

What can we do to develop fine motor skills in pre-school children?

Here are some activities that can help to develop fine motor skills...

Shoulder Girdle Stability

- Completing drawings & on a *vertical surface*, such as a wall or easel.
- Stirring mixtures of thick consistency (eg. cake mix; play-dough)
- Playing games on all fours, such as crawling through obstacle courses and animal walks.
- "Wheelbarrow walks", where the child is the "wheelbarrow".
- Making flat "pancakes" with play-dough, by pushing down onto the play-dough whilst elbows remain straight.

Hand Strength

- Squeezing a sponge filled with water.
- Playing with play-dough.
- Construction games involving *pushing* and *pulling* actions.
- Scrunching paper balls to stick on a collage. You can also use the paper balls to fill an orange bag, making a fun ball to throw and catch.
- Using a spray bottle to water plants
- Playing games with tongs, teabag squeezers or tweezers.

Fine Pincer Grasp

- Tearing paper into shapes, using the index finger and thumb.
- Playing games with pegs. E.g. make a colourful design around a plastic container.
- Doing puzzles that contain small knobs.
- Playing games with toothpicks - push into playdoh; post into a spice jar

NOTE: If children are having difficulty isolating their index finger and thumb, try asking them to hold a marble with their ring finger and pinkie during these activities.

Manipulation Skills

- Peeling off stickers, sticker pictures.
- Threading beads or lacing cards.
- Making small balls with playdoh/paper.
- Finger games (eg. Incy wincy spider, 5 little monkeys)
- Turning puzzle pieces over with 1 hand.

Bilateral Hand Use

- Hold and do activities, such as stacking blocks, threading beads, stirring cake mixes (real or pretend), screwing & unscrewing containers and snipping.
- Try using the "doing hand" and "helping hand" terminology during these tasks.

How to refer:

If you think a child is experiencing fine motor difficulties, you can refer them for an Occupational Therapy Assessment. Parent consent is required – please call the Occupational Therapist, **Natasha Rogers**, at the Croydon Health Centre on 93781151 for more information. The Croydon Child, Adolescent and Family Health Service, located at the Croydon Health Centre, is a free service provided by Sydney South West Area Health Service.

Sensory Play Ideas

Below are some play ideas for each of the sensory systems. This type of play should be fun and lead by the child. Combine different types of sensory experiences to make activities interesting.

TOUCH:

Textured fabric tunnel to crawl through.
Find objects in a bowl of water/pasta/rice/flour.

Textured play mat

Puppets

Play-Doh/Making pastry

A tactile box - put objects of different textures in a box and let your child choose - this could include pine cones, leaves, cotton wool, rubber ball, stones.

Wet play, play in sand, and messy play

Shaving cream play.

Feely Box (hide toys inside for them to find)



PROPRIOCEPTION

Cuddles

Hot Dogs- rolling them up in a blanket

Sandwiches- squashing between two cushions

Wheelbarrow walking or rolling over a large ball.

Kids Yoga

Jumping, bunny hops, bouncing, trampolining.

Twister

Bottom shuffling across the floor

Tug of war

Animal Walks



VESTIBULAR: It is very important that vestibular (movement) input is within the child's control. Too much input at one time can cause nausea (sickness). Some ideas include: Playing in a go-cart, log rolling, swinging, roundabouts, twirling, stepping stones, balance board, playground equipment, walking between ladder rungs, hopscotch, and wobble board.



SIGHT

Mirrors

Shiny collages or mobiles.

Bubbles

Balloon Games

Flashlight play

Glow in the dark toys

Puzzles

Mazes

Using variety of colours in play

Ball games

Eye Spy

Card games

TASTE & SMELL

Scented Playdoh

Scented textas/stickers

Room fragrance/oil burner

Messy play with food

Cooking/Baking

Tasting/smelling blindfolded



AUDITORY

Sound toys

assical and Kids Music

Musical instruments

Singing

Rhythmic clapping games

Useful Sensory Websites and References:

- www.lifeskills4kids.com.au
- <http://www.sensory-processing-disorder.com/index.html>
- <http://www.sensorysmarts.com/index.html>
- <http://www.spdfoundation.net/>
- Stock-Kranowitz C. 2003. *The out-of-sync child has fun: Activities for kids with sensory integrative dysfunction*. New York: Perigree.
- Stock-Kranowitz C. 1998. *The out-of-sync child: recognizing and coping with sensory integration dysfunction*. New York: Perigree.

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