

BUILDING SKILLS @ HOME

FINE MOTOR

WHAT IS FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT?

Fine motor skills require the use of small muscles in the fingers, hands, and forearms. It is the ability to pick up small items, stack blocks, string bead, color with crayons, draw shapes, write letters, and cut with scissors. Fine motor skills are necessary for children to succeed in school activities.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Fine motor skills let kids perform crucial tasks like reaching and grasping, moving objects and using tools like crayons, pencils, and scissors. As children get better at using their hands, their hand-eye coordination improves. Fine motor skills are needed to succeed in school; tasks such as drawing and writing require hand strength and control.

FUN ACTIVITIES TO TRY: TO INCREASE CONTROL & HAND STRENGTH

- Tear paper into small pieces to improve the ability to use both hands in a coordinated manner.
- Color and write with small, broken crayon pieces.
- Offer stencils or trace around different objects.
- Build or play with dominos, small wooden blocks, and small lego blocks.
- Spin a top to exercise the muscles in the thumb, index, and middle finger.
- Punch holes on index cards with a handheld puncher to strengthen the hand muscles and improve bilateral skills.
- Squeeze water out of squirt-toys, spray bottles, or sponges in the bathtub, so hand muscles get a workout.
- Finger puppet play is entertaining and addresses finger isolation and dexterity.
- Place clothespins or kitchen clips on the edge of a paper plate to strengthen small hand and finger muscles and encourage bilateral skills.

TIPS & TRICKS FOR HOLDING A PENCIL:

It is always best to teach your child how to hold a pencil using a traditional "tripod" grasp. When holding a pencil, the thumb and index finger pinch the pencil while it rests on the middle finger. Here are three tips to help teach this grasp;

- Use shorter pencils such as golf pencils or broken crayon pieces.
- Teach them to "pinch and flip." Have your child pinch the sharpened end of the pencil using their index finger and thumb. Once holding the pencil, have your child flip it around until it gently rests in the "webspace" or the soft skin between the index finger and thumb.
- Have your child hide something under their last two fingers. Doing so helps children bend their ring and pinky fingers under while writing. Have your child hold something small like a pompom, cotton ball, marble, or small ball of play dough in their hand while holding their pencil.

TIPS & TRICKS FOR HOLDING A PAIR OF SCISSORS:

Showing your child how to hold a pair of scissors correctly will help minimize frustration. Have your child place their thumb in the smaller hole and put two or three fingers in the larger hole. Ensure that your child keeps their thumb facing up when cutting.

- Start by giving your child a half inch strips of paper to cut. Have your child practice snipping pieces off of the strip. Gradually make the paper wider as your child's scissors skills strengthen. For fun, have your child practice cutting play dough, slime, leaves or even grass.
- Draw a thick black line on paper and have your child practice cutting on the line. Use a variety of paper and materials such as newspaper, magazines, wrapping paper, coupons, construction paper, or fancy stationery or scrapbook paper.
- Draw simple shapes for your child to cut out. As your child's cutting skills increases, draw more complex shapes.