

"Unlocking the potential in every child!"

Free Teacher Tips
Compliments of Key Education

Great Activities to Strengthen Fine Motor Skills

ACTIVITIES TO INCREASE STRENGTH

Building hand strength is necessary for developing fine motor skills and will assist with increasing manual dexterity. Here are some fun ideas:

Play Dough

Encourage creative play. Pretend you are baking cookies. Use a rolling pin and then cut with cookie cutters. Use various kitchen tools. Play dough can be squeezed through a potato ricer, garlic press, or pushed through a funnel. Plastic forks, spoons, and knives can be used to cut play dough and to create impressions in the play dough.



Fun with Tweezers

Give the child a bowl of objects (*colored paper clips, buttons, small pom-poms, acorns, erasers, rubber bands, gold fish crackers, bean seeds, craft jewels*), a muffin tin, and tweezers. Have the child pick up the items using the tweezers and then sort the objects by placing them into the individual muffin tin sections. Children enjoy this activity and it will increase finger strength and manual dexterity.



ACTIVITIES TO INCREASE EYE-HAND COORDINATION

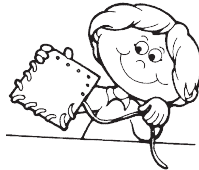
Children's explorations with pouring and scooping, tossing bean bags, printing and stamping, and lacing and stringing activities will help improve manual dexterity and increase eye-hand coordination.

Make Your Own Stamps

Cut shapes, letters, or numbers (*in reverse*) from craft foam, self-adhesive shoe liners, or heavy self-adhesive mounting tape. Glue craft foam to the block wooden block. The self-adhesive mounting tape and shoe liners will stick to the block. This is an inexpensive way to create easy-to-hold stamps. Use stamping ink pads or fill a pie tin with thin coat of tempera paint.

Home-Made Lacing Cards

Pictures from discarded coloring books, toy catalogs, discarded children's books, or greeting cards make wonderful lacing cards. Simply glue the picture onto heavy card stock or cardboard, cover with self-stick laminate, punch holes, and the cards will be ready to lace. Wrap masking tape around one end of the yarn as a needle or use real shoe laces.



Jewelry-Making

Children will enjoy stringing bracelets and necklaces from a wide variety of materials. Edible necklaces can be made from round cereal and candy. Other kinds of jewelry can be made from small plastic craft beads, buttons, different kinds of pasta, packing peanuts, drinking straws cut into small pieces, and home-made play dough beads — roll the play dough into a ball, poke a hole through the middle, and allow to dry.



SCISSOR SKILLS

Before a young child can successfully cut with a pair of scissors, the child must have enough muscle strength to be able to control and coordinate using two hands together (*one hand holds the paper, while the other hand manipulates the scissors*).



Here are some helpful suggestions:

- ◆ Let children sit and practice opening and closing the scissors before you give them anything to cut. (*And purchase good scissors!*)
- ◆ Beginner's should use a heavier weight paper. It is easier to hold and to cut. As the child's skills increase, then introduce lighter weight papers.
- ◆ Start with small pieces of paper because they are easier to cut.
- ◆ Introduce the concept of "snipping." Let the children snip 1 inch fringe on the edge of a strip of paper.

- ◆ Let children practice cutting using a wide variety of paper and textures, such as sandpaper, aluminum foil, paint sample squares, wax paper, yarn, straws, play dough, napkins, or other items that you might find handy.

BEFORE THE PENCIL

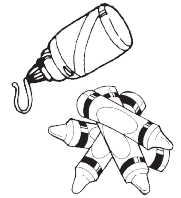
Before young children learn to print, it is important to provide them with a wide variety of tactile experiences. Tactile experiences allow children to "feel" shapes, letters, and numbers as they draw with their fingers. Tactile experiences are wonderful for all children, but can be especially helpful for children who find visual-motor and fine motor tasks difficult.

Cookie Sheet Tracing - Dry Materials

Fill a cookie sheet with any of the following materials: rice, clean sand, salt, glitter, coffee, sugar, seeds, small beads, or oatmeal. Let the children draw and trace with their fingers. Draw specific shapes and then ask the child to try and copy the shape that you have drawn.

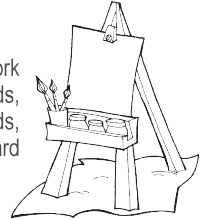
Create Raised Borders on Coloring Book Pages

Using white glue, trace around the edge of a coloring book picture and let dry. This will provide a raised border making it easier for the child to color within the lines and help the child learn better control. Raised borders can also be achieved by lining the picture with self-sticking Wikki Stix®.



Vertical Surfaces are Best

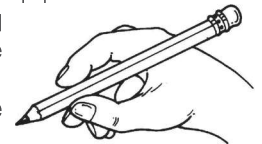
Fine motor skills are best developed when children work on vertical or near vertical surfaces, such as chalkboards, easels, lite-brights, magnets on refrigerators, wipe-off boards, flannel boards or slant boards. Draw large dots on a black board or easel. The child can connect the dots in any direction.



USING A PENCIL

Some children just naturally know how to properly hold a pencil. While other children struggle with this skill and must be taught the proper pencil grasp. Here are some tips:

- ◆ **Good Posture.** Feet should be on the floor and the desk surface should be a comfortable height for the arm and elbow to rest.
- ◆ **Slanted Surface.** Learning how to print is easier using a slanted surface. Place a 3- to 4 inch three ring-binder (*rings towards the top of the desk*) and rotate to a 45 degree angle. Tape a piece of writing paper on the binder.
- ◆ **Align Paper.** Even if you do not use a slanted surface, be sure that the paper is aligned parallel to the arm of the dominant hand and is at a 45 degree angle. The non-dominant hand should be used to hold the paper stable.
- ◆ **Proper "Tripod" Pencil Grasp.** The pencil should be held between the pads of the thumb and the index finger while resting on the middle finger.
- ◆ **Pencil Grips.** Grips are helpful for children who have a difficult time remembering how to hold their pencil.
- ◆ **Chubby and Short Writing Tools.** Use sidewalk chalk, chubby crayons, or pencil cut down to a short 2 inch length to help children learn more control.



Purchase Fine Motor/Early Handwriting Materials at:

