

Activities for Preschoolers to Improve Fine Motor Skills

Fine motor control is the ability to utilize one's hands and fingers smoothly to accomplish an activity. The following are activities which support age-appropriate fine motor skills:

Working on a **vertical surface** is an appropriate position for preschoolers and older children with low muscle tone. It develops shoulder and wrist strength needed for fine motor and handwriting tasks. Children can draw or paint on paper taped to the wall, use an easel, chalkboard, dry erase board, place Colorforms on the window, and play Lite Brite. Fine motor games can be placed on the easel (geoboards, puzzles with small handles, magna-doodle, ink stamping activities, and magnet letters). Fine motor **manipulatives** prepare children's hands for more refined activities such as handwriting. The following are examples of manipulatives used to develop hand skills:

Playdough: Mold and roll play dough into balls, snakes, use cookie cutters to form animals/shapes, cut play dough with a plastic knife, use toothpicks to make designs.

Tearing paper: Holding paper with the thumb, index, and middle fingers, tear paper into strips, make collages with various colors, crumple into balls and use to stuff a dinosaur, snowman, or other art creation. Two large pictures of an animal can be made which can be taped or stapled together back to back, and stuffed with crumpled newspaper to create a 3D creature.

Spray bottles: Sprayers with large handles are wonderful for developing hand strength. Children love spraying plants (indoors and outdoors) and dry erase boards and chalkboards. Food coloring can be mixed with water and sprayed onto the snow.

Tweezers and tongs: Oversized tweezers such as the ones found in the "Bedbugs" game can be used to pick up and release small objects such as Cheerios, cotton balls, etc. as part of a counting activity or art project.

Lacing activities: String cut-up straws, beads, Cheerios, and other small objects. Felt and cardboard lacing activities are also great for developing eye-hand and fine motor coordination.

Eye-droppers: These can be used at the water table, in the bathtub, or for art projects to drip food coloring onto paper towels.

Cooking activities: Children often love to help make cookies. Stirring the ingredients in the bowl and using a rolling pin helps to develop strength in the arms. When putting sprinkles on cookies, the sprinkles can be poured into a bowl so that the children have to pick them up with their fingertips.