



Fine Motor Skill Activities



Engaging children in regular fine motor skill activities will help to build up the strength in their small muscles in their hands and fingers, develop co-ordination skills and support their dexterity and ability to manipulate objects. This will then help children to be able to engage in and complete tasks with a level of independence, including: managing zips, buttons, effectively using tools and resources, developing precision and control as well as progressing their mark-making, drawing and writing skills.

Below are a variety of examples of fine motor skill activities that can be implemented with individuals or small groups of children.

Considerations:

- ◆ Does an adult need to show the child/children how to complete the task/access the activity? It is useful for an adult to model the use of resources to the children using another set of the resources.
- ◆ Can other aspects of children's development and possible targets be incorporated into the activity, e.g. turn taking with an adult or a peer, requesting "more", shared attention, responding to instructions etc.
- ◆ Can the activity be extended to help develop concept knowledge in other areas, e.g. matching resources, sorting resources?
- ◆ How will you adapt the language used to ensure it is at the child's stage of development (not the child's chronological age)? The use of key word, simple language will benefit children and allow them to focus on the specifics you are saying, e.g. "blue next" "pull" "squash" "more water?"



It is important to remember:

- ☑ You **must** ensure that all activities are **risk assessed** and **supervised appropriately**. All equipment must be safe for children to access and be appropriate to the **developmental stage** of the child.
- ☑ Support the activity and children with narrative language – use simple language to talk about what the child is doing and refrain from asking questions.
- ☑ Fine motor activities can be used as part of a "now and next" approach" with motivational activities to follow.
- ☑ Allow time for children to explore the resources as well as having structured activities. Adults can follow the child's lead and copy their play (with multiples of the same resource) and then extend their play by modelling another action/step in the sequence of play.
- ☑ Encourage children to explore resources with both hands – this can be at the same time as well as cross their midline.



Fine Motor Skill Activities

Squeezing, stretching and pulling

- Single hole punch.
- Tearing up, squashing and rolling up pieces of tissue and paper – these can be thrown to hit a target/into a bucket, used as footballs to “flick” into a goal etc. Try scrunching up the paper using only one hand.
- Using malleable resources to squash, stretch and squeeze, e.g. play dough, gloop, clay, theraputty, slime. Children can help make the malleable resources too.
- Rolling and molding play dough into balls - using the palms of the hands or only using fingertips to make smaller balls.
- Pulling pipe cleaners through holes on a colander – these can be bent, pasta threaded onto them etc.
- Stretching rubber bands on, off and over resources – e.g. onto containers, natural resources etc. On containers, children can take them off to access what’s inside etc.
- Bubble wrap – popping, painting onto it etc.
- Using spray bottle to spray plants, to paint (add watered down paint or water with food colouring) or melt "monsters". (Monster pictures are drawn with pens/markers and sprayed so the colours run.)
- Squeeze out sponges during water play and pour water/sand from one jug/container to another.



Pinching

- Bending pipe cleaners into different shapes and back again.
- Use tongs of different sizes and that require differing amounts of strength to use to pick up and release objects, e.g. pom poms.
- Rice/lentils/pasta play with tweezers and teaspoons, utensils and containers. Also encourage scooping up with both hands creating a space between two cupped palms (shaking dice creates the same hand shape.)
- Using pegs e.g. to hang up pictures, to hang up washing in the role play area, to make a peg chain, put pegs around the outside of objects – paper plates, containers etc.
- Using stickers in play/activities that children can peel off and stick on independently.
- Picking up, turning over and posting cards, coins, buttons, bottle tops etc.
- Use liquid droppers and plastic syringes to collect water/coloured water and then release again. These can also be used for creative painting.
- Picking pom poms out of a whisk.



Fine Motor Skill Activities

Twisting

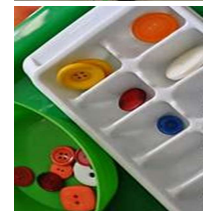
- Unscrewing little jars and containers to take out motivating objects from inside e.g. activity pieces – puzzles, beads to thread, favourite toys etc.
- Using small-sized or toy screw drivers and spanners.
- Attaching nuts to bolts and removing them again.
- Accessing wind-up toys, pop-up toys and toys with moving parts.
- Squeezing and twisting the water out of flannels/towels/sponges.
- Resources that involve an element of twisting e.g. Russian dolls, cogs, puzzles, spinning tops.



Hand-eye Co-ordination

All of the activities in the squeezing, pinching and twisting sections involve elements of hand-eye co-ordination skills. Here are a few more examples:

- Put large rings etc. on to fingers, mug stands etc. and off again.
- Fun threading activities – take beads out of a bag one at a time and then thread them, pull beads out of a container of shredded paper and then thread them.
- Make mazes that the children can mark a route with a whiteboard pen, chalk or use a magnet to “lead” a magnetic object around it.
- Using plastic/child-safe scissors and child-safe knives, forks and utensils with the play dough and malleable play resources.
- Placing feathers into straws, pasta tubes onto spaghetti etc.
- Sorting and placing different resources.
- Use finger puppets – taking them on and off of different fingers during singing and story times. Encourage movement of all and individual fingers.
- Painting on to different surfaces and printing from them, e.g. bubble wrap printing.



Fine Motor Skill Activities

Mark making activities

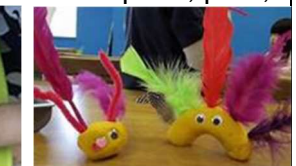
- Use different resources that the children can mark make with – pegs with cotton wool/fabric/leaves, twigs, leaves, cotton buds, hand-held and smaller sized chalk, different sized paint brushes etc.
- Encourage children to mark make with both hands, one at a time and both together – best done on a large surface.
- Use coloured/masking tape to create patterns on surfaces or create roads for cars etc.
- Attach pens/paint brushes to favoured resources, e.g. cars and allow children to make marks as they are driven along.
- Finger and whole hand mark making in different media, e.g. sand, salt, crazy foam, oats/cereal, gloop, fairy dust, etc. Provide some tools (paint brushes, spatulas or other resources, e.g. plastic animals etc) that the children can use to make marks with if they do not like getting messy.
- Attach paper to walls and tree trunks outside – children can make marks on them with different media (water/paint/chalk etc.) as they scoot/ride/walk by.
- Make edible paint – this can be used with mark making tools or fingers/hands.



Children can peg up and hang their creations up to dry or for all to see and enjoy!

Additional playdough activities

- Hiding “surprises or treasure” in playdough - encouraging children to pull the play dough away to reveal what is hidden (e.g. cars, little animals, gems, laminated pictures of favoured objects or characters.) They can then dig them into the playdough and hide them again for the adult or a peer to find.
- Adding additional resources to your playdough table for children to create with, e.g. pegs, straws, feathers, pasta etc.
- Add different tools and hand-held resources to the playdough table, e.g. play/child safe cutlery, plastic pizza cutters, fish slices, potato mashers, plastic/child safe scissors.
- Set up playdough making sessions and make playdough alongside the children so they can copy your actions – allowing them to spoon, pour, mix, squash etc.



Playdough Tool Kit taken from www.theimaginationtree.com



play dough tool kit

the imagination tree



Drawing on vertical or over-head surfaces supports wrist strength development, e.g. attaching paper underneath tables, onto wall and fences, “painting” with water and chalking on walls and outside surfaces etc.

Fine Motor Skill Activities

Daily routine fine motor activities

Daily routine activities that provide great opportunities to support children's fine motor skill development:

- Putting shoes, coats and clothing on and off and doing up/undoing the fastenings etc.
- Snack times – pouring drinks, cutting up food, peeling food, picking up and placing small pieces of food, spooning food, spreading, washing up, squeezing cloths/sponges, wiping tables etc.
- Meal-times – dishing up food, cutting up food, using cutlery, pouring, scraping, washing up etc.
- Cooking activities – spooning, stirring, mixing, kneading, stretching, scraping etc.
- Story and song times – copying actions, movement of hands and fingers in repetitive motions, creating specific shapes with hands and fingers, using puppets and props etc.
- Toileting time – grasping, releasing and maneuvering clothing when accessing the toilet or being changed. Activating the soap dispenser and rubbing the soap into their hands, washing it off again, twisting the taps and drying their hands.



It is important to remember:

Children will need help and to be taught how to establish a developmentally appropriate level of independence with the fine motor skill activities linked to self-care skills and routines.

Forward and backward chaining are effective strategies that can be used to help children to build up their skills in these areas.



The following website offers further information on forward and backward chaining:

<https://thesensorytoolbox.com/forward-chaining-vs-backward-chaining/>