

Fine motor activities

Fine motor co-ordination (manual dexterity) is the ability to co-ordinate movements of the eyes and hands to manipulate objects, this also requires the ability to perform small precise movements, quickly and smoothly. Many activities can be used to develop these skills:

- Punch holes around edges of pre-cut shapes or big letters (made of paper or cardboard, depending on the child's hand strength). Now weave a shoelace through. This is also ideal for learning different shapes, letters or numbers.
- Threading - cotton reels, beads, pasta, e.g. to make necklaces.
- Modelling - plasticine, playdough, saltdough, paper mache, Fimo.
- Pouring liquid between containers - make the necks gradually smaller.
- Picking up small objects between thumb and first finger (pincer grip), e.g. raisins, rice, beads.
- Construction toys, Duplo, Stickle Bricks, Lego, K-nex
- Jigsaw puzzles, form boards.
- All craft activities – tearing crepe paper and rolling it into small balls to paste, etc. Collages made of torn up paper / tissue paper. Tearing pictures of simple objects from newspaper/ magazine.
- Scrunch paper together with one hand, try to open with only one hand. Alternate hands.
- Scrunch up magazine/ newspaper into tight balls and throw at target (the bin would be ideal!)
- Stretching rubber bands with the fingers.
- Squeezing pegs, clip them round an ice cream/ margarine container.
- Squeezing a sponge, how much water can be got out? To save flooding, suggest done in the bath !
- Playdough - rolling, squeezing and kneading
 - hide items in playdough, ask your child to look for them
- Pick up small objects with tweezers, e.g. marshmallows or toys from a bucket. If this is too difficult, use barbecue type tongs until the child can carry out the movement with her hand. This is an ideal pre-scissor skill.
- Peg board activities.
- Tracing around templates.

Playdough Recipe

Ingredients:

200g plain flour
100g salt
1 tbs oil
300ml water
2 tsps cream of tartar
food colouring

Method:

- Put the flour, salt, cream of tartar and oil in a large saucepan
- Add a few drops of food colouring to the water
- Add the liquid gradually to the ingredients in the saucepan and mix it thoroughly to get rid of as many lumps as possible
- Put the pan over medium-low heat and cook stirring constantly. The mixture will start to thicken quite suddenly. Continue to cook until fairly stiff
- Remove the pan from the heat and scrape the dough out onto a smooth surface
- Leave to cool- it will be very hot at this stage
- Knead it thoroughly until it becomes smooth and pliable
- Store in an airtight container

Gross motor activities

Any activity involving using the muscles against resistance will help to increase muscle strength. Activities such as animal walks and using easels help to increase the shoulder stability, which we use for hand skills such as handwriting, dressing, using cutlery etc. Some of the activities may be difficult at first but they should become easier. They can be graded by using, for example, low resistance playdough to start with and gradually increasing the resistance. Try to alternate activities, e.g. if child is doing an activity at an easel, he may then need to do an activity with his arms supported at a table.

Positioning

Always make sure your child is positioned well for activities. The child should sit on a chair with their feet flat on the floor (or supported on a block) and back against the back of the chair for activities such as hand writing, dressing and eating.

When sitting on the carpet, they may benefit from sitting with their back against a wall or cupboard, particularly if tired or feeling unwell.

- Drawing/painting on an easel
- Drawing large shapes and letters on a white board, or piece of paper on a wall
- Painting with clear water and clean paintbrush outside over walls, floor etc
- Modelling with playdough or cooking dough
- Stretching elastic bands over fingers and stretching fingers out
- Mixing with a spoon, e.g. helping to make cakes etc
- Using Lego and other construction toys
- Jigsaw puzzles.

- Picking up small objects between the thumb and first finger (pincer grip) e.g. beads.
- Threading beads or using a sewing card.
- Squeezing clothes pegs/tongs with fingers
- Tearing and scrunching paper, e.g. to make a collage
- Wiping clear the white board at school
- Using flip top containers (e.g. some empty medicine/vitamin containers) to put things in such as craft materials.
- Using hole punches. Toy hole punches that punch out various shapes are available.
- Playing with water/sand and pouring from one container to another e.g. bath toys.
- Squeezing water from sponges, squeeze bottles
- Wheelbarrow walks
- Animal walks, e.g. crab walk (sitting on bottom with legs in front and arms behind and lifting bottom off of floor), frog jumping, bunny hopping.
- Throwing/bouncing a ball to a target, e.g. into a hula-hoop or bucket.
- Rolling a ball to knock down skittles or to go between a goal.
- Hitting a suspended ball with a bat
- Stopping a ball going between own legs
- Using scarves/streamers to make shapes in the air (one in each hand)
- Mirroring someone else's actions.