

Fine Motor Skills Activities

Playing with play dough or similar material is a really good activity to help strengthen the muscles in your child's hands. Squeezing soft balls, opening and closing pegs, pushing Lego bricks together, using a hole punch etc. also help develop hand strength.

Winding, Twisting and screwing activities – These types of activities give children practice at moving their hands and fingers in different ways. Activities like taking lids off and on bottles and jars, twisting a nut up and down the thread of a bolt, using a toy screwdriver or wrench in a toy tools set or winding, windup toys, are all good examples of this.

Making things balance - Building blocks, building towers etc. that balance involves hand to eye coordination. If you don't have blocks, you can stack up tins or upside down plastic cups. You may have actual stacking rings and cup games at home already. Also playing with figures and toys that require balancing to stand up e.g. action figures, dolls, soldiers, trees and animals, helps to build hand to eye coordination.

Nesting activities, i.e. making things fit inside each other for example playing with Russian dolls, nesting cups and boxes which are designed to fit inside each other. If don't have any, empty plastic tubs or cardboard boxes of different sizes are still fun to play with, to put things inside and to fit inside each other. Your child begins to understand about size and space through these activities also.

Practice manipulation of small objects by playing with pegs for example or tweezers and picking up objects like beans, pasta, beads, pom poms etc. You can combine this with sorting or just have fun trying to put them in a jar or tin. Just be very careful if you are giving your child small objects and don't leave them unattended.

Threading activities are good for developing fine motor skills and hand to eye coordination. You can practise threading beads, buttons or pasta shapes onto cord, string or wool to make necklaces, bracelets, worms or caterpillars. You could thread through holes in card or foam to make a shape or pattern.

Folding, wrapping and unwrapping activities are good – folding paper into shapes or wrapping and unwrapping objects.

Perhaps a toy needs a bandage put on? Fold paper to make a hat or boat or to make a paper snowflake. You could fold napkins for the dinner table, fold clothes to put away or fold dolls/teddies clothes.

Cutting activities – practicing cutting out simple shapes or following lines, straight or wavy. Get child to put some stickers on a sheet of paper then they need to cut a line from one sticker to the next. You could put stickers or draw stars in a circle and they need to cut right through each shape to cut out the circle. (Use appropriate scissors for safety)

Tearing activities – Controlled tearing of paper for craft activities etc. is another activity which helps develop little fingers and hand to eye co-ordination. Tearing paper in half or in strips, is good and the strips can be used for pictures e.g. blue for the sea, green for grass or yellow for sand etc.

Jigsaw Puzzles – manipulating the pieces in a simple jigsaw is good for both matching skills and fine motor skills. It can be the wooden missing piece type puzzles or simple puzzles with a few pieces. Jigsaws usually come with an age rating to help give an idea of the age appropriateness of the puzzle.

If your child is interested, help them to practise their fine motor skills by encouraging them to draw. They can use pencils, crayons, pens, paint, chalk etc. They could also use their fingers to finger paint or make patterns with fingers in sand or in some shaving foam, or paint on a tray.