

Fine Motor Skills Activities

Fine motor control is the ability to use hands and fingers accurately whilst carrying out a skilled activity. By exploring their environment children learn where and how their fingers are moving in space (**body awareness, proprioception**). They also develop **tactile awareness** (sense of touch which allows us to register heat & cold, pain and textures etc.) Children need to develop **hand strength** as well as the ability to visually judge the size, shape and distance from the body of an object they want to work with (**visual spatial perception**). They also have to be able to organise, plan and carry out a sequence of unfamiliar motor tasks in order to undertake many fine motor activities e.g. writing, playing games and dressing (**motor planning**).

The development of **bilateral skills** (co-ordinating the two sides of the body) and **hand dominance** are particularly important when carrying out fine motor tasks.

Hand Aerobics

The following exercises will increase tactile (touch) and proprioceptive (sensory awareness of a part of the body) sensory messages received from their hands, increasing the child's sensory awareness of what their hand muscles and joints are doing and what they are touching or holding.

This may help to improve motor (movement) control and develop motor memory, to enable the development of more complex fine motor skills.

Briefly rub hands, palms together, then the back of each hand. If tolerated hand cream can be used.



Press hands and fingers together, squeeze then stretch fingers out wide. Repeat 5 times.

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Hook fingers of both hands together and pull in opposite directions.



With palms together and fingers straight, press fingers together firmly. Hold for 1020 seconds, and then shake out the hands to relax fingers.

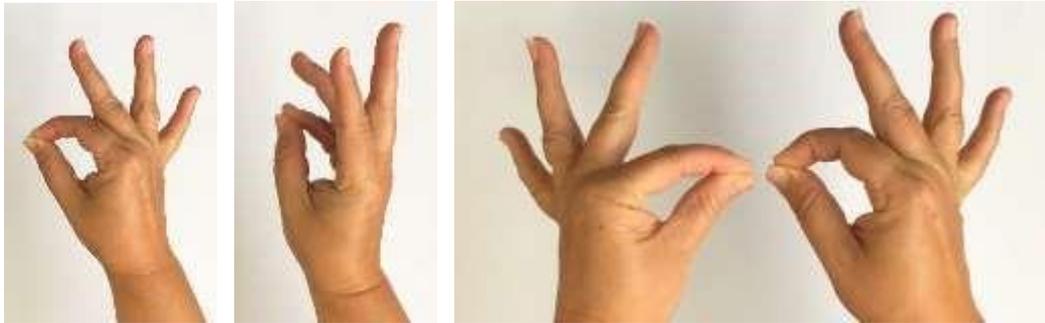


Place palms together, fingers straight, separate palms slightly, keeping fingertips touching. Rotate thumbs around each other, away from the body then towards body. Ten times each way.



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With hands separated, preferred hands first, ask the child to touch their thumb to each fingertip in turn, beginning with the index finger and back again. When mastered separately, carry out with both hands at the same time.



Put your hands on the table (palms down). Now copy your partner who is pretending to play the piano, by lifting one finger at a time from the table.



Thumb Scrunches

Ask the child to sit at a table with the fabric strip/bandage placed horizontally in front of them. They should use their dominant/writing hand to secure the fabric (on the left-hand end if they're left handed & right-hand end if right handed). The fingers should be used to secure the fabric (as shown above). Then see if they can scrunch up the fabric, collecting it under their hand whilst using only the thumb of that hand. The child should try to keep their wrist as still as possible. You can place small toys i.e. cars, animals etc. on the end of the fabric and get the child to treat it as a race, seeing how quickly they can gather in the fabric.



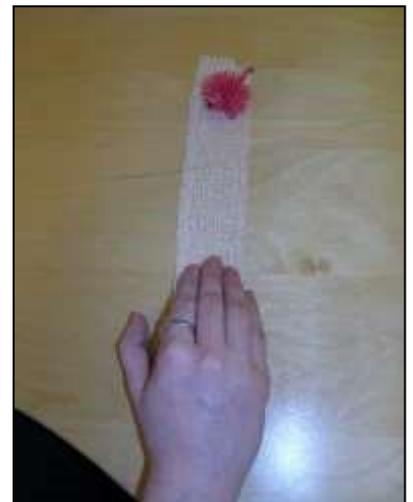
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If the child is confident with their dominant hand, they can then try with their non-dominant hand.

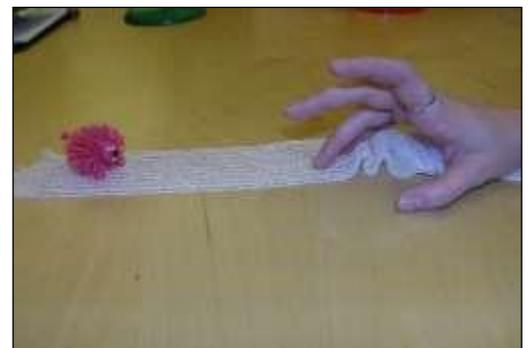
This activity can be carried out either on a one-to-one basis or with a small group. Try to ensure that if working with a group, the children all have similar skill levels.

Creeping Fingers

Ask the child to roll out the fabric vertically in front of them. They can then anchor the end of the fabric nearest to them with their hand. They then collect the fabric in under their hand, keeping the wrist as still as possible, using the fingers of that hand only. The child can first try collecting the fabric in by moving their fingers together. They can then try collecting in the fabric by using a galloping movement with their fingers, beginning with their little finger, ring finger, middle finger then index finger.



Then ask the child to try these activities with their non-dominant hand.



Marble Hide

Place a number of marbles on the table in front of the child. Ask them to pick up a marble using their index finger and thumb, and hide it in the palm of the same hand, using only that hand. Pick up another and hide it again. Continue and see how many marbles they can hide before they begin to drop them. Then try and drop the marbles into a container one at a time (using the tips of the index finger and thumb). The child will have to manipulate the marbles using only that hand, from the palm to the index finger and thumb.

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Marble Drop

Place a marble between the knuckles of each finger and ask the child lift their hand off the table, trying not to drop any. Then, if they achieve this, ask them to try and drop each marble into a container one at a time. Start with the dominant/writing hand then the non dominant.



Close Enough

This is a simple capture game for 2 players. Player 1 rolls a marble out a short way. Player 2 shoots at it attempting to hit it. If they miss but can touch both marbles with their thumb and forefinger they are close enough and win the marble. If they are too far away, player 1 takes a shot at the marble and tries to win it and so on. Once the first marble is won player 2 must roll another marble out for capture



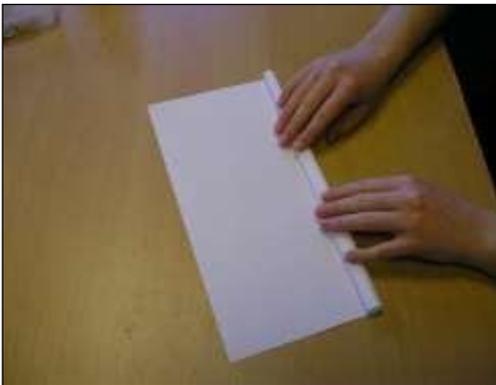
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Ring Shot (Marbles - Group Game)

Draw 2 circles, one inside the other. The inner circle should be approx. 30cms wide, with the outer being 1 metre wide. Each player puts an agreed number of marbles into the inner circle. Players then take turns shooting from anywhere in the outer ring at the marbles in the inner ring. Players may shoot at the marbles originally placed in the inner circle or can shoot at other people's shooters. The aim of the game is to knock other player's marbles out of the inner ring. Once a marble is knocked out of the inner circle it can be claimed by the shooter. The game continues until all of the marbles in the inner ring are claimed. The player with the most marbles wins.

Finger Football

The child begins by making a set of goal posts, using a sheet of A4 paper. The paper is rolled into a tube and then folded into thirds before being taped to the end of a table. The child then rolls up a small piece of paper to form a ball. They can then play finger football. When flicking the paper ball the child can use their index finger and thumb, or their middle finger & thumb. The footballs can be made smaller as fine motor skills improve. The game can be adapted for more players. Try securing goal posts to two opposite ends of a desk.



Play Dough Activities

The child rolls out the play dough into a snake. They can then pinch along the length of the snake using first their thumb and index finger, then their thumb and middle finger, progressing down to their thumb and little finger.

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This activity helps to improve pinch strength. The snake can also be used to improve scissor skills.

The Play Dough can be used in a variety of ways. Ask the child to roll out 3 small play dough balls and place them in between their fingers. They can then slowly bring their fingers together, squeezing the play dough between the fingers.



Roll out a long sausage of play dough and ask the child to make the letters of their name.

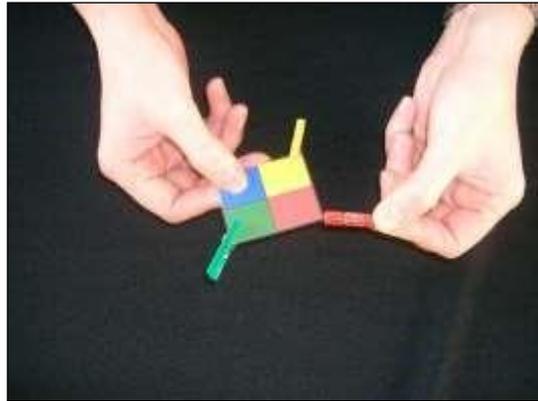
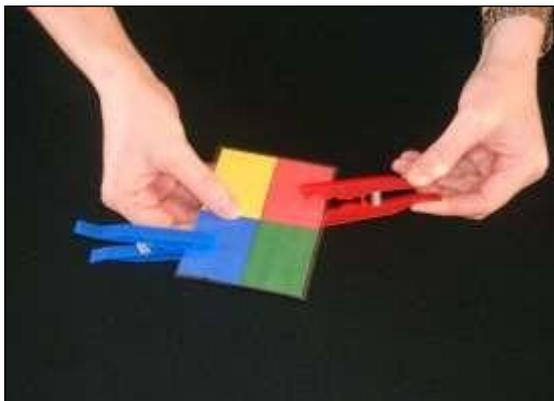
Then trace their finger over the letter with their eyes open and then eyes closed.



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Peg Races

The child begins by placing the large pegs onto the large colour card, as quickly as possible, ensuring that they match the pegs to the corresponding colour. When they are confident using the large pegs they can move on to using the small colour card and pegs.



The children can have races to see who can complete this task the quickest. Although this task is used to improve the child's fine motor skills, they are also learning to sequence movements, colour match and follow verbal instructions.

As with all of the activities in the kit, the activities can be adapted as the child gains in confidence. As well as increasing the difficulty in the fine motor tasks you can also increase the amount of verbal instructions given, i.e. can you put the green peg on the blue square, or, can you put the red peg on the yellow square, then put the blue peg on the green square. As you work with the child you will be able to adapt the tasks to match the child's abilities.

Clothes Pegs

To build up general body awareness and fine motor skills, ask the child to put a peg onto their sleeve, and one on their trouser leg etc. As with the previous activity, you can increase the complexity of the verbal instructions i.e. can you place the blue peg on your left trouser leg, can you place the red peg on your right sleeve and then place the green peg on the back of your jumper etc.

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Nuts and Bolts

Ask the child to screw the nuts onto the large bolt as quickly as they can, ensuring that each nut is screwed as far up the bolt as possible before beginning with the next.

Again, once the child is confident using the large nuts and bolt, they can try using the smaller bolts, washers and nuts.



Threading Activities

The child can begin by threading larger beads, then progress onto using increasingly smaller beads.

