

Fine motor skills for children at pre-school age and older



Fine motor skills are the movement and use of the small muscles of the hand. Having good finger, wrist and hand strength, coordination and skill helps with many tasks like eating, dressing and writing. If a child has poor fine motor skills, it can take them a long time to complete these tasks, or they might need extra help from others.

You can help improve or develop your child's fine motor skills through a range of activities, in lots of different positions. This can also develop other areas, like their gross motor skills. For example, when children complete activities when lying on their tummy, they can strengthen their arms and tummy muscles. Also, when children complete activities on a vertical surface (like a chalk or whiteboard) they can build their wrist strength and develop a controlled finger movement.

There are heaps of activities you can try with your children. Remember to have FUN while doing them, as children learn best when they PLAY.

Activities you can try at home:

Play with playdough or a foam/stress ball: Squeezing playdough or a stress ball is a great activity for finger movement and hand strength. Get your child to practise with both hands.

Scrunching paper: Using just one hand, crumple a piece of newspaper or magazine in the hand until it is a tight ball. Do not use any other part of the body to help, and try do it while holding the hand in the air so the fingers work harder. The scrunched up balls can then be thrown into a bucket for development of eye hand coordination. Practise with both hands, one hand at a time.

Collages: Rip up pieces of paper, magazines or thin card using the 'snappy fingers' (thumb and index fingers only with the other fingers tucked into the palm). Stick all the pieces onto a large sheet of paper to make a picture or collage.

Tweezers/chopsticks: Practise using just the 'tripod fingers' (thumb, index, middle) to hold the tweezers and pick up small objects and then place them down again. For example: pick up marbles or buttons and sort them according to colour or size, or pick up craft items then stick them onto a picture.

Pegs: Squeeze clothes pegs open and shut using the snappy fingers (thumb and index). Play games by attaching pegs onto string or cardboard, using lots of different colours and patterns.

Bead threading: Thread beads or macaroni/pasta onto string. To make the game more difficult, give the child a pattern to follow using different shapes and/or colours in a sequence.

Hand skills: Place a few small objects (coins or buttons) into the palm of your child's hand, then ask the child to pass you a certain item without using their other hand. The child must use their fingers to work the object up to their fingertips to give it to you.



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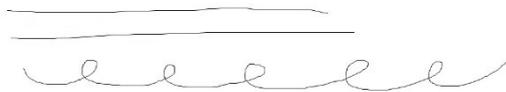
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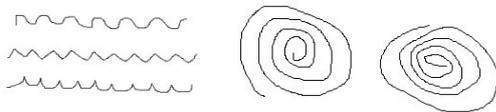
Drawing: Practise drawing and copying shapes, either with pencils at a table or with shaving cream on the shower screen, using the pointer finger only.

Have your child practise the following patterns to improve fine finger movement and pencil control. Encourage them to use the correct pencil grip and completing each pattern a few times.

Do these ones as quick flowing movements with your arm:



Do these ones by keeping your arm still and just using your fingers to move the pencil:



Cutting with scissors: Cut out a variety of shapes from different materials, such as paper, fabric, thin card or playdough. Stiffer paper is good to cut because it is less

floppy and easier to control, and it helps strengthen the hand because it provides more resistance when cutting.

Arm and wrist strengthening: Try activities such as crawling, hand stands, pushing or climbing on playground equipment to increase the strength in arms and wrists.



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