

A13 – Developing hand dexterity

Fine motor skills involve the coordination of small muscle movements that occur in the fingers, usually with coordinated use of the eyes to look at what the hands are doing.

When referring to the motor skills of hands (and fingers) the term **dexterity** is commonly used in reference to the skill and grace in physical movement, especially in the manual use of the hands. Developing the ability to use visual skills with graded action of the upper limbs are separate skills that develop together in a more coordinated manner, as the child participates in daily living and play activities.

Hand dexterity aim: to help with developing fine motor skills, pre-writing and increased independence in activities of daily living.

Additional adult support is likely to be required to assist with increasing tolerance and acceptance of unfamiliar or new activities for sensory skill development, to facilitate **hand skills** by using **hand over hand techniques** to teach the coordinated use of hands in functional grasps, with greater resistive force & control with tool use.

Additional practice will be needed to repeatedly facilitate completion of each task two to three times a day, to consolidate learning new strategies or techniques.

Grade the amount of help you provide, to reduce the physical or verbal assistance as skills progress.

Vary the positions used (sitting, lying, standing, kneeling) and **add additional sensory experiences** to motivate & support sustained skill attainment.

Activities

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

- Pegboard toys are graded manipulative or dexterity activities with positioned slots to place the pegs, which require more complex visual-motor coordination skills.
- Use of tweezers involving the use of a precision small tool to pick up single items for placing in a pot or hole.
- Graded use of puzzles from simple shape sorters to more complex shapes that insert or slot together.
- Fishing games that require more precise careful control to action the rod hook or magnet with slow pickup in lift and collection.
- Card games that require controlled pickup, in-hand grips and selected placement eg, Pairs, Old Maid, Snap, Donkey, etc.
- Activities that require Tool use for mixing, stirring, cutting, banging, punching holes painting etc.
- Lots of opportunity to explore craft making, colouring, sticking activities and various media to motivate and explore such as slate and chalk, ball crayons....

Frequency of use: Complete 10-15 minutes sessions every day.

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).