

# A12 – Developing isolated finger movement

## Preparation for hand activities

When developing explorative hand play, it is important to ensure the child is supported well in seated or lying positions, to facilitate stable propping and manipulation of toys.

Ensure that all distractions are kept to a minimum both visual and auditory eg, reduce visual distractions on the table or workspace, or try an enclosed area to reduce the expanse of their visual field and minimise auditory sounds. Keep a clear wall space in neutral tones (soft green or cream paint) to reduce visual sensitivity or overload/reduced lighting to soften the environment.

**Aim:** to facilitate the child initially and work towards increasing their independent responses by increasing tolerances and acceptance of unfamiliar or new activities for sensory skill development, in **isolated finger work** and use of **hand over hand techniques**. To teach the coordinated use of hands in functional grasps, resistive force and controlled, more precise directional actions and responses.

## Activities

Introduce the activities at a graded level, within the child's individual level of tolerance and achievement.

### Promote pointing and finger and thumb Isolation

- Using extended index finger to pop bubbles blown in the air or floating on a water surface (soapy bubbles in a bowl)
- Poking playdough or soft foods (Remember 'Little Jack Horner' and the plum on his thumb)
- Draw with index fingers in sand, shaving foam or finger painting
- Push button toys with index finger
- Point to pictures in books
- Point and naming eg, names of body parts to songs (at a gentle pace). Try using a partner to mirror image or use of a mirror to heighten sensation awareness with the reversed imaging
- Putting on chunky play rings or hula hoops on fingers
- Singing finger play actions songs such as 'Two Little Dicky Birds, Five Fat Peas, Ten Fingers' etc. see ideas on [www.preschoolrainbow.org/preschool-rhymes.htm](http://www.preschoolrainbow.org/preschool-rhymes.htm)
- Use vision based gesture with hand signs such as Makaton methods (if known) or simple thumb up for good, counting on digits,

### Develop pincer grasps from raking whole hand pickup

To grip an object with opposed thumb and fingertips so that there is visible space in the palm. This type of grip relies on well-developed palmar arches for the pincer or tripod grip to establish efficient digit control.

- Finger feeding to pick up raisins or small pieces of food from the table top
- Use an eye dropper with coloured water to make pictures
- Pinch along a length of playdough with thumb and index finger
- Picking up small objects such as beads, cotton wool, coins, small toys - show the child which fingers to use and help them achieve this

- Threading activities
- Tearing paper into strips
- Use a box of coloured clothes pegs and a rope. Put the pegs on the rope using the thumb, index and middle fingers to pinch the peg. Vary the sequence of peg colours or place pegs around the edge of cardboard or containers. Peg up dolls clothes after washing in a play trough, to add purpose to the activity
- Peg boards
- Fuzzy felts
- Play with pick-up sticks, toothpicks, straws
- Bending pipe cleaners to create shapes or animals
- Squeeze soft balls such as juggling balls or small squeeze toys
- Opening containers with screw on lids
- Wringing out sponges or flannels
- Push and pull games such as Lego/Duplo blocks, pop beads, stickle bricks
- Scrunching up paper into balls to throw at target
- Folding heavy paper or card into different shapes
- Squeezing glue pens
- Trigger toys such as water pistols, plant sprayers
- Wind-up toys that provide resistance

### **Developing Accurate Release**

- Encourage the child to give you a toy. Get them to place the toy in your hand. Use the same instruction each time 'Give to me', as the repetition will assist the learning process.
- Drop objects into a container or water to make an additional sound or splash.

See additional fine motor activity sheet ideas for:

- 0 to 12 months
- 1 to 2 year olds
- 2 to 3 year olds
- 3 to 4 year olds
- 4 to 5 year olds
- 5 to 6 year olds

For specific average developmental age appropriate hand skills and use them according to the individual functional stage of development for the child.

**Frequency of use:** Complete 10-15 minutes sessions every day or at least three times a week.

**Monitor the child's level of response** (interest and motivation) in the task and adjust accordingly (to simplify or increase) to obtain the 'just right fit' and grade challenges (less challenging to more challenging).