. The act of laying out the mat defines their workspace and signifies the start of their activity, while rolling it up and putting it away indicates the completion of their work. This simple routine helps children develop a sense of independence, establish boundaries, and refine their fine motor skills.

A Visual Boundary and Grace and Courtesy:

The mat visually outlines the area where the child works, preventing materials from spilling over. The children learn about rolling and unrolling a mat as a preliminary work at the beginning of the year. Rather than stepping upon or hopping over a mat, the children practice how to walk around a mat, so as not to disturb another's work. When working with a rug or mat, it demonstrates a sense of organization, mindfulness, and respect for both materials and the workspace of others. By placing materials on a mat, the children are encouraged to handle the materials with care and it may even prevent the material from being spread or scattered throughout the room.

Aid to Concentration and Fine Motor Development:

The act of unrolling and rolling the mat can help the child focus on the task at hand. Rolling up the mat requires precise hand movements, strengthening the child's fine motor skills. Fine motor skills begin developing in infancy through activities like grasping objects and reaching for toys. Muscle development, particularly in the hand and finger muscles, is directly related to fine motor skills. The small muscles enable the precise movements needed for activities like writing, buttoning, or using utensils, that require both strength and coordination to perform these tasks.

How to Use a Work Mat at Home

How do you introduce the work mat at home? As parents, simply have the rug or mat available in the room where the child has 'materials', whether that be in the child's bedroom or the living room, or both spaces. Present the mat as an option and let the child decide whether to use it: *Would you like to work on a mat or sit at the table?* For the youngest children, the parent models, i.e., (1) silently unroll a mat, (2) bring materials (a puzzle, blocks, etc.) to the mat, (3) invite the child to join, and when finished with the work, (4) restore the mat. This will help establish a routine. Modeling is a powerful parenting tool because it allows our children to learn by our example, and shapes their understanding based on the actions and attitudes they observe in their parents.