

How to help your child's fine motor development

Hand skills are important to successful handwriting. Small movements of the hand are referred to as fine motor skills. Here are some suggestions of extra activities to help your child strengthen their hands and fine motor skills.

- Do finger-plays. Find them in a book at the library.
- Cut pictures out. Parents can outline them with a marker to making cutting easier.
- Play with small beads, Legos, Tinker Toys, Lincoln Logs, Kinex, Magnetix.
- Knead play dough or clay. Build objects with them. (roll it into snakes, pancakes, use cookie cutters)
- Dig through play dough for small hidden objects (pennies).
- Put pegs in a board or Styrofoam or push pins in a small carpet square to make a picture.
- Pick up small objects with tweezers and put them in a container.
- Add a little food coloring with water in a squirt bottle and spray the snow to "dress" a snowman or color a picture in the snow.
- Squeeze air out of a turkey-baster to move cotton balls on a table.
- Finger paint with Jello or cocoa on a paper plate (make shapes and letters in it).
- String cereal, buttons, pieces of straws or Cheerios or beads to make necklaces.
- Clip clothespins to a container and count them as you do it.
- Coloring (find him a book with his favorite characters)
- Use different kinds of crayons, markers, colored pencils to keep him interested. Use small crayons to reinforce good grip.
- Tape paper to flat wall surface for drawing and writing, practice writing on vertical surfaces (windows/walls, etc)
- Lite Brite/Bed Bugs/Operation
- Hungry Hungry Hippos
- Ants in the Pants/Don't Break the Ice/Don't Spill the Beans
- Sticker books (where he has to place the stickers in an activity book)
- Puzzles with interlocking pieces
- Tracing mazes and staying in the lines, Dot-to-dot pictures

Activities to encourage gross motor development often help to improve fine motor skills as well. Ideas include:

- Playground equipment play (swings, monkey bars, climbing, sliding) or snow play (sliding, climbing, snow angels).
- Animal walks (crab walk, wheelbarrow, bear walk, bunny hop, snake crawl)
- Simon says games work well not only to get your child practicing gross motor skills but also to practice following directions.