

MOVING ON UP!

Developing fine motor skills



Fine motor skills involve the use of the small muscles that control the hand, fingers, and thumb. They help children perform important tasks like feeding themselves, buttoning and zipping clothes, writing, drawing and much more. Little hands can develop dexterity and strength through practical play activities such as play dough, safe scissors, threading and building. These will help your child prepare for holding a pencil, mark-making and eventually writing.

WHAT I NEED TO DO

- I can squeeze and roll play dough using the palms of my hands.
- I can thread a bead.
- I can carefully build a tower.
- I can control scissors with one hand to make a snip in paper.
- I can use a safe knife to cut food.
- I can squeeze tweezers to pick up objects.
- I can fasten and unfasten clothing such as; zip up/unzip, button up/unbutton, open & close velcro.
- I show a preference for a dominant hand.
- I can hold a pencil between thumb and two fingers.
- I can control mark making tools to make circles, lines and zig-zags.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Provide play dough for your child to explore – encourage squeezing, rolling, pressing using fingers, thumbs and palms.
- Encourage your child to 'take their time', 'persevere' and 'concentrate' when building or threading as this can be tricky.
- Encourage your child to put on and take off clothing supporting them with fastening and unfastening zips, buttons, velcro. Reduce frustration by 'starting your child off' and guiding them through it with lots of praise.
- Try using kitchen tongs for your children to pick up and transfer objects such as pom poms.
- Provide string, ribbons or pipe-cleaners to thread beads or pasta on to.

PRACTISING NEW SKILLS IS TRICKY AND NEEDS LOTS OF TIME AND ENCOURAGEMENT!

Play dough recipe

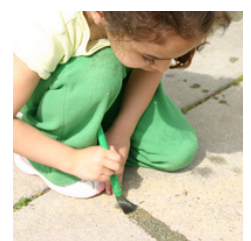
- 2 cups of flour
- 1 tbsp oil
- 1 cup of hot water
- Food colouring (optional)
- Selection of fresh herbs and vanilla/peppermint essences (optional)

Play dough activity is about the process, not the final result. It heightens their senses, aids their fine motor development, and strengthens hand muscles and tendons. Focusing on the activity, rather than an end goal, takes away pressure and puts the emphasis on fun and learning.

Fastenings on your child's clothing can be tricky at first. Provide play opportunities to practice these by dressing and undressing a doll or teddy.

When playing with play dough use a safe knife or picnic utensils to practice 'cutting'. Place your hand over your child's to guide them in moving the knife and holding the fork still.

Make marks using a range of tools: sticks, paint brush, feather, straw, wands, chalk. Dip a paintbrush in a pot of water and mark make on the fence or pavement.



Clothes pegs help to strengthen the muscles for fine motor control. Let your child help with squeezing the pegs when hanging clothes or provide pots or a piece of cardboard to clip the pegs on to.

Remember! All activities should be carried out under adult supervision