

Motor Skills Ideas

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Gross and fine motor skills are important aspects of physical development which form a foundation on which other skills are built.

Fine Motor Skills

Fine motor skills involve the use of the small muscles that control the hand, fingers, and thumb. They help children perform important tasks like feeding themselves, grasping items, buttoning and zipping clothes, writing, drawing, and more. The ability to complete self-care and every day tasks helps a child's self esteem and confidence increase.

It's important to start working with children on building their fine motor skills early on. Fine motor skills will develop and improve as they move through childhood. Fine motor skills gradually build for children as they do activities to help strengthen their muscles and coordination. Make sure to keep the fine motor activities fun and change it up for your child. The more they want to play and explore with activities that build their fine motor skills, the more precise their movements will be.

Gross Motor Skills

Gross motor skills are important to enable children to perform every day functions, such as walking and running, playground skills (e.g. climbing) and sporting skills (e.g. catching, throwing and hitting a ball with a bat). They are also crucial for everyday self care skills like dressing (where you need to be able to stand on one leg to put your leg into your trouser leg without falling over), climbing into and out of a car or even getting into and out of bed.

Gross motor abilities also have an influence on other everyday functions. For example, a child's ability to maintain appropriate table top posture (upper body support) will affect their ability to participate in fine motor skills (e.g. writing, drawing and cutting) and sitting upright to attend to class instruction, which then impacts on their academic learning. Gross motor skills impact on your endurance to cope with a full day of school (sitting upright, moving between classrooms, carrying your heavy school bag). They also impact on your ability to navigate your environment (e.g. walking around classroom items such as a desk, running around the playground).

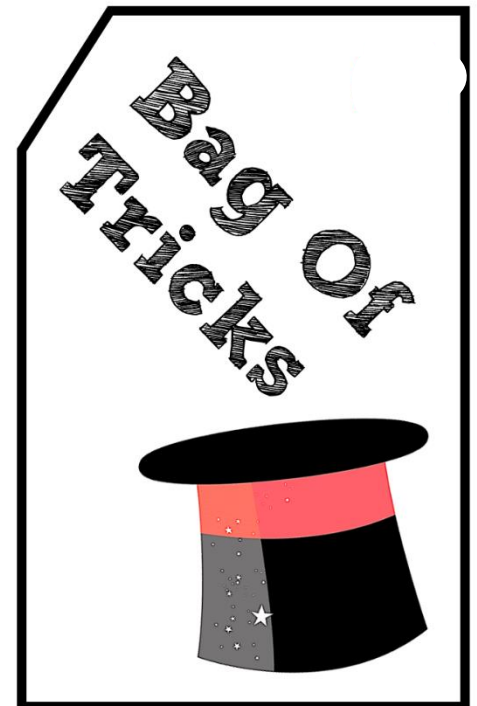
This leaflet gives some ideas about the types of activities you can enjoy that will help your child develop their fine and gross motor skills, in a fun, pressure free way. We have provided some of the things you might need for some of the activities in this 'Bag Of Tricks'. Many of the activities can be adapted to use things that you have around the home, e.g. paper clips.

Piggy Bank:

- The children will need a selection of different coins and a money box.
- Children to pick up the individual coins using their tripod grasp (thumb, forefinger and middle finger) and post them into the money box.
- This could be done as a timed task, posting as many coins in a given time.

Nuts and Bolts:

- Children to screw the nuts on and off of bolts, using their "helping hand" to hold the bolt and their "doing hand" to screw on the nuts.



Fine Motor Skills

Squeeze Me, Feed Me

This activity develops the hand strength needed for handwriting and is a fun way to incorporate counting and sorting practice addition.



Directions

- 1 Have the student hold the tennis ball with thumb, index finger, and long finger of his or her dominant hand and practice squeezing to open the “mouth” of the ball.
- 2 Have the student roll the die with his or her non-dominant hand.
- 3 Referring to the number on the die, have the student squeeze the ball to pick up the corresponding number of pennies with the mouth of the tennis ball, one at a time.
- 4 Once the pennies are all used, the student can squeeze the tennis ball to dump the pennies into the cup.

Optional Activity Modifications

For sorting practice:
Use colored pom-poms instead of pennies to sort by color.

Bubble Wrap Pop:

- Children to use their pincer grip (thumb and forefinger) of their “doing hand” to pop as many bubbles in the time given as the “helping hand” holds the bubble wrap.
- This can be repeated so that the “doing hand” and “helping hand” are reversed.
- It can also be developed where both hands are using their pincer grip to pop simultaneously

Tweezing for Coins

This activity can be used to introduce students to the value of different coins as they work on developing a tripod grasp—a finger position that produces a strong, efficient pencil grasp.

Ingredients

- foam pipe insulation
- craft knife
- glue
- tweezers
- box with compartments for sorting



Directions

- 1 Have the student hold the tweezers in the same manner that he or she would if holding a pencil.
- 2 Have the student pick up each coin from the prepared foam pipe insulation and place it in the correct compartment of the sorting box.

Beading With Both Hands

This activity assists students with establishing a hand preference. In most cases, the student will use his or her more dominant hand to place the beads on the string.

Ingredients

- 40 small beads (20 of one color, 20 of another color)
- 2 shoelaces
- 1 small cup



Directions

- 1 Have the student pick up one bead at a time from the cup.
- 2 Have the student place each bead on the second shoelace in the same pattern as the model.

Wind-up Toy Race:

- Children to use their “helping hand” to hold the wind-up toy whilst using the tripod grasp (thumb, forefinger and middle finger) of their “doing hand” to wind up their toy.
- Once their toy has been wound up, children should race their toys from one end of the surface to another.

Cereal Letters

This activity helps students develop skills that lead to a good pencil grasp while working on letter recognition and formation.

Ingredients

- 9" x 12" construction paper
- small cereal pieces
- tweezers
- glue
- marker
- 1 small cup



Directions

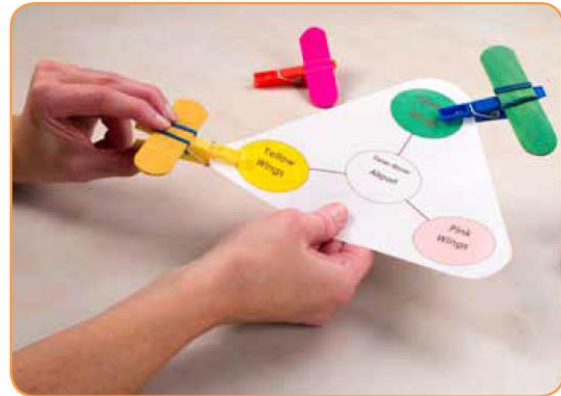
- 1 Give the student a small cup of cereal and the prepared letter on construction paper.
- 2 Have the student trace the complete letter with glue.
- 3 Using tweezers placed in the hand like a pencil, have the student pick up small pieces of cereal, one at a time, and place each piece onto the letter, so that it sticks to the glue (until all of the lines are covered).

Flying Into the Airport

This activity develops tripod grasp and hand strength (needed for efficient handwriting), fastening skills, and color sorting. The popsicle sticks are added to encourage the correct finger placement.

Ingredients

- 3 large popsicle sticks (1 red, 1 green, and 1 yellow)
- 6 clothespins (2 red, 2 green, and 2 yellow)
- 6 rubber bands
- scissors
- sand paper
- laminated "airport" graphic



Directions

- 1 Have the student place his or her index and long fingers on the wings and thumb underneath on the clothespin end.
- 2 Have the student "fly" the planes into the correct color airport gate, clipping the clothespin to the graphic.

Tearing Paper:

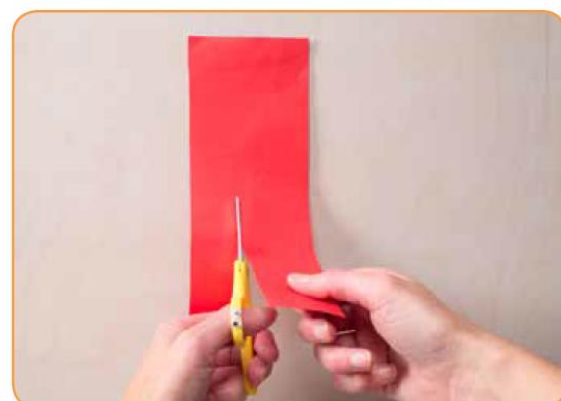
- Children to tear a piece of paper into strips, using their "helping hand" to hold the paper as their "doing hand" tears the strips of paper. They should use their tripod grasp (thumb, forefinger and middle finger) when tearing the paper with their "doing hand".
- This could be a timed task where children tear as many strips as possible in a given time.

Cutting Up

In this activity, working at eye level helps develop strong shoulders, which support writing/cutting hands. NOTE: Make sure to use left-handed scissors with left-handed students.

Ingredients

- thick paper (construction paper or oak tag)
- tape
- child-safe scissors



Directions

- 1 Have the student cut the strips into smaller strips using an upward motion.

Snap, Snap, Sort

This activity develops the wrist and finger strength needed for precise movements in handwriting, as well as math patterning and color sorting skills.

Ingredients

- linking cubes in two or more colors



Directions

- 1 Provide the model to the student and have the student follow the math pattern provided by linking the cubes together.
- 2 When the pattern is completed, have the student separate the cubes and sort them by color.

Play-doh Balls:

- With a ball of play-doh, children to use their “doing hand” to roll smaller play-doh balls, using their pincer grip (thumb and forefinger) and tripod grasp (thumb, forefinger and middle finger).
- These balls could be used for a different activity, e.g. finger football or feeding Bob the Ball.

Sphere on a Spoon

This activity helps develop the elbow, forearm, and hand control needed to manipulate a writing utensil. Try sorting by color or matching to add skill practice to the activity.

Ingredients

- 1 wooden spoon
- 5 small rubber balls or pom-poms
- 1 small bowl



Directions

- 1 Have the student hold the spoon with the palm up and arm extended.
- 2 Have the student place a ball or pom-pom on the spoon and concentrate on keeping it in place as he or she walks to the bowl across the room.
- 3 Have the student drop the ball into the bowl once it is reached.

Pasta Lace:

- Children to thread pieces of pasta onto a piece of lace, using their pincer grip (thumb and forefinger) and tripod grasp (thumb, forefinger and middle finger) to hold the lace and thread the pasta.
- Washing line or pipe cleaners could also be used as firmer alternatives to lace.

Bulldog Line:

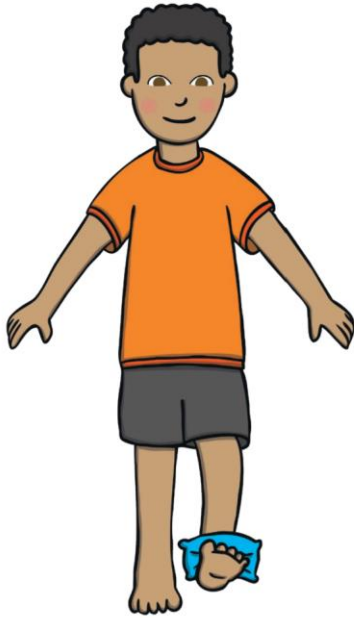
- With a number of bulldog clips and a piece of washing line, children to clip as many bull dogs as they can using their pincer grip (thumb and forefinger) and tripod grasp (thumb, forefinger and middle finger) as they can in a given amount of time.
- Children to swap between their “doing hand” which is opening the bulldog clips and the “helping hand” which is holding the rope.
- This could also be done with pegs on the washing line.

Get Building:

- Children to use bricks, cubes or LEGO® to build something. Children to focus on using their pincer grip (thumb and forefinger) and their tripod grasp (thumb, forefinger and middle finger) when picking up the bricks, cubes or LEGO®.

Gross Motor Skills

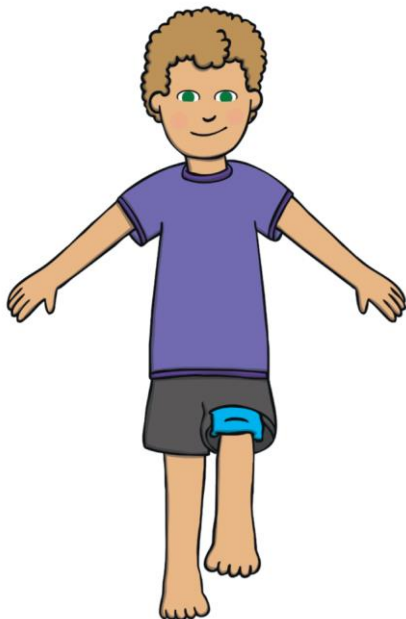
Balance the beanbag on
your foot.



Balance the beanbag on
your head.



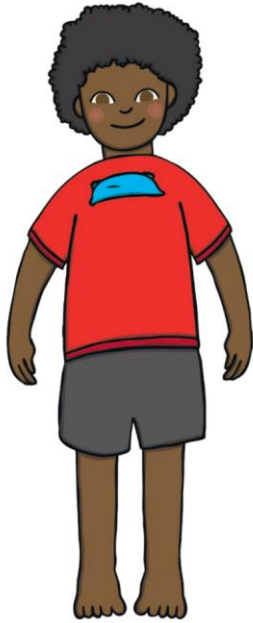
Balance the beanbag
on your knee.



Balance the beanbag on
your elbow.



Balance the beanbag
on your chest.



Balance the beanbag
on your hand.



Balance the beanbag
on your shoulder.



Balance the beanbag
on your back.



Beat the clock

Simply stand on one foot! Turn this into a contest; the child needs to try and beat how long they balanced last time!

Walk the line

Put two lines of tape on the ground and practice walking on a pretend balance beam.

Jump, jump, jump

Jump on and off mats, in and out of hoops, side to side and move around the room, then at a signal jump into a hoop.

Jump off

Jump from a bench first holding an adult's hand, then independently, gradually increasing height from the ground.

Jump over

Jump over a skipping rope that is still by starting low to the ground and gradually increasing the distance from the floor. Develop to a moving skipping rope.

Hold on

Hold the pupil's hands and ask them to jump, encourage him/her to use one leg only.

Hop around

Hop around a table holding on, it doesn't have to be a table, it can be another suitable object, such as a wall or rail that is at an appropriate height.

Change feet

Hop on the spot and change feet after two hops.

Hop to the beat

Hop around the room to music.

Roll the ball

Roll a ball to a partner using both hands, roll the ball around his/her feet, push the ball towards a target.

Target

Stand and drop the ball into a hoop, increasing the distance gradually.

Underarm

Throw a bean bag into a hoop increasing the distance, throw a beanbag at a target on the wall, move to using different balls to hit the target.

Overarm

Throw a beanbag as hard as possible at the floor, throw a beanbag into a large container on the floor, throw a bean bag at a target on the wall starting close then increasing the distance.

Pass the ball

Pass the ball over his/her head with both hands, then repeat.

Throw to the sky

Throw a balloon up and catch it, move to a foam ball and then to smaller balls.

Drop ball

Drop a large ball to the floor with two hands and catch it, increasing the force used.

Bounce ball

Bounce a ball to a partner, start with a large ball, developing to a smaller ball.

Hot potato

Transfer a bean bag from hand to hand, pretending it is a hot potato. Gradually increase the distance between the hands and use a variety of balls of differing weights, sizes and textures.