

Fine Motor Skills and Activities

Fine motor skills refer to using the small muscles of our hands to complete activities such as holding a pencil or crayon to write or color, manipulating clothing fasteners, stringing beads on a lace, feeding ourselves, cutting with scissors, typing, etc. Fine motor skills also include being able to isolate individual fingers such as the pointer finger, pinching skills, thumb to finger opposition, and in-hand manipulation skills.

Ways to improve and strengthen fine motor skills and coordination include:

- Stringing beads, Cheerios, Froot Loops, pasta noodles, etc. on lace, string, or dental floss. Tape can be added to the end of the string if needed, or a pipe cleaner can be used.
- Finger counting starting with the index or pointer finger as number 1.
- Finger isolation songs such as Thumbkin, Daddy Finger, etc.
- Thumb to finger opposition—touch thumb to the tip of each finger individually starting with thumb to index, then thumb to middle finger, etc. Try going in reverse starting with the pinky. Try increasing the speed or doing both hands at the same time for a challenge.
- Picking coins up one at a time with one hand and holding the coins in the palm of the hand, then using the same hand to move the coins back to the fingertips to place coins into a bank or slotted container such as a plastic container with a slit cut in to the top.
- Have an adult carefully cut a slit into a tennis ball, then practice squeezing the tennis ball open to “feed” the ball small items such as coins, beads, marbles, or shredded paper in the opening.
- Use golf pencils and broken crayons to strengthen and improve fine motor strength.
- Clay, Therapy Putty, Silly Putty, Play-doh, Bread Dough, Modeling Foam (Crayola Modeling Magic)
 - These are all excellent materials for squeezing, squishing, pushing, pulling, and molding
 - Try hiding small objects (beads, pennies, beans) inside and then let your child pull them out
 - Use a rolling pin to flatten it out, then use cookie cutters to make shapes. Practice pulling the dough apart, rolling it into a snake, forming letters, stamping the dough, making mountains in the dough, flattening it into a pancake, making small dough “bugs” and squishing them with the thumb or index finger, make snowmen or other creations, etc.
- Use the pointer finger to erase letters from a chalkboard or dry erase board, or erase “bugs” from the board.
- Use the pointer finger to point to objects in books, turn single pages of books, or point to icons on tablets.
- Pop the bubbles on large or small bubble pack by pinching with thumb and index finger or by pushing down on bubbles when sheet is placed on a hard surface.
- Interlocking Construction Toys
 - Legos, Tinkertoys, Pop Beads, and Linking Chains
- Games
 - Tricky Fingers, Pop the Pig, Froggy Feeding Fun, Feed the Woozle, Avalanche Fruit Stand, and Operation.

- Using office supplies with supervision, such as a single hole punch, rubber bands, paper clips, office clips, etc.
 - Hole Puncher
 - Punch holes along strips of paper or along the edges of a paper plate,
 - Use hole punch clippings to make confetti or “snow” to glue on paper for pictures.
- Spray Bottles, Water Guns, Squirt Toys, Sponges
 - Spray bottles – help water plants or spray the windows to clean, play with it in the bathtub, play outdoors in warm weather, add food coloring to make spray bottle pictures on the sidewalk
 - Water guns & squirt toys – outdoor fun as well as in the bathtub
 - Sponges – squeezing to wring out the water is great for strengthening hands and forearms. Help wash the car, wash toys and dolls in the sink or bathtub.
- Squeeze Toys & Materials
 - Foam balls, animals, and shapes
 - Craft activities that require using bottles to squeeze: glue, glitter glue, puffy paint, fabric paint, etc.
 - Bulb syringe (usually in infant supply section of stores) or turkey baster to squirt water (can add food coloring), or have a race by squeezing them to blow cotton balls and pompoms across a finish line.
- Pinch Strengthening
 - Tongs, tweezers, connected chop sticks: use these to pick up small objects for sorting such as beads, marbles, beans, cotton balls, and pompoms.
 - Push a toothpick point into a Styrofoam tray or plate, or in aluminum foil placed over craft foam to make a picture.
 - Tear construction paper into small pieces. Crumble the pieces into small balls. Use the pieces to make a mosaic picture or put through a small opening such as the top of a coffee creamer bottle.
- Tweezer and clothespin activities—use tweezers or clothespins to pick up cotton ball, craft pompoms, pieces of cloth, small paper ball. Practice clipping clothespins to various items.
 - Clothespin Games
 - Use the pad of the thumb and index finger to open the clothespin rather than pinching it open against the side of the index finger.
 - When pinching open, try alternating each finger to squeeze opposite the thumb.
 - Pick up small items with clothespins: cotton balls, pompoms, crumbled paper, beads, pegs, etc.
 - Place clothespins around an index card.
 - Hang up pictures or plush toys on a string, like a clotheslines.
 - Place clothespins along the top of a container and then on top of each other to construct a design.
- Please refer to other links on this website such as Scissor Skills, Self-Care, and Typing for additional resources and suggestions.

Online Resources for Fine Motor Skills

- Finger Isolation Songs <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9aYkS5dYsWI>
- Tennis ball idea <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Ph0qO3amAw>
- Fun Finger Gym <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Roj9Kc6a-bw>
- Eat the Cheese (free printable game)
<https://www.yourtherapysource.com/blog1/2019/05/02/fine-motor-skills-game/>
- Bilateral Hand Use
file:///C:/Users/kellyn.gibson/Downloads/dh5_Tools%20to%20Grow%20at%20Home%20-%20Bilateral%20Hand%20Use.pdf