



Supporting your child at home

Fine motor and Handwriting

What are fine motor skills?

The term 'fine motor' means small muscles. Fine motor skills involve the small muscles in the fingers, hand and wrist and arm to manipulate, control and use tools. Hand-eye coordination is also an important component of motor control, as it is needed to control the aim and direction of the hands when operating tools.

Why are they important?

Children are not born with defined and developed muscles and so it is important to help them strengthen and grow. Children mainly use fine motor for drawing, writing, colouring, and building. They use gross motor for physical aspects of play and physical activity including running, dancing and riding bikes and scooters.

For young children the development of fine motor skills are the precursors for early literacy, maths and self-help skills like dressing and toileting. As children develop and their fine motor skills are enhanced children are able to participate in more complex skills such as, arts, crafts, sewing, musical instruments, computing, and complex construction. At this point, the children's handwriting may develop; they will have found a consistent approach to holding their pencil and the letter formations become clear and consistent in size.

Children who are working hard to develop these muscles may tire easily, become frustrated and suffer from low self-esteem when comparing the appearance of their work to that of their peers.

How can I support fine motor development?

Children learn most effectively when they are interested in what they are doing. With young children, there is a range of activities, which children enjoy whilst developing their fine motor. The motto 'little and often' is applicable when developing these muscles. There are ranges of traditional activities, which are successfully used to develop fine motor. There include, cutting with scissors, threading, malleable materials, tweezers, Lego and small world play.

Apps to support fine motor

Cut the buttons

Dexteria - Fine Motor Skill Development

Bugs and buttons

Chalk walk

Tickle tap

Let's trace

Dexteria Jr

Little digits

Boogiebopper

Games and activities to support fine motor.

In role play areas

- Play dress up with the children having a go at different types of zips, buttons and fasteners.
- Writing materials which fit in with a role-play theme for example in a play kitchen have a recipe book, shopping lists and post-its to leave messages on the fridge.
- Tubs of water for washing and drying dolls
- Small world and construction. Little figures in imaginative play.
- Lego-Following instructions and free play with Lego and Meccano.
- Zoob construction which required more strength to build and dismantle

In sand play areas

- Using play tweezers to find hidden objects.
- Mark making in rock salt
- Becoming a palaeontologist using a paintbrush to excavate hidden dinosaurs
- Using utensils and cutlery to manipulate either wet or dry sand
- Using shaving foam to make shapes and patterns (adult supervision needed)

Music and movement

- Any finger movement songs
- Playing with any musical instrument
- Jumpstart Jonny activities
- Running, stopping and changing direction games.

Malleable play

- Play-Doh-decorating Play-Doh eggs with beads and sequins
- Pasta necklaces
- Painting shells
- Salt dough modelling
- Using spaghetti and cereal loops, create the tallest tower.