



SCHOOL-AGE FINE MOTOR ADVICE

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Well-developed fine motor skills and hand strength are dependent on postural control and gross motor skills. Where possible, try doing these activities whilst weight-bearing, so lying on the stomach with the arms propping the body up, or complete the activities on a vertical surface to prompt shoulder girdle activation. This is not an exhaustive list and these activities should be used with caution. It is important to try to incorporate these suggestions into the child's daily routine to encourage skill development.

Warm-ups prior to fine motor activities:

Pencil twirls

Holding a pencil between a thumb and index finger, the child should try to roll the pencil up and down their thumb by bending and straightening their index finger. Do the same with middle, ring and little finger.

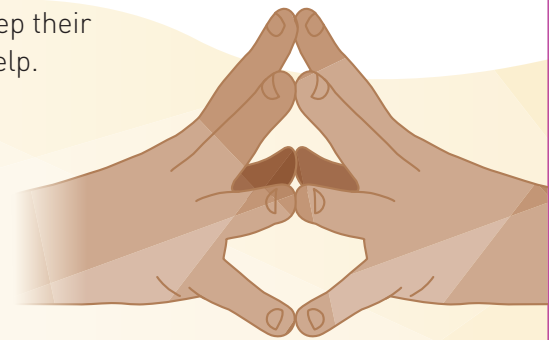


Incy Wincy caterpillar

The child should hold the pencil using a tripod grip and should creep their fingers up and down the pencil without using their other hand to help.

Spider push-ups

Place the finger tips together and bend and straighten the fingers while pushing the finger tips against each other.

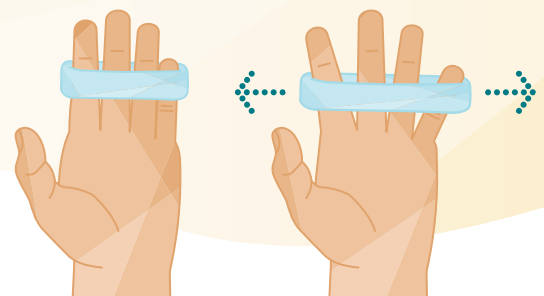


Finger opposition

Press down lightly with each finger on the thumb. Repeat the sequence backwards.

Elastic resistance

Place an elastic band around the fingers as shown. Open and close the fingers against the resisting band for 10 repetitions. If this is painful or pinches, stop the activity.





Chair push-ups

Sitting with upright posture in a classroom chair, the child puts their hands on the side of the chair. The child lifts and holds their bottom up off the chair, for 3-5 seconds, and then slowly lowers back down again.

Desk push-ups

Ask the child to place both forearms on the desk, palms facing down flat. Ask them to lean their body weight over their forearms, lifting their bottom off the chair and then return to sitting position.

Wall pushes

Encourage the child to stand and place their hands on the wall and push in attempt to make the room bigger.



Stress balls

Encourage the child to squeeze a ball up to 5 times with each hand.

Hug and tug

Link the first fingers of each hand together and pull for 5 seconds. Do this with each pair of fingers.

Marble

Roll a marble between thumb and index finger, then thumb and middle finger and so on.

Rock, paper scissors game

Encourage the child to make different positions with their hands such as rock (fist), paper (hand flat) and scissors (where the fingers are stretched wide apart).

Coin turning

Encourage the child to turn coins or small items over with their fingers.



Shake

Encourage the child to shake their hands, bend their fingers, complete circles with their wrists, clench their fists, rub their hands together and clapping their hands.



Activity suggestions:

Dot letters and pictures with thumb tack/drawing pin

Place a piece of paper over some cardboard or Styrofoam. Using a thumb tack, prick holes through the paper to write a message or draw a design. The small size of the thumb tack will ensure that the child requires a fine, precise grasp and strength to prick through the paper.



Squeeze toys

Try using a paint sprayer, water gun or balloon gun.

Spray bottle picture

You could create a picture outside using a spray bottle containing water. Alternatively, draw with chalk outside and use the spray bottle to wash away your drawing.



Coin slotting

Try posting coins through a small slot made in a container, such as a butter container, that requires the child to really push the coin through.

Paper clip chain

Join together paper clips to form a chain. Time how long it takes to form a chain of 10/20 paper clips.

Picking up items with clothes peg/tweezers

Encourage the child to pick up small items, such as pom poms, beads, skittles or raisins with a clothes peg (using index finger and thumb only) or tweezers and place them on a target. This could be done using a timer/stopwatch to encourage child to progress.



Construction games

Play with lego/k'nex blocks to further develop fine motor skills. You could also get a child to copy a design you have created to support their visual perceptual skills development. It is also good to encourage the child to pull apart pieces of lego/duplo bricks.





Games using theraputty

Encourage the child to roll theraputty into a snake or sausage, pinch it, poke the theraputty with individual fingers, squeeze it into a ball, pull it apart and flatten it like a pancake. You can also hide items such as beads or coins in theraputty and encourage them to remove items using their thumb and index finger only.



Manipulation toys

Wind-up toys can be particularly helpful to increase fine motor skills. Choose toys with increased resistance required to twist to wind them up. You could also add fun by having wind-up toy races.



Finger isolation

To strengthen specific fingers, use items such as a telephone, keyboard or do finger painting, popping bubble wrap or play with finger puppets. You could also try flicking games such as cotton wool football where the child is encouraged to flick a cotton wool ball with their index finger.

Board games

Games such as scrabble, operation, jenga, buckaroo, snakes and ladders can all help children develop their fine motor skills..

Threading

Threading beads onto string or pipe cleaners to make a bracelet or threading lace through card helps to strengthen the hands and fingers.

Scissor skills

Ask the child to draw a picture and then cut their drawing out using scissors. To make this harder, use thicker paper or cardboard.





Household or school chores/activity suggestions:

Dressing

Encourage children to do their own buttons, zips and laces.

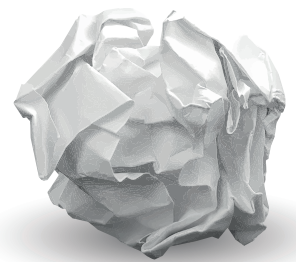
Hole puncher and thick cardboard

Cut shapes, letters or animals out of cardboard. Use a hole puncher to make holes around the outside of each shape. Encourage the child to thread a lace in and out of the holes.



Paper scrunching

Scrunch up pieces of newspaper/magazine into balls and use them for art or to work on ball skills by aiming and throwing the paper paper into the recycling bin.



Cutting

Start by asking the child to cut some standard paper with scissors. Once they have mastered this then get them to cut stronger paper or card to increase the resistance and strength required. This could be used for artwork.

Clothes pegs

Ask the child to help put out the laundry on the line, if appropriate, as this can help develop their fine motor skills whilst also developing their shoulder girdle strength as they are reaching up to put clothes on the line.





Wringing out a sponge or facecloth

This can be done when washing themselves or washing the dishes.

Baking

Involve the child in mixing batter or dough or breaking up food items to make a cake.



Squeeze bottles

Encourage the child to squeeze bottles when using different products such as shampoo, washing-up liquid, toothpaste, glue or glitter glue.

Opening and closing food containers/ packaging

Encourage the child to open containers/packaging of food to develop fine motor skills and strength.

