**Developing motor skills – Fine Motor Skills**

**How to help your child with Hand Skills (Fine Motor Skills)**

Fine motor skills are used in all daily activities for example dressing, brushing your teeth, drawing, writing and playing with toys.  It is important that children develop these skills to help them with school and other everyday living activities.

The activities suggested here may help your child with these skills.  It is important to chose activities that you and your child enjoy.  Many can be done during normal daily routines like car journeys, bathing or while you are busy in the kitchen.  Most toys can be used for a wide range of age groups as children will experience them in different ways appropriate to their age.

**Activities to encourage using 2 hands together and hand control:**

**Stacking and building**

* Building blocks
* Jenga games
* Stacking cups
* Stacking rings on a post
* Building towers from everyday things and household ‘junk’

**Lacing and threading activities**

* Sewing cards
* Threading macaroni, cotton reels and big button onto a lace
* Threading lace through hole punched cards or pictures
* Making jewellery

**Cutting, tearing and folding**

* Tearing and cutting cards and paper for collages
* Making papier mache
* Making cards for people
* Paper folding, aeroplanes and origami
* Cutting play dough

**Construction activities**

* Lego, meccano, k-nex, geo – max, brio, stickle bricks etc
* Simple woodwork
* Simple models

**Winding, twisting and screwing**

* Wind up toys
* Games with a windup timer
* Big mecanno sets or early tool sets
* Screwing and unscrewing containers such as storage jars and tubs to keep toys in

**Activities to encourage using fingers, developing fine grasps and hand-eye co-ordination:**

**Finger Activities**

* Finger songs and clapping games
* Finger painting with sand, shaving foam, paint
* Finger games ‘racing’ fingers along surface
* Using fingers on musical instruments
* Picking up objects as quickly as you can
* Scrunching up paper just with your fingers

**In-hand manipulation activities**

* Screwing up paper into little balls for collages
* Picking up coins for the play till, tiddly winks, hamma beads and other small items
* Putting pen tops on and off
* Play doh – rolling balls and sausages

**Tweezer games**

* Picking up and moving things using tongs and blunt ended tweezers
* Pegging out dolls clothes or pictures on string
* Bed bugs or operation type games

**Puzzles**

* Peg puzzles
* Interlocking puzzles
* Jigsaws
* Peg board games

**Board games**

* Many commercially available games require you to move small pieces and sometimes have a timed element.
* Many games require precision and skill rather than speed

**Drawing and writing**

* Pencil activities like early scribbling on paper on chalk board
* Water painting books
* Dot to dots and mazes
* Colouring simple pictures
* Using chalks on chalk board or paving slabs
* Crayons on different materials eg card, light paper, woodchip wallpaper
* Using stampers or sponge painting
* Using etch a sketch and magic boards

**How to help your child using scissors**

**Why?**

Using scissors should be fun however learning to use them can be hard work and often does take time! Your child will probably go through different stages in learning to use scissors properly, such as:

Your child will probably go through different stages in learning to use scissors properly, such as:

* Using scissors in two hands
* Fingers only in the 2 scissors handles
* Finger and thumb pushed too far through the scissors handles, almost at the knuckles

And then finally:

* Managing to hold at the ends of their fingers (either index or middle finger) and thumb
* When your child comes to use their scissors they may hold them sideways at first before turning their hand so that their thumb is facing upwards.
* Using scissors is usually a skill that is practiced through nursery and primary 1/2

**Here are some ideas to help your child:**

Using toys to develop using pincer grasp and using the fingertips:

* Post boxes
* Posting pennies in piggy bank
* Duplo/stickle bricks/k-nex/geo-mex
* Wind up toys
* Tearing paper and card for collages
* popoids

Using toys and games to develop squeezing:

* tiddly winks
* squirt toys, water pistols turkey basters and old eye droppers can be played with in the bath
* clothes pegs to hang up pictures or dolls clothes
* hole punches to make confetti to glue onto pictures and collages
* blunt ended tweezers for picking up small items like buttons and beads to pop into containers or tubs
* small kitchen tongs or tea bag squeezers for bigger things to pick up as above

**How to help your child with pre-writing skills**

Using a pencil is a surprisingly complex task.  Before a child is ready to use a pencil, there are many areas that need to be developed including:

* Posture and muscle strength
* Body and spatial awareness
* Hand and finger manipulation
* Using both hands together
* Establishing hand preference
* Developed sense of sight and touch
* Hand eye co-ordination
* Concentration
* Understanding of language

There are a variety of other downloadable sheets with activities that you could do with your child to develop these skills if you feel your child is not yet ready.  There is a lot of overlap between the above areas and some children need more practice in some areas than others.   By using lots of alternatives to pen and paper tasks it is hoped that when they reach school that they have developed many of the necessary skills.

The activities on this sheet are aimed at the child who is ready to hold a pencil but cannot yet use it very well.

Often the hardest part can be finding a motivator for the child who is disinterested. We hope you can find some fun ideas here.

Pencil skills tend to develop in a sequence that is similar for everyone.  Children first scribble randomly, scribble and dot the page, scribble in a circular pattern, then start to copy and make lines, then make circles and a variety of marks, then copy more complex shapes, then make representational drawings of a face or person and make ‘pretend writing’.  You should encourage all attempts at drawing and writing and make positive comments to your child.

Use lots of non pencil activities and ways to draw and write too – chalks, foam, finger paints, magic writing boards, whiteboards, sand at the beach or sandpit, water paint with wet paint brushes on a chalk board, wall or paving outside. Use your finger, or stick. With all these ways there is no paper to scrunch up dissatisfied or upset, just rub or splash more water and it is gone.

Stick paper onto a wall or easel to help develop arm and shoulder control or use water as above.  Use foam soaps or shaving foam on the bath tiles to draw and write.

Use lots of novel pencils or pens which are cheaply available as a fun new way.  Try pencil grips and chunky crayons.  Use broken bits of crayons and chalks to draw – you have to hold them in a tripod pencil grip.  Mini pens and pencils can be good because they are not so heavy to hold in little hands.

Improve pencil grip / feedback by colouring on bumpy paper/woodchip or using a hard textured surface under paper.

Encourage scribbling over shapes and simple pictures on a page.  Start with one picture per page eg a teddy, car, fairy, doll, tree.  Look at picture and talk about it and identify the different parts to colour, make the outlines bold with a thick pen to make it clear.  You could use wikki sticks to form the outline so that the child has a barrier to help control their scribbling.  Build up to pictures with more detail bit by bit.  Look for picture books to interest boys and girls eg farm pictures, sea side pictures, dolls and prams.

Encourage tracing and copying simple shapes, draw together making up a picture bit by bit to give the child success.  Take the lead from the child – what will you draw, what do you want to me to draw now.  Don’t over influence children who like to draw, ask child to tell you about their picture and be enthusiastic about it, don’t judge or tell child should have this or that in picture.  Display pictures the child is proud of.

Draw, write or cut out pictures from magazines for shopping lists, choose things you will let your child take from the shelf to help you like tins of beans or fruit and vegetables.

Encourage child to pretend to write lists or letters when you are doing the same, pretend writing is an important stage that young children go through, you might see recognisable letter forms or just scribbles spaced like words.

Keep envelopes, junk mail and paper for drawing supplies.

In the summer for young primary children, keep a picture diary.  Use books with a space for drawing and a space for writing.  It will keep up the skills they have learned in school.  Don’t force it every day but chose something the child really enjoyed or likes to draw.  You could help by sometimes writing the story.  It can be good for the rainy days.

There are many commercially available pre-writing materials in comics and children’s books found in high street toy stores