

Fine Motor List

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Several occupational therapists contributed to the ideas that were compiled into this list of fine motor activities. Before engaging in any fine motor tasks, several areas should be addressed including posture, sensory processing issues, trunk and shoulder stability, visual motor and visual perceptual skills, and hand functioning. Once these areas have been addressed as needed, the following fine motor activities may be helpful to improve your child's fine motor issues:

1. Playdough, silly putty, or clay
2. Shaving cream play
3. "Flippers": the kids flip them into an egg crate with colored stickers, each color worth a different number of points. Ants in the Pants game follows this same "finger flipper" concept
4. Hide and then find tiny pegs, beads, marbles or coins in silly putty , playdough, or theraputty
5. Chalkboard/whiteboard activities
6. Tape paper to a flat wall surface for drawing or writing
7. Make and complete mazes to draw or cut along
8. Use coins to stack, sort, put in a container and balance on a pencil placed on the table
9. Egg carton with small manipulatives such as Pepperidge Farm Goldfish. The child is asked to use his "crabs" to get the fish, one at a time. For the children who don't need the snack as a motivational means, small pegs, buttons, etc. can also be used
10. Place dried peas or popcorn kernels on the tiny suction cups of a suction soap holder. Can use fingers or tweezers
11. Create an entire fish bowl scene using Goldfish and adding Cheerios as the bubbles they blow in the water. Have them color in the fish bowl for added fine motor activities
12. Vinyl sticker activities placed on vertical surface
13. Stretch a rubber band around distal end of fingers and stretch out. Using other hand, place mini clothes pins on rubber band
14. Cut coffee stirrers or drinking straws. Straw pieces can then be laced on string or yarn
15. Place a small dish (Altoids cans work great) in fingertips. Rotate dish in fingertips while maintaining a horizontal position. Put a small sticker on the side so you'll know when it has gone all the way around. To add a challenge you can put rice, etc. in the dish
16. Use scissors style tweezers to pick up small toys and place in container
17. Hold cosmetic wedge under the last two fingers to improve separation of radial and ulnar sides of the hand
18. Reward chart - have child place own tiny sticker (e.g., stars) in the correct square of the chart. The chart hangs on a door so there is a vertical component. After receiving a certain number of stickers, the child got to go to the "treasure box."
19. Use a small musical keyboard to work on individuation of digits
20. Lite Brite, Operation, Hungry Hungry Hippos, Bedbugs, Knock Out, Forty Faces for Forty Faces, Doubletake (card game), Hammer and Nails, Waterfuls (increase thumb flexors)
21. Make an "O" with thumb and index (and middle) finger(s)
22. Can do a lot with Magna Doodle game. Use the donut-shaped magnet and have children color it in with the stylus. Draw an apple tree and use

donut-shape to put apples on tree. Turn Magna Doodle surface upside down for increased wrist extension during erasing.

23. Hold a small piece of crumpled Kleenex or small pom pom to place under child's ring and little fingers when writing or picking up small manipulative

24. Pick-up-sticks game

25. String macaroni or buttons onto spaghetti, pipe cleaner or yarn

26. Cheerios or Rice Krispies can also be crumbled with the fingers to make "sand" for pictures of the beach, an hourglass, etc.

27. Make necklaces with Fruit Loops

28. Make candy sculptures. Use colored toothpicks and various soft candies (marshmallows, gum drops, licorice, etc) to make the various creations

29. Roll a small ball of modeling clay or putty. Using thumb, move it from palm to fingertips and back. Then roll across finger tips, from index to little finger and back

30. Loop rubber band around pencil several times. Using only one hand for both holding and manipulating, move rubber band to other end of pencil

31. Using flashlight or bulb, make "finger shadows" against wall

32. Stamping activity. Try the flexible rubber stamps, sponge stamps and firm stamps

33. Crumple paper or tissue paper for art projects, hole fillers, etc.

34. Roll and shake dice within the palm of one hand

35. Roll a pencil from palm to finger tips and back

36. Pick up two or more clips, pegs, marbles, chips, etc., one at a time, while holding remaining ones within one hand (e.g., how many pegs can you keep in your hand while pulling the pegs out of a Lite Brite?)

37. Hold cloves while placing them in an orange

38. String games, such as Cat's Cradle

39. Nuts and bolts (real project or Erector set)

40. Hold marbles, rolling them one at a time into a hole on a Chinese Checker board

41. Hold Skittles and place on outline of picture

42. Play travel-sized games, especially Connect 4. For added challenge, you must play with only the amount of chips you can hold from the start

43. Use chopsticks to eat popcorn

44. Learn the manual (signed) alphabet

45. Fold origami (Japanese art of paper folding)

46. Build with toothpicks (supervise because of the points) and small styrofoam balls or marshmallows

47. Secure items in bags with twist ties or in Zip-lock bags

48. Roll and pull taffy

49. Spin small tops, twirl markers, etc.

50. Play Jenga or similar game using tweezers to remove the pieces

51. Turn over egg or game timers with one hand

52. To start off the new school year, I like to have the children trace their hands and then cut them out. We then place a letter on each hand to spell out "Occupational Therapy" and any other bulletin board or wall that needs a label. Last year I did "Our Birthdays" and "Our Sticker Charts". Under the birthday section, each child traced and cut out a balloon and wrote their birthday on it. This year, they will cut and trace a cake with candles to display their birthdays

53. Another hand print activity: have the children make their handprint and then write an activity on it (parquetry, puzzles, worksheets, theraputty, etc). Then glue them onto a popsicle stick. Stick them in a flower pot or window box to look like flowers. Have the children pick a flower to determine one of the activities for the day

54. Place a large paper on the wall and draw all different mazes that the kids can trace. Draw various shapes overlapping each other that the kids

need to trace for a figure ground activity. Play the dot game (make rows of dots with BINGO markers and kids make a line on their turn trying to make squares and prevent their opponents from making a square). I also tape up various worksheets for the kids to work on using this vertical surface.

55. Rice bucket filled with parquetry shapes that the children can identify (with eyes closed) or search for a named shape depending upon their skill level

56. Halloween activity: have various stations set up. STATION ONE - set up the station with various tactile goodies hidden for them to use their tactile sense (cold cooked spaghetti, raw hot dogs, peeled grapes, popcorn kernels, dried apricots, etc.) Be careful with this activity if you have anyone extremely sensitive to touch or smell. STATION TWO - the children have to use a straw to suck up pumpkin seeds to place in a cup. STATION THREE - balloon volley with orange and black balloons. STATION FOUR - bean bag toss into a Halloween bucket. STATION FIVE - Halloween Word Search

57. Can set up various fine motor activities in the gym (when it is available). Have the children ride to one station on a scooter board, complete the fine motor activity at that station, and ride the scooter board to the next activity. Children would do this until they completed all the stations.

58. When playing the Memory game with students, have one child pick up one card and the other child look for the match. It helps them work together and there is no competitiveness!

59. I like to set up murals with the kids which they help contribute to: FALL - Ummmmm, I didn't do one for Fall! WINTER - I had all the students draw their own snowman on paper, which was hung on the walls. SPRING - For the students learning how to cut, they snipped the green paper to make grass.

I took their pictures and put them into the middle of a flower that they traced and cut out. They then had to choose whether to make a cloud, butterfly, kite, or caterpillar to add to it (these all had templates made so they could trace, color, cut and paste). SUMMER - Students made sailboats and had to practice their handwriting by writing on the sails or the base of the boats what they liked about summer or what they were going to do during the summer

60. Book by Usborn called What Shall I Draw Today. Also, good books by Klutz Publishers and Ed Emberly drawing books

61. Beady Buddies (www.westrimcrafts.com)

62. Zaner-Blose and Benbow fine motor kits

63. Macrame jewelry

64. Water plants

65. Make dream catchers

66. Computer games

67. Electronic project labs (at Radio Shack for \$15 and up)

68. Chinese balls, stretch animals, bouncy balls, punch balls, finger puppets, crafts

69. Use hand tools such as strawberry huller, pickler, toaster tongs, etc. to pick up small objects

Activities to Promote Finger Isolation and Strengthening

- "Flippers" game sold by Therapro. The kids flip them into an egg crate with colored stickers, each color worth a certain amount of points. Each time a point is scored, the child runs to the chalkboard to make an appropriate tally mark

- Ants in the Pants game

- Hike small items in theraputty, such as pegs, beads, or coins

Activity to Promote Motor Planning (Ideation)

- Children are asked to think of 3 different ways to use their hands to find the objects hidden in the putty (pinch, poke, flatten with palm, etc.)
 - Use a lot of proprioceptive input to hands and arms prior to writing.
- Activities could include working in heavy clay, popping bubble wrap with their fingers, doing crab walk and wheelbarrow walk, writing while prone on elbows, etc.

Activity to Promote Proximal Stability and Encourage Wrist Flexion

- Chalkboard/whiteboard activities
- Tape paper to a flat wall surface for drawing or writing
- Make or complete mazes, which are hung to create a vertical surface, to draw or cut along
- Use coins to stack, sort, put into a container, balance on a pencil that's lying on a table
- Using a short pencil/crayon eliminates hooking of wrist as well as promoting pincer grasp.

Activities to Strengthen Thumb

- To avoid thumb wrap, strengthen hypothenar with activities such as: pinching/rolling playdoh, eye-droppers, games using eraser tips to pick up small beads, etc. Also, have child use small pieces of chalk, really short pencils, etc. to prevent spreading fingers across or wrapping thumb around the pencil

To Prevent Holding Pencil at 90 Degrees

- Vertical surface above shoulder level -- this will force the pencil into the web the elastic band method works well: use two interlocking rubber bands (like you attach a luggage or ski slope tag). One goes around the wrist and the other wrapped a couple times around the eraser end of the pencil. It also pulls the pencil down into the web space. For greater pressure, wrap the band tighter around the pencil. Also gives added proprioceptive input.
- Benik splint to support the thumb position. It allows child to open his/her web space and, as a result, improves the angle of the pencil and pencil control.

Activities to Promote Greater Pencil Pressure

1. Place a sheet of sandpaper (Walmart, sheet of about 6 = 1.79) under the sheet they are coloring. I stabilize everything with a clipboard (Walmart.99).
2. Take turns with a squiggle pen.
3. When all else fails, use markers.
4. Erasermate pens (with erasers on the end, Walmart also 3 in pack about 1.29).
5. Rollerball pens and thicker lead pencils can be ordered via mail from "The Pencil Grip Co".
6. I use a crayon that sticks into a holder shaped like a cartoon character. When the crayon is pushed down with enough pressure, it either makes a noise or plays music, depending on the character. I found them at toy stores (Toys R Us)/ Hearing the noise or the music has been an incentive for some students I have worked with to push harder. I wouldn't recommend it for everyday use, however, just for practice with the OT or at home.
7. Small wrist weight or hand weights
8. Short pencils or crayons
9. Try using a number 1 pencil which has softer lead and requires less force to produce a darker result. I found these at Staples after reading about them in TRICS.
10. Crayola has recently come out with crayons called Color Slicks (Walmart).

Their purpose is to produce more vivid colors without the need for as much pressure or coloring over and over on the same spot.

Activities to Promote Decreased Pencil Pressure

1. Mechanical pencils. When they break the lead enough, they learn to decrease the pressure.
2. Dycem placed under the paper they have to write on.
3. Writing on a slantboard or other vertical surface.
4. Carbon paper for an activity
5. Let the child use markers instead of pencils when doing assignments
6. Magic slates as an activity
7. Sidewalk chalk as an activity

More Activities to Aid Development of an Efficient Pencil Grasp

Any activities that involve using a pinching motion (touching pad of thumb to pad of index finger) help develop a good pencil grasp. Therapists call this a "pincer grasp." The child can be told to "make an "O" with the thumb and index (and middle) fingers." The challenge is to maintain this position. Children can be prompted by saying, "can you fix your "O"? Students also need to be taught to tuck the ring and little finger into the palm when doing manipulatives. You can have your child first make a fist and then get the thumb and index fingers out to make the "O". The ring and little fingers are always to stay tucked into the palm. If this is a problem, give child a small piece of crumpled kleenex or small pom pom to hold with the ring and little fingers as a reminder (can also give child small piece of candy to hold - like a tootsie roll - which child can eat as a reward after the activity). The ring and little fingers should never be used on a pencil or crayon. During any activity, if you see student switching from pincer grasp to using a key pinch (thumb pad to the side of the index finger like a key is held), then that activity may require too much strength for these muscles. Simply switch to something easier until greater hand strength is developed. Try using large diameter crayons and larger objects at first, while the hand is weak and focusing more on the hand strength activities. (Target carries some fat, short animal markers that work really well for children with weak hands).

1. Have child do art project using small (1/2" to 1") pieces of chalk, crayon or pastels. There are only two ways to hold small pieces like this. The first and preferred way is the pincer grasp.. If child has a weak hand he or she will hold it in a key grip. If you see this, focus on hand strengthening activities
2. "Finger Tug of War": use a popsicle stick or small piece of rubber tubing. Have student make an "O" with his/her thumb and index fingers, making sure all the joints are nice and round or flexed. Then both of you pinch either end of the tube or stick, being sure to keep the "O" shape, and pull. To be the "winner," the "O" must be maintained. Don't let the child switch to a key grip
3. "Hand Races": using silverware or pencils (or whatever!) line items into one hand as fast as you can. Race against the clock, your previous" record", or a friend. Also try this with smaller items such as buttons, toothpicks, or pennies. Then, keeping pennies or paper clips in your hand try to place them one at a time into a slotted container such as a cut-out yogurt container or piggy bank. Also try the reverse - how many pennies or paper clips can the child pick up, one at a time, and hold in his or her hand before one drops? This is one of the more difficult suggestions for hand skills.
4. Children enjoy putting pennies in and out of slots cut into foam pieces

(like a ring display). The slots are easier to find if you mark the holes with a marker

5. Use a clothespin to do finger "push-ups". Use the pads of the thumb and index finger to open a clothespin and count the repetitions. Encourage the child to keep all the finger joints rounded or flexed. Tell the child to touch his or her fingernail to the clothespin. Challenge the child to do one more each time

6. Try pinning clothespins to the side of a container. You can write letters on the side of the clothespins and use them to make words

More Pencil Grasp Activities

7. Use clothespins to pick up small pieces of crumbled paper. Try passing the paper to each other and then dropping in a bucket. Then after doing this activity, have the student do some type of fun visual motor activity (mazes, dot to dots, tracing), practicing this finger position on his or her pencil

8. Use squeeze bulbs to blow cork or ping pong balls back and forth. This is also fun when done in water

9. Push pins into foam with a paper design over the top. Play with clay, using thumb and index fingers to pinch pieces of clay off. Make dragons and pinch marks on top of the dragon. Play with pushing pegs or marbles into the clay using the thumb and index fingers

10. String beads together

11. Use eyebolt boards or lacing cards (needle and thread should be held between the thumb and index fingers)

12. Play games on pegboards. Score Four is a game of putting beads on pegs to get a tic-tac-toe

13. Tear pieces of construction paper into small pieces and paste the different colors of paper on an uncolored picture. You can make your own design. For example, get a piece of heavy paper for pasting the project on to. Cut some rectangles of brown paper 2"x6". Use them as tree trunks. Have student tear green construction paper for leaves and paste it all together

14. Make a small mosaic picture by gluing colored rice to a picture traced on a board. Rice can easily be colored by shaking it in a plastic bag with food coloring

15. Do water color pictures with the small paints sets and brushes found in the birthday favors section of stores

16. Moving objects with a large pair of tweezers (such as the plastic medical supply or from Bed Bugs) is a great hand strengthening activity. Initially, a child may hold the tweezers with all four fingers on them. That's okay at first as student is learning to manipulate the tweezers. When this is achieved, transition student to using the tweezers with the thumb-index-middle fingers or thumb-index fingers only. Teach student to tuck the ring and little fingers in

17. Light bright

18. Creating patterns with strawberry hullers

19. Paper dolls

20. Magnetic wands with bingo chips that have animal stickers on it (the children play a memory and matching game).

21. Use a small cup (Tupperware Midgets or Dixie cups) to eat a small snack out of, such as Skittles or M&Ms. The cup needs to be small enough so that the child has to use a tripod grasp to get the items out of it.

22. I have played a game where the child has 5-10 pennies on a flat surface. They have to pick them up one at a time without compensating by using their body to stabilize the pennies or by sliding the pennies off the surface. Once they pick up a penny they translate it to ulnar (pinky) side of the hand (without using their other hand to assist). They have to keep the penny in their hand while picking up the next penny. Then when all the pennies are in the hand they have to bring the pennies back to the radial (thumb) side of

the hand, one penny at a time, and place them through a slot on a plastic container. This can be modified by changing the items picked up (i.e., smaller beads and lightweight objects are harder). Also, the amount of items can be changed and the slot can be made more or less resistive. Kids also like to be timed, which is great for motor memory once they are successful with the activity. This activity works on the muscle strength and coordination of the hand needed for an efficient pencil grasp. Once the game is mastered, the activity can be performed daily in the classroom.

23. Making pea sized putty balls with only one hand works to strengthen and coordinate the muscles of the hand.

24. Making a necklace with small beads (1/4 inch or less) is also good for an efficient pencil grasp.