

# Fine Motor Activity Suggestions for Preschoolers

a complement to the video

## Fine Motor Skills in the Preschool Years

Please note:

The following suggestions are aimed at a broad range of children. They are not tailored to meet any child's specific needs, and do not substitute for therapy.

Be guided by your child's interests when choosing toys and activities. There are many different ways to give children the opportunity to develop the same skills.

You know your child best. Always provide:

- A safe play environment.
- Materials that are safe for your child's age and developmental level.
- The level of supervision your child needs.

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# 1. Stability Activities

Stability is a combination of strength and balance that allows us to keep one body part still while another part moves. To develop precise and skillful fine motor movements, children need:

- Body and Shoulder Stability
- Hand Stability

## Activities to Build Body and Shoulder Stability:

- Crawling.
- Climbing.
- Silly Animal Walks.
- Pushing/Pulling.
- Lying on your tummy, propped on your arms.
- Hanging clothes on a clothesline.
- Carrying.
- Lifting.
- Shoveling.
- Sweeping.
- Raking.
- Digging.
- Hockey.
- Batting a ball.
- Wiping counters.
- Window washing.
- Painting with a roller.
- Chalkboard play.
- Skipping rope.
- Twirling streamers.
- Painting at an easel.
- Transitional Movements\*.

## Activities to Build Hand Strength and Stability:

- Climbing a ladder or climbing frame.
- Hanging from monkey bars.
- Bike riding.
- Carrying by a handle.
- Squeezing and shaping playdough.
- Stirring.
- Squeezing lemons, sponges, etc.
- Wringing out a cloth.
- Holding 2 or more items in one hand.
- Squirreling\*\* into the hand.
- Releasing one item at a time, while still holding other items in your hand.
- Dealing cards.
- Holding and fanning cards.
- Peeling an orange.
- Undoing a foil wrapper.

\* **Transitional movements** are ways that children move themselves from one position to another. Standing up from sitting, and getting on or off of a bike, swing or chair are all examples of transitional movements. **Transitional movements** are a great opportunity to build strength and balance. When possible, encourage and help your child move from one position to another on his or her own.

**For example:** Help your child climb safely on to a swing (by encouragement, or by holding the swing steady), instead of lifting and placing him or her on it.

\*\* Squirreling refers to holding several small items in the palm with the little, ring and middle fingers, while continuing to pick up other items with the thumb and forefinger (similar to the way squirrels hold seeds or nuts in their cheeks).

## 2. Two Handed Activities (Bilateral Coordination)

Children need to develop the coordinated use of both hands for most fine motor activities.

There are two types of two-handed activities, and both kinds are important for a child's development:

### 1) Hands Together Activities

### 2) "Doing Hand" and "Helping Hand" Activities

#### Hands Together Activities

- Clapping.
- Drumming on pots & pans.
- Take apart or put together pop beads, nesting dolls, and construction toys\*.
- Folding paper, clothes or towels.
- Cracking an egg.
- Braiding hair or yarn.
- Throwing and catching with two hands.
- Steering a bike.
- Batting a ball.
- Raking, shoveling.
- Two handed holding and carrying.
- Pushing, pulling and dragging of large objects (boxes, wheelbarrows, sleds, etc).

#### Doing Hand and Helping Hand Activities

- Opening a jar or other container.
- Opening a zip-top bag.
- Holding a cup while taking things out of it, or putting things in it.
- Beading.
- Construction toys\*.
- Lacing and sewing cards.
- Doing up zippers, buttons and shoe laces.
- Using scissors with one hand while holding the paper steady with the other hand.
- Holding a bowl while stirring or eating.
- Colouring while holding the paper with the other hand.

\* **Construction toys** are toys that need to be put together to create something, either from a plan, or from a child's imagination. Currently popular brands include: Lego™, Duplo™, Megabloks™, and K'nex™.

There are many other types of construction toys including: gear sets, "straw and connector" sets, Meccano™ sets, Tinkertoys™, and plain old fashioned building blocks.

Many other toys (like Polly Pocket™ and Playskool™ action sets) have an aspect of construction to them.

Construction toys of all kinds offer a chance for children to work on **two-handed skills (both kinds)**, **eye-hand coordination** and all aspects of **dexterity**.

### 3. Sensory Processing Activities

Being able to take in and use information from all of our senses is important for the development of fine motor skills.

**Touch (tactile sense)** – tells us what we feel.

**Joint Position** – tells us the position of our muscles and joints, and how much force (pressure) each joint is experiencing.

**Movement** – tells us the direction, and how fast, our body is moving

**Eye-Hand Coordination** develops through activities that require children to use **vision** together with the senses of touch, joint position and movement to complete a task.

#### Touch (Tactile) Exploration Activities

- Gardening or playing in mud.
- Sand play.
- Water play.
- Finger painting with paint or pudding.
- Playing in bins of Macaroni (uncooked), dry rice, flax, dry beans or plastic pellets.
- Playing with play dough.
- Drawing shapes with your fingers in shaving cream, foam soap or baby powder.
- Baking and cooking.
- Craft activities with different textured items such as: yarn, feathers, pompoms, fabrics, tin foil, styrofoam, foam and felt shapes, paper, glue, tape and ribbon.

#### Movement and Position Sense Activities

- Silly animal walks.
- Obstacle courses.
- Action Songs and Rhymes.
- Simon Says.
- Playground play, such as: swinging, climbing, sliding, spinning, see-sawing.
- Playing Tag, Freeze Tag, and other chasing and movement games.
- Ball games.
- Carrying and Putting Away groceries or toys.
- Getting Dressed.
- Pouring, filling and emptying containers with water, sand, or other play materials.
- Cooking and Baking, including, measuring, pouring, and cracking eggs.

#### Eye Hand Coordination Activities

- Construction Toys.
- Playing with a dollhouse, including placing dolls and furniture, and dressing dolls.
- Lacing and sewing cards.
- Crafts of many kinds.
- Tracing and copying shapes\*.
- Dressing, including putting on socks, doing up buttons and tying shoes.
- Playing games like pick-up sticks, Connect Four™, Kerplunk!™ and Operation™.
- Games that involve throwing at a target including: horseshoes, beanbag toss, bowling, and playing catch or Frisbee.
- Sports where you hit a ball with a “stick” including: tee-ball, softball, hockey and croquet.

\* Get young children to trace and copy shapes with one finger in baby powder, flour, finger paint, pudding or foam, on a tray or a plastic covered table (instead of drawing on paper).

## 4. Dexterity Activities

Dexterity enables us to make small, precise and efficient movements with our hands and fingers. Dexterity is made up of several skills, which are developed and refined over the preschool years: **grasp & release; pinch & thumb control; wrist movement and finger coordination.**

### Grasp & Release Activities

- Filling and emptying containers.
- Stacking building blocks.
- Shape sorters.
- Puzzles (choose the type of puzzle based on your child's skills and interests).
- Construction toys.
- Putting crayons or small toys away in a container.
- Putting away dishes and groceries.
- Putting coins in a piggy bank.

### Pinch & Thumb Control Activities

- Picking flowers and leaves.
- Opening zip-top bags.
- Putting coins in a Piggy bank.
- Popping bubble wrap.
- Turning the knobs on an Etch-A-Sketch™.
- Screwing a nut onto a bolt.
- Beading.
- Sewing or Lacing cards.
- Doing up Zippers or buttons.
- Rolling tiny balls of dough between finger and thumb.

### Finger Coordination Activities

- Precise pointing and poking.
- Squirt guns.
- Spray bottles.
- Finger action songs such as 'Eensy Weensy Spider' and 'Round and Round the Garden'.
- Playing with finger puppets.
- Playing a musical instrument such as piano or recorder.
- Manipulating cards, such as: fanning a hand of cards while playing Go Fish or another game.
- Games like Connect 4™, Kerplunk™ and Pick Up Sticks.

### Wrist Control Activities

- Turning door knobs.
- Twisting lids on and off.
- Playing with a slinky.
- Playing Frisbee.
- Pouring from a pitcher.
- Shaking from a container (eg: baby powder, salt shaker, sparkles for crafts).
- Shaking up a snow globe.
- Turning a key or dial.