Occupational Therapy Home Activities for School Closure

When we talk about fine motor skills, we are looking at several components including the following:

**Bilateral Coordination** (using both hands together)

**Manual Dexterity (moving the fingers in a smooth and coordinated way)**

**Midline Crossing (spontaneously moving body parts – in this case hands- to the other side of the body to work. From right to left and vice versa if we are speaking in terms of an imaginary line being drawn down the center of the body from head to toes)**

**Hand Strength (fingers and hands must be strong enough to get the work done and not get tired out too quickly)**

**Listed below are a few activities that address all these areas to give you some ideas and a starting place for working on these important skills at home. Enjoy!**

* **Make cookies! (WASH, WASH, WASH those hands!) Mixing ingredients, rolling dough with a rolling pin, pressing cookie cutters, or even making balls with just their hands addresses all components of fine motor coordination.**
* **\*Bonus – allow child to ice cookies or squeeze decorative icing from a tube, finish off with sprinkles – use fingers to sprinkle them versus shaking the canister**
* **Make pretend cookies!! – reenact the steps of cookie making with play dough for nearly the same fine motor benefits.**
* **Paper airplanes, or origami if you’re fancy 😉 (origami step tutorials can be found in a simple google search as can airplane ideas)**
* **Screw open and closed tops for containers such as water bottles, gatorade (regular or mini sized) bottles and jars.**
* **Spray water bottles or water guns at each other for outdoor fun**
* **Use water bottles to spray plants (even plants you don’t care much about ar good for this activity)**
* **Put coins into a bank (or small items such as dry beans or corn kernels into a container with a small hole cut into the top – think plastic tops like coffee cans)**
* **Use tongs to pick up small items – can be done at a table top or at floor level (or even outside)**
* **Pop bubble wrap bubbles**
* **String beads or cereal (cheerios, fruit loops etc) to make necklaces/bracelets** 
  + - **(To make the task a little easier for small hands, try pipe cleaners and larger beads)**
* **Tear paper into pieces or strips to paste into shapes drawn for textured artwork (shapes can be drawn by child or adult)**
* **Trace hands to make artwork**
* **GO back to basics!!**
* **Build with blocks**
* **Puzzles! (lots of options here including homemade – look online for tutorials)**
* **Board games**
* **Card games (physically handling the cards even just to pull from a deck or place one out from a hand works on fine motor coordination)**
* **Color – anything from blank paper to coloring books or sheets (bonus for doing so on the floor laying on bellies to work that core and shoulder girdle)**

**Scissors skills**

* **Start with just snipping and then move on to lines, progress from short (2-4”) lines to longer lines.**
* **Cut out pictures from cereal boxes (the cardboard helps with scissors control)**
* **Cut lines and shapes from index cards**
* **Cut straws into small pieces (and string them if desired)**
* **Cut play dough or putty (Bonus: there are tons of simple dough recipes online and lots of fine motor skills involved in making it!)**
* **Draw anything from single lines (vertical and horizontal) all the way up to shapes and letters for those who can, in sand, dirt, shaving cream (on a tabletop)**
* **Form shapes and letters from putty or playdough**

**Activities to incorporate into everyday**

* **Peeling fruit – oranges, bananas: help as much as the child needs and try to decrease the amount of help over time**
* **Opening containers – water bottles, fruit snacks, any and everything they might have**
* Putting bag clips on bags – allow the child to do the part of pinching the clip and putting it on while you hold the bag
* Hand clapping games or songs (even if just one song during am and pm dressing)
* **IMPORTANT:** During this time where we have more opportunities to move without rushing, encourage the child to complete as much of dressing/getting ready routine as he or she can, try to set small goals to work toward to challenge them while keeping it realistic and doable. Sometimes this is easier to do at bedtime than in the morning.

**Keyboarding**

* For students with keyboarding goals, there are good drills and lessons offered for free with a quick sign up on www.typingtest.com. Even 5-10 min practice per day will make a difference

Thank you for taking the time to check these options out. Keep in mind, the absolute most important thing for kids to do to develop motor skills is *PLAY*! I have added a few more strategies specific to handwriting to the following link: <bigideaslittlehands.weebly.com>

Dr. Sikithea Zackery, OTD, OTR/L

Occupational Therapist

Carroll County School System