

## Activities with Fine Motor Manipulatives

Pre-kindergartners benefit from experiences that support the development of fine motor skills in the hands and fingers. Children should have strength and dexterity in their hands and fingers before being asked to manipulate a pencil on paper. Working on dexterity and strength first can eliminate the development of an inappropriate pencil grasp, which is becoming more common as young children are engaged in writing experiences before their hands are ready. The following activities involve the use of manipulatives which will support young children's fine motor development, and will help to build the strength and dexterity necessary to hold a pencil appropriately.

1. Molding and rolling play dough into balls - using the palms of the hands facing each other and with fingers curled slightly towards the palm.
2. Rolling the play dough into tiny "peas" using only the finger tips.
3. Using pegs or golf tees to make designs in play dough.
4. Cutting play dough with a plastic knife and kids scissors.
5. Tearing newspaper into strips and then crumpling them into balls.
6. Scrunching up 1 sheet of newspaper in one hand. This is a super strength builder.
7. Using a plant sprayer to spray plants, (indoors, outdoors) to spray snow (mix food coloring with water so that the snow can be painted).
8. Picking up objects using large tweezers. This can be adapted by picking up Cheerios, small cubes, small marshmallows, etc., in counting games.
9. Picking up pennies, buttons, or other small, flat objects using "pinching fingers."
10. Shaking dice by cupping hands together, forming an empty air space between the palms.
11. Using small-sized screwdrivers like those found in an erector set.
12. Lacing and sewing activities such as stringing beads, Cheerios, macaroni, etc.
13. Using eye droppers to "pick up" colored water for color mixing or to make artistic designs on paper.
14. Rolling small balls out of tissue paper, then gluing the balls onto construction paper to form pictures or designs.
15. Turning over cards, coins, checkers, or buttons, without bringing them to the edge of the table.
16. Making pictures using stickers.
17. Playing games with the "puppet fingers" -the thumb, index, and middle fingers. At home have your child's puppet fingers tell about what happened at school, or use them in songs and fingers plays.

## Scissor Activities

When scissors are held correctly, and when they fit a child's hand well, cutting activities will exercise the very same muscles which are needed to manipulate a pencil in a mature Tripod Grasp. The correct scissor position is with the thumb and middle finger in the handles of the scissors, the index finger on the outside of the handle to stabilize, with fingers four and five curled into the palm.

1. Cutting junk mail, particularly the kind of paper used in magazine subscription cards.
2. Making fringe on the edge of a piece of construction paper.
3. Cutting play dough with scissors.
4. Cutting straw or shredded paper.

## Vertical Fine Motor Skills

When a certain amount of body stability has developed, the hands and fingers begin to work on movements of dexterity and isolation as well as different types of grasps. Children will develop fine motor skills best when they work on a VERTICAL surface as much as possible. In particular, the wrist must be in extension (Bent back in the direction of the hand).

1. Attach a large piece of drawing paper to the wall and have them color or trace bodies with a crayon.
2. Play Connect The Dots. Again make sure the child's strokes connect dots from left to right, and from top to bottom, VERTICALLY.
3. Trace around stencils- the non-dominant hand (helper hand) should hold the stencil flat and stable against the paper, while the dominant hand pushes the crayon firmly against the edge of the stencil. The stencil must be held firmly.
4. Attach a large piece of felt to the wall, or use a felt board. The child can use felt shapes to make pictures. Magnetic boards can be used the same way.
5. Have the child work on a chalkboard, using chalk instead of marker. Do the same kinds of tracing and modeling activities as suggested above.
6. Paint at an easel. Some of the modeling activities as suggested above can be done at the easel.
7. Magna Doodle- turn it upside down so that the erasing lever is on top. Experiment making vertical, horizontal, and parallel lines.

## Midline Crossing

Establishment of hand dominance is still developing at this point. The following activities will facilitate midline crossing.

1. Encourage reaching across the body for materials with each hand. It may be necessary to engage the other hand in an activity to prevent switching hands at midline.
2. Refrain specifically from discouraging a child from using the left hand for any activity. Allow for the natural development of hand dominance by presenting activities at midline, and allowing the child to choose freely.
3. Start making the child aware of the left and right sides of his body through spontaneous comments like, "kick the ball with your right leg." Play imitation posture games like "Simon Says" with across the body movements.
4. When painting at the easel, encourage the child to paint a continuous line across the entire paper- also from diagonal to diagonal.