

Fine motor fun for preschoolers

Fine motor skills are the grasping and manipulating of objects your child does, in coordination with their eyes. There are many ways to help develop these skills that are fun and inexpensive. The most important thing is to keep it fun by giving lots of choices, keeping the activities short and giving lots of positive feedback.

Create some art

- Short and thick markers, crayons, chalk, etc. are easiest when children are first learning their pencil grasp!
- Make games out of drawing roads (across the paper), rain (going down the paper), crosses and rainbows.
- Let your child see you doing activities like colouring, or functional writing like making a grocery list or to do list. They may want to copy you!
- Make your own simple shapes for your child to colour in or very simple mazes to draw through.



Draw in different locations



Sitting at a table.



Lying on the floor (or outside with chalk in nice weather).



Standing at an easel (or tape paper to the wall).

Hole punch

- Punch holes through a paper plate or piece of thick paper. Then with a long piece of yarn, they can string it through the holes they punched.



Playdough-a fun way to strengthen the hands

- Squeeze a ball in the palm of your hand and make it squish through your fingers.
- Stretch it out to make it as long as you can.
- Roll it into balls or 'snakes'.
- Use a garlic press to squeeze out 'spaghetti'.
- Make little balls between thumb and index finger and squeeze.
- Hide small objects in the playdough and ask your child to dig their fingers in and search for the hidden treasure. Encourage them to stretch the playdough and work their fingers in.



Water play - During bath time or just playing in the sink or in a small basin, this is a great way to work on hand strength.

- Squeeze the water out of a sponge or wring out a washcloth into another container.
- Use bath toys like a rubber duck, eye-dropper or spray bottle to squirt/spray water.



Kitchen activities - Stirring, scooping, mixing and mashing!

- Start with stirring thin batters (with a thick-handled spoon) and progress to thicker batters that require more strength to mix.
- Tong Games – Using kitchen tongs (the smaller ones for ice cubes work well) pick-up different objects (blocks, pompoms, beads, almonds...) and drop them into a container. You can sort objects as well!



Clothes pins

- Put them around the edge of a box or container.
- Pinch onto firm paper/pictures.
- Use them to pick-up things like cotton balls!



Photo: <https://busytoddler.com/easy-clothes-pin-activity/>

Beading

- Use large beads, or large pasta (like rotini) at first and place them on straws or pipe cleaners.
- To make it more difficult, string beads on a shoe lace and use smaller beads.



Practice cutting with scissors

- Encourage your child to keep their "thumb up" and hold the paper with their other hand.
- Cut playdough or items in the recycling, like old magazines.



Photo: <https://www.playgroupwa.com.au/cutting-playdough/>