

Fine Motor SKILLS

When we think of the physical development of infants and toddlers, we primarily think about gross motor development (i.e. standing, crawling, walking.) A preschooler is still developing gross motor skills, but fine motor skills are also rapidly emerging. Fine motor development milestones are:

- Stacking and stringing skills
- Puzzle skills
- Pre-writing/drawing skills
- Cutting skills
- Self-care skills

▲ To be able to perform the above skills children need to be able to:

- Grasp and release with whole hand
- Grasp and release with thumb and index (pincer) finger
- Turn things using hands
- Understand and work: parts to whole/whole to parts (stringing, nesting, sorting activities)
- Visual perception (pegboards, keys & locks, drop cans, books, etc)
- Push and pull

■ Activities Ideas:

These Are Our Hands

To Do: Think of all the things to do with hands and use at transition times.

Look at your hands. What do you see?

Find your wrists. Bend your wrist in different ways: up/down, in circles, sideways or back and forth

Find your fingers. Can you make them: open/close fists and sideways, wiggle, shake fast/slow, bend up and down, snap, roll, etc.

Line your fingers up, touching fingertips. Line your fingers up to fold your hands.

Clap your hands fast, slow, loud, quiet.

Count your fingers.



Tip:

Motor skills develop from the core of the body outward, therefore large muscle coordination develops before small muscle coordination. For example, shoulders and arm movements will be controlled before finger and wrist.

Move It!

Materials: Spoons, ice cream scoops, tweezers and/or tongs, buckets, bowls, or dishpans, materials such as: cotton balls, dry cereal, pom poms, noodles, assorted pieces of fabric, blocks, etc.

To Do: Show the children how to position fingers to use the tool (tweezers or tong) to move things. Children will enjoy moving the materials from one bucket to another, or “serving” into smaller dishes, etc.

To Expand: Introduce other tools to transfer materials: strawberry huller, ladle, teaspoon, turner, etc.

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Find the Lid

Materials: Assorted containers with lids (milk jugs, plastic peanut butter jars, gift boxes, spice containers, candy boxes, individual drink bottles, etc.), dish pan or other large container

To Do: Remove all of the lids from the containers. Sort the lids from the containers. Encourage the children to match the lid to the container and twist into place.

Pinching

Materials: Clothespins

To Do: First practice opening and closing a clothespin. Attach it around all of the sides of a stiff piece of paper or cardboard. Next move around the room and investigate all the places a clothespin can attach to.

To Expand:

- A. Attach clothespins around the rim of an ice cream bucket or cardboard box.
- B. Write a number 1-10 on ten clothespins and attach to a ruler matching the numbers. Work up to a yardstick.
- C. String up a small line to use as a doll sized clothesline. Have your children “wash” the doll clothes and hang them up to dry.

Styrofoam Sculptures

Materials: Styrofoam balls or chunks, toothpicks, paper clips, pipe cleaners, small beads, cheerios, buttons, etc.

To Do: Create sculptures by poking the toothpicks into the Styrofoam. Unbend the paper clips and poke them in as well. Add buttons, Cheerios, etc. for more texture and color.

String It Up

Materials: Lacing materials (yarn, plastic lacing string, thin electrical wire), Cheerios, Fruit Loops, small beads, hair roller, pasta: wheels, rigatoni, buttons, etc.

To Do: Children love to lace and typically will be very focused on it. Tape one end of the lacing material down to the table as the “end.” The stiffer the lacing material the more successful the project. If you’re using yarn, use masking tape to stiffen an end and create a thin point to ease lacing. Lace necklaces, ankle and wrist bracelets, bird or squirrel feeders, etc.

Make A Shack

Materials: Assorted foods to make a snack.

To Do: Try the following combinations:

- Pretzel sticks poked into chunks of cheese
- Toothpicks to stab: mini marshmallow, dry cereal, fruit snacks, Craisins, raisins, small pieces of fruit (dried or fresh)
- Create kabobs of cheese and fruit chunks
- Spread peanut butter on crackers or toast using craft sticks or wooden spoons (available in bulk at craft stores)
- Frost graham crackers or smaller crackers. Shake on sprinkles for decoration.
- Dip teddy graham crackers into puddles of peanut butter, frosting, or pudding
- Stir chocolate into milk.
- Untwist sandwich cookies.
- Slice bananas using a smooth edge butter knife or safety cutters such as pumpkin knives.

Assorted toys that encourage fine motor skills:

blocks
blocks for stacking
boats in water
bubbles & tumblers
cars and road rugs or tracks
dolls and doll house
dressing dolls
Duplos or Legos
geo boards with rubber bands
lacing cards
magnetic letters
making patterns with blocks
marble works
nesting toys, bowls, dolls, eggs
peg boards
Potato Head
puppets
puzzles
ring stackers
Tinker toys
Velcro strips, toys, shoes, language boards
wind-up toys
wooden train & track

Using Scissors

Materials: Scissors, assorted materials

To Do: Encourage proper scissors position (thumb up) by placing a bit of colored tape on the top blade. Remind children to cut so that they can see the color. First attempts with scissors will be more successful with stiff materials such as: play dough snakes, straws, and thin strips of paper. Work up to: fringing the edges of a piece of paper, snipping corners off of smaller squares of paper, cutting between alleys, following thick straight lines, following thick curved lines, cutting out shapes, cutting out around more complex shapes, etc.

Torn Paper

Materials: Assorted paper to tear

To Do: Encourage tearing. Tear pieces of: newspaper, tissue paper, Kleenex, construction paper, leaves, etc.

To Expand: Glue the torn pieces on a larger base of paper to create a collage.

Water Spray

Materials: Spray bottles, water

To Do: Have a water fight outside using spray bottles.

To Expand: Spray water on paper and lay square of tissue paper over the wet area to create a collage.

Spaghetti Poke

Materials: Colander, uncooked spaghetti noodles.

To Do: Lay the colander upside down (curve of bowl facing up) and poke the spaghetti noodles through the holes.

To Expand:

A. Try colored toothpicks or bamboo skewers instead of spaghetti.

B. Try other homemade forms of pegboards: Drop clothespins into cans or bottles, drop marbles, small pom poms, or small balls into baby bottles, drop sticks into Pringle chip cans, poke unsharpened pencils through the openings of laundry baskets, etc.

Zip It Up

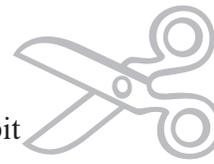
Materials: Zippers, boards

To Do: Purchase zippers of varying lengths. Attach to thin boards with strong glue or a staple gun. This allows children to practice moving a zipper up and down.

To Expand: Practice zipping a zipper with coats off and on the floor. Progress to coats on a friend and then coat on self.

Tip:

Encourage children to rest their forearms on the table when writing.



Assorted art materials that encourage fine motor skills:

chalk
collaging
crayons
finger painting
gluing with fingers and glue sticks
markers
painting
paste
play dough
Q-tips for painting
scissors
sidewalk chalk
sprinkling
stencils
stickers
tape
thick pencils

With play dough add:

plastic flowers
Potato Head pieces
rice
small plastic people (Fisher Price or Duplo)
small plastic people or animals
sticks, leaves, and rocks

Fingerplay

Silly Clown:

I'm a silly little clown, (wiggle finger back and forth)

And I move up and down. (bend finger down)

I can move my finger up. (straighten finger)

I can move my finger down. (bend finger down)

I'm a silly little clown. (wiggle finger back and forth)

I'm a silly little clown.

Try using a different finger as you say the poem again.

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Sensory Play

Materials: Assorted materials: sand, water, dry pasta, rice, oatmeal, beans, etc. and tools: scoops, pitchers, spoons, shovels, bowls, cups, sponges, funnels, etc.

To Do: Provide materials in a large tub with assorted tools. All of the fine motor coordination that is developed from this type of play is worth the mess.

Find the Beans

Materials: Cornmeal, dry kidney beans, small bowl, large bowl

To Do: Have the children help you mix the dry beans into the cornmeal in the large bowl. Next ask them to find the beans and rub them “clean” before putting them into the small bowl.

Drop the Water

Materials: Eye dropper (purchased or medicine droppers), water, food coloring, containers (Dixie cups, and larger bowls)

To Do: Color water using food coloring. Provide the primary colors: red, yellow, blue in the smaller containers. Encourage color mixing by moving a dropper of colored water from the smaller container to a larger container.

To Expand:

A. Drop colored water on a block of ice.

B. Drop colored water down an incline by covering a baking sheet with wax paper and raising one end. Be sure to roll up a towel and the low end to catch the drips.

C. Use large turkey basters to move water from one bucket to another.

Pencil Grip

Materials: Crayons/pencils, tape, paper

To Do: To encourage proper pencil grip (4-5 years) try these idea:

- Break crayons to a shortened piece with just the tip left for grasping
- Use a stripe of tape around a crayon or pencil to indicate where fingers should rest
- Purchase pencil grips to encourage proper finger placement (available at most office supply stores or the craft/paper section of most Target/Walmart)

Pounding

Materials: Small, plastic hammers, golf tees, pumpkins, Styrofoam

To Do: Hammer the golf tees into the chunks of Styrofoam or the pumpkin.

General activities that strengthen hand muscles:

playing in sand, dirt
playing with playdoh
pulling weeds
sift flour or sand with a flour sifter
using sponges or clothes to wash toys, dishes, tables
using silverware

Pull the Car

Materials: Pencils, string, small car

To Do: Glue or tape one end of the string to the small car. Attach the other end of the string to the pencil. Have the children turn the pencil using the fingers of both hands to roll up the string and “drive” the car towards them.

Scarf Poke and Pull

Materials: Shape sorter, scarf

To Do: Have children poke the scarf in and out of the openings of the shape sorter.

Typical fine motor activities used in school:

Attempt to write letters
Attempts to draw people
Attempts to draw shapes
Attempts to write name
Attempts to write numerals
Buckles
Buttons
Circles objects
Colors inside the lines
Colors with crayons, markers, chalk
Copies or traces shapes
Cuts from magazines
Cuts on a line
Cuts paper
Draws free form shapes
Draws lines
Draws on a line
Draws simple people
Draws with ruler
Folds paper
Glues/pastes objects
Outlines when coloring
Snaps
Traces with stencils
Underlines pictures
Uses pencil
Zips