

A brief overview of motor skills

Developing good fine motor skills is a great way of supporting your child to improve their handwriting skills and pencil control, which in turn will help their written work in class.

Often we need to strengthen the muscles in our hands to help us be able to write for a longer period of time. The more practice your hands have with this sort of activity, the more the muscles in your hands will 'remember'. Muscle memory is great for helping with spelling too!

Any activities where children are required to use their hands for detailed work, eg mosaic, aqua beads will all help to develop fine motor skills - the main thing at home is to try and make it fun, your child will practise handwriting at school!

Below are fun and easy-to-access activities for supporting your child's motor skills development at home. Some of the activities may state that resources are needed, but these can often be swapped with things that you can find in the home eg: you could use pasta tubes to thread instead of beads on a string.

If you come across any other fab ideas, please feel free to share them with us, new ideas are always welcome.



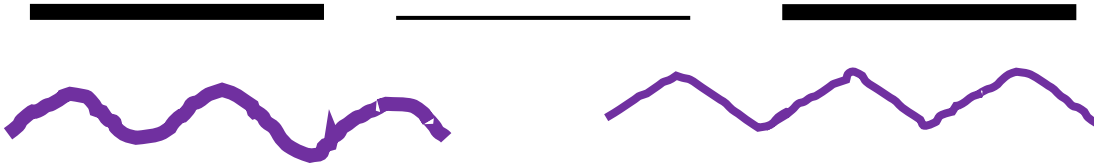
Menu of fine motor skills activities:

 <p>bead threading</p>	 <p>chalk drawings</p>	 <p>stacking blocks</p>
 <p>lacing cards</p>	 <p>cutting out lines</p>	 <p>playing Jenga</p>
 <p>pinching rice</p>	 <p>posting</p>	 <p>pegs</p>
 <p>pom poms</p>	 <p>play-doh</p>	 <p>baking</p>
 <p>drawing in sand</p>	 <p>elastic bands</p>	 <p>stress balls</p>

The menu explained...

Cutting

Draw a range of lines of different thicknesses for your child cut out across a page. Once they are confident with this, then try drawing shapes or wiggly/ zig-zag lines.



Equally, using tracing paper (or baking/greaseproof paper) to draw a shape and ask your child to trace over the shape is a great way to develop handwriting skills. You could do the same activity using a yellow felt tip or highlighter and ask your child to trace the line.

Stringing beads

Take a shoe lace and knot one of the ends then practise threading beads or buttons onto it. If you don't have beads, then use pasta tubes (penne, rigatoni or macaroni if you want a real challenge) - get your child to paint them to make some funky jewellery. You could even use Cheerios and make edible necklaces or bracelets! As an alternative to threading on a lace, you could stand dried spaghetti in playdough and make pasta or cheerio towers - great for practising maths too!



Tower building

Build tall towers or create a model or structure for your child to copy using Lego or mega blocks. Putting together and taking apart Lego is great for

getting the muscles in your fingers moving. You could just build towers using blocks, or play Jenga - look out for cheap versions in The Works or Poundland.



Lacing cards

You can buy these in shops, but you could also make your own using thick card and a hole-punch. There are also freebies on the internet.

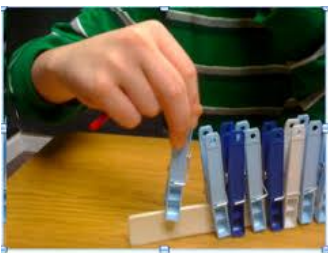
Just take a piece of card and punch holes in it. Thread wool or laces through it. There are some examples in this pack. This is also a great way to teach shoe-lace tying!



Using a pincer grip

Rice: Place some rice or lentils or small pieces of dried pasta in a bowl and place an empty cup or bowl next to it. Your child should use a pincer grip (thumb and pointer finger) to take one piece of rice at a time and place it in the bowl.

Pegs/tweezers: Using pegs on anything is a great way of developing a pincer grip. You can also use them to pick up objects such as pom poms.



Posting

There are lots of ways to do this activity and it can be made as easy or as challenging as you like, depending on the age and need of the child. Take a box and make a slit (or punch holes) in the lid. The smaller the slot, the trickier the activity. Provide your child with buttons, pipe cleaners, straws, counters etc to post through the slot. There are many possibilities for this type of activity, some ideas are shown below.



Elastic Bands

Encourage your child to stretch elastic bands (or loom bands) around objects eg Pringles tubes, pine cones, swimming noodles or the bottoms of cupcake tins...



Sand writing

Make the most of dry weather and get outside! Writing in sand (or rice on a tray indoors) is a great way to develop writing skills. You can use your finger to mark make in the sand or use sticks. Start as big as you can and then encourage your child to make the same marks smaller and smaller. This is a fun way to practise letter formation and even spellings!



You could also try painting with water...simply take paint brushes and water outside and make patterns, write words or draw shapes on the wall - mess free fun!

Sensory dough (Playdoh)

This is a great way to strengthen muscles in the hands and it is lots of fun too. Making your own playdoh is really easy and you can add food colouring and even scents to make it smell nice! There are a few recipes for homemade dough; we have included one for salt dough and one for sensory dough.

Salt dough recipe:

2 cups of flour

Cup of salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ - 1 cup of water

Drop of oil

Food colouring

Mix together - children to shape and create models - they could add other items to their models. Or, models can be baked and then painted.

Sensory dough recipe

1 cup baby oil

8 cups flour

Food colouring in a colour of your choice

This dough can't be baked, but you could add some of the ideas below to make some weird and wonderful creations.



Exercises to develop hand strength

Creeping Thumbs:

For this activity, you will need a bandage/ribbon (or even toilet roll), about 75cm long. Place the unrolled bandage in front of your child whilst they are seated at a table. Your child should put their writing hand at the end of the bandage (on the right-hand side if they are right handed, and on the left hand side of they are left-handed). Their fingers should be resting on the bandage and their palms resting on the table. Keeping their wrist still, your child should try to gather up the bandage with their thumb, tucking it under their hand as they do so.

You could make this fun by timing them and then seeing if they can beat their own time. Similarly you could draw patterns or pictures on the bandage.

Creepy Crawlies:

This is similar to Creeping Thumbs.

Once again ask your child to sit at the table. This time you should unroll the bandage so that it is laid out in front of them. This time your child should gather the bandage using only their fingers, making sure that they keep their wrist still.



Useful weblinks and resources:

This list is by no means exhaustive. It is easy to find ideas online by searching for fine motor skills activities into a search engine. Pinterest is also fab for magpie-ing ideas!

www.theimaginationtree.com

www.pinterest.com

www.creativepreschoolresources.com

<http://therakids.org/media/pdf/FineMotorActivitiesForHome.pdf>

<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/movement-coordination-issues/8-fun-ways-to-build-fine-motor-skills>

<http://www.learning4kids.net/list-of-fine-motor-play-activities/>

<http://www.fingergym.info/downloads/Finemotordevpp1-4.pdf>

<https://www.education.com/activity/fine-motor-skills/>

<http://therapyfunzone.net/blog/ot/fine-motor-skills/>

<http://mamaot.com/fine-motor-activities-using-household-items/>

<https://jojoebi.com/50-fine-motor-skills-activities/>