

Fine Motor List

Compiled by Deanna Iris Sava, MS, OTR/L

Several occupational therapists contributed to the ideas that were compiled into this list of fine motor activities. Before engaging in any fine motor tasks, several areas should be addressed including posture, sensory processing issues, trunk and shoulder stability, visual motor and visual perceptual skills, and hand functioning. Once these areas have been addressed as needed, the following fine motor activities may be helpful to improve your child's fine motor issues. Following these activities are additional lists compiled by Carrie Lippincott.

1. Playdough, silly putty, or clay
2. Shaving cream play
3. "Flippers": the kids flip them into an egg crate with colored stickers, each color worth a different number of points. Ants in the Pants game follows this same "finger flipper" concept
4. Hide and then find tiny pegs, beads, marbles or coins in silly putty , playdough, or theraputty
5. Chalkboard/whiteboard activities
6. Tape paper to a flat wall surface for drawing or writing
7. Make and complete mazes to draw or cut along
8. Use coins to stack, sort, put in a container and balance on a pencil placed on the table
9. Egg carton with small manipulatives such as Pepperidge Farm Goldfish. The child is asked to use his "crabs" to get the fish, one at a time. For the children who don't need the snack as a motivational means, small pegs, buttons, etc. can also be used
10. Place dried peas or popcorn kernels on the tiny suction cups of a suction soap holder. Can use fingers or tweezers
11. Create an entire fish bowl scene using Goldfish and adding Cheerios as the bubbles they blow in the water. Have them color in the fish bowl for added fine motor activities
12. Vinyl sticker activities placed on vertical surface
13. Stretch a rubber band around distal end of fingers and stretch out. Using other hand, place mini clothes pins on rubber band
14. Cut coffee stirrers or drinking straws. Straw pieces can then be laced on string or yarn
15. Place a small dish (Altoids cans work great) in fingertips. Rotate dish in fingertips while maintaining a horizontal position. Put a small sticker on the side so you'll know when it has gone all the way around. To add a challenge you can put rice, etc. in the dish
16. Use scissors style tweezers to pick up small toys and place in container
17. Hold cosmetic wedge (or small piece of candy) under the last two fingers to improve separation of radial and ulnar sides of the hand
18. Reward chart – have child place own tiny sticker (e.g., stars) in the correct square of the chart. The chart hangs on a door so there is a vertical component. After receiving a certain number of stickers, the child got to go to the "treasure box."
19. Use a small musical keyboard to work on individuation of digits
20. Lite Brite, Operation, Hungry Hungry Hippos, Bedbugs, Knock Out, Forty Faces for Forty Faces, Doubletake (card game), Ants in the Pants, Hammer and Nails, Waterfuls (increase thumb flexors)
21. Make an "O" with thumb and index (and middle) finger(s)

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22. Can do a lot with Magna Doodle game. Use the donut-shaped magnet and have children color it in with the stylus. Draw an apple tree and use donut-shape to put apples on tree. Turn Magna Doodle surface upside down for increased wrist extension during erasing.
23. Hold a small piece of crumpled Kleenex or small pom pom to place under child's ring and little fingers when writing or picking up small manipulative
24. Pick-up-sticks game
25. String macaroni or buttons onto spaghetti, pipe cleaner or yarn
26. Cheerios or Rice Krispies can also be crumbled with the fingers to make "sand" for pictures of the beach, an hourglass, etc.
27. Make necklaces with Fruit Loops
28. Make candy sculptures. Use colored toothpicks and various soft candies (marshmallows, gum drops, licorice, etc) to make the various creations
29. Roll a small ball of modeling clay or putty. Using thumb, move it from palm to fingertips and back. Then roll across finger tips, from index to little finger and back
30. Loop rubber band around pencil several times. Using only one hand for both holding and manipulating, move rubber band to other end of pencil
31. Using flashlight or bulb, make "finger shadows" against wall
32. Stamping activity. Try the flexible rubber stamps, sponge stamps and firm stamps
33. Crumple paper or tissue paper for art projects, hole fillers, etc.
34. Roll and shake dice within the palm of one hand
35. Roll a pencil from palm to finger tips and back
36. Pick up two or more clips, pegs, marbles, chips, etc., one at a time, while holding remaining ones within one hand (e.g., how many pegs can you keep in your hand while pulling the pegs out of a Lite Brite?)
37. Hold cloves while placing them in an orange
38. String games, such as Cat's Cradle
39. Nuts and bolts (real project or Erector set)
40. Hold marbles, rolling them one at a time into a hole on a Chinese Checker board
41. Hold Skittles and place on outline of picture
42. Play travel-sized games, especially Connect 4. For added challenge, you must play with only the amount of chips you can hold from the start
43. Use chopsticks to eat popcorn
44. Learn the manual (signed) alphabet
45. Fold origami (Japanese art of paper folding)
46. Build with toothpicks (supervise because of the points) and small styrofoam balls or marshmallows
47. Secure items in bags with twist ties or in Zip-lock bags
48. Roll and pull taffy
49. Spin small tops, twirl markers, etc.
50. Play Jenga or similar game using tweezers to remove the pieces

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51. Turn over egg or game timers with one hand
52. To start off the new school year, I like to have the children trace their hands and then cut them out. We then place a letter on each hand to spell out "Occupational Therapy" and any other bulletin board or wall that needs a label. Last year I did "Our Birthdays" and "Our Sticker Charts". Under the birthday section, each child traced and cut out a balloon and wrote their birthday on it. This year, they will cut and trace a cake with candles to display their birthdays
53. Another hand print activity: have the children make their handprint and then write an activity on it (parquetry, puzzles, worksheets, therapy, etc). Then glue them onto a popsicle stick. Stick them in a flower pot or window box to look like flowers. Have the children pick a flower to determine one of the activities for the day
54. Place a large paper on the wall and draw all different mazes that the kids can trace. Draw various shapes overlapping each other that the kids need to trace for a figure ground activity. Play the dot game (make rows of dots with BINGO markers and kids make a line on their turn trying to make squares and prevent their opponents from making a square). I also tape up various worksheets for the kids to work on using this vertical surface
55. Rice bucket filled with parquetry shapes that the children can identify (with eyes closed) or search for a named shape depending upon their skill level
56. Halloween activity: have various stations set up. STATION ONE - set up the station with various tactile goodies hidden for them to use their tactile sense (cold cooked spaghetti, raw hot dogs, peeled grapes, popcorn kernels, dried apricots, etc.) Be careful with this activity if you have anyone extremely sensitive to touch or smell. STATION TWO - the children have to use a straw to suck up pumpkin seeds to place in a cup. STATION THREE - balloon volley with orange and black balloons. STATION FOUR - bean bag toss into a Halloween bucket. STATION FIVE - Halloween Word Search
57. Can set up various fine motor activities in the gym (when it is available). Have the children ride to one station on a scooter board, complete the fine motor activity at that station, and ride the scooter board to the next activity. Children would do this until they completed all the stations
58. When playing the Memory game with students, have one child pick up one card and the other child look for the match. It helps them work together and there is no competitiveness!
59. I like to set up murals with the kids which they help contribute to: FALL - Ummmmm, I didn't do one for Fall! WINTER - I had all the students draw their own snowman on paper, which was hung on the walls. SPRING - For the students learning how to cut, they snipped the green paper to make grass. I took their pictures and put them into the middle of a flower that they traced and cut out. They then had to choose whether to make a cloud, butterfly, kite, or caterpillar to add to it (these all had templates made so they could trace, color, cut and paste). SUMMER – Students made sailboats and had to practice their handwriting by writing on the sails or the base of the boats what they liked about summer or what they were going to do during the summer

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60. Book by Usborn called What Shall I Draw Today. Also, good books by Klutz Publishers and Ed Emberly drawing books and one called Draw, Write, Now
61. Beady Buddies (www.westrimcrafts.com)
62. Zaner-Blose and Benbow fine motor kits
63. Macrame jewelry
64. Water plants
65. Make dream catchers
66. Computer games
67. Electronic project labs (at Radio Shack for \$15 and up)
68. Chinese balls, stretch animals, bouncy balls, punch balls, finger puppets, crafts
69. Use hand tools such as strawberry huller, pickler, toaster tongs, etc. to pick up small objects. Can have child pick up Skittles or other candy with tool, place in palm of other hand, and "squirrel" candy toward fingertips. After a few times, have child switch hands
70. Light Brite
71. Creating patterns with strawberry hullers
72. Paper dolls
73. Magnetic wands with bingo chips that have animal stickers on it (the children play a memory and matching game)
74. Use a small cup (Tupperware Midgets or Dixie cups) to eat a small snack out of, such as Skittles or M&Ms. The cup needs to be small enough so that the child has to use a tripod grasp to get the items out of it
75. I have played a game where the child has 5-10 pennies on a flat surface. They have to pick them up one at a time without compensating by using their body to stabilize the pennies or by sliding the pennies off the surface. Once they pick up a penny they translate it to ulnar (pinky) side of the hand (without using their other hand to assist). They have to keep the penny in their hand while picking up the next penny. Then when all the pennies are in the hand they have to bring the pennies back to the radial (thumb) side of the hand, one penny at a time, and place them through a slot on a plastic container. This can be modified by changing the items picked up (i.e., smaller beads and lightweight objects are harder). Also, the amount of items can be changed and the slot can be made more or less resistive. Kids also like to be timed, which is great for motor memory once they are successful with the activity. This activity works on the muscle strength and coordination of the hand needed for an efficient pencil grasp. Once the game is mastered, the activity can be performed daily in the classroom
76. Making pea sized putty balls with only one hand works to strengthen and coordinate the muscles of the hand
77. Making a necklace with small beads (1/4 inch or less) is also good for an efficient pencil grasp