

Improving Fine Motor Skills in Children

Fine motor skills are small muscle movements of the fingers in coordination with the eyes. When teaching fine motor skills try to be patient and understanding with your child. Fine motor skills take more time and practice to develop than we adults might think. Sometimes we forget just how many of these skills need to be learned - thinking instead that our child should automatically know how to do these tasks. It's definitely worth taking the time to practice these skills with our children. The more developed our children's fine motor skills become, the easier they will be able to learn to write.

Like gross motor skills, fine motor skills develop in a consistent manner but at an uneven pace. At times, your child will pick up skills rapidly, and at other times their skill development will be delayed.

It is more fun for your child to learn while they play. Try to incorporate activities like dress-up to teach zipping and buttoning; making cards to practice writing or tracing skills; cutting and pasting to make a project other than just a writing on a plain piece of paper, etc.

Here are some suggestions for developing fine motor skills, and some activities to allow your child to practice them:

1. Cutting - Use a thick black line to guide cutting the following:

- ☐ A fringe from a piece of paper
- ☐ Cut off corners of a piece of paper
- ☐ Cut along curved lines
- ☐ Cut lines with a variety of angles
- ☐ Cut figures with curves and angles
- ☐ Cut clay with blunt scissors

2. Placing and Pasting

- ☐ Place a variety of forms (eg. blocks, felt, paper, string, yarn, cereal, cotton) on outlines
- ☐ Match shapes, color, or pictures to a page and paste them within the outlines

3. Tracing and Coloring

- ☐ Use a thick black line if needed
- ☐ Trace and then color shapes, increasing the size and complexity gradually

4. Self-Care Skills

- ☐ Buttoning and unbuttoning
- ☐ Lacing
- ☐ Tying
- ☐ Fastening Snaps
- ☐ Zipping

- ☐ Locking and unlocking a door
- ☐ Winding a clock
- ☐ Opening and closing jars
- ☐ Rolling out dough or other simple cooking activities
- ☐ Washing plastic dishes

5. Finger Tracing

- ☐ Many times when a child is unable to do a worksheet, it helps to trace the pattern with the finger before using a pencil.
- ☐ Have the child trace a pattern in sand, baby cream, finger paint, etc. The textures give the child kinaesthetic feedback.

6. Other activities....

- ☐ Dot-to-dot drawings of pictures, objects, shapes, numbers, letters, etc.
- ☐ Typing exercises
- ☐ Tile and mosaic work
- ☐ Folding activities
- ☐ Fine colouring

7. Writing

- ☐ Practice letter formations in the air and in front of your child's eyes (arm outstretched) with the finger.
- ☐ When a writing tool is introduced, letters which involve similar strokes should be taught first (moving simple to complex). Next, combinations of letters in short words, sentences and finally spontaneous writing. (Remember to use words your child can read).

e.g.

c a o s (curved shape)

i r n u m (short letters)

l t (tall, straight letters)

h d b k (straight and curved)

v w x z (diagonals)

y p q g j f (letter shapes beneath the line)