

Activities to Develop Finger Control and Strength for Handwriting

Children who are having difficulty with handwriting will benefit from extra practice for finger coordination, use of pincer grasp, and increase of hand strength. It is simple to build in this extra practice by adapting everyday activities and by offering and encouraging participation in the activities listed below.

Arts & Crafts:

- String small beads for craft projects or jewelry. Vary the string materials (firmer, larger strings are easier than flimsy, smaller strings.)
- Make Perler Bead crafts.
- Tear paper to use in craft projects and collages.
- Cut heavy paper, such as card stock.
- Create things with Bendaroos®.
- Use hole punches (i.e., lacing activities, etc.).
- Use craft punches to make shapes for decorating projects.
- Use eye droppers to drop small amounts of paint onto surfaces.
- Open and close small bottles.
- Squeeze things such as glue, glitter glue, or puffy paint from squeeze bottles.
- Spray water onto surfaces for cleaning using a spray bottle.
- Use clothespins to hang art projects on a line to dry (oppose thumb to index fingertip).

Cooking:

- Open screw top plastic jars.
- Place toothpicks into cheese or hors d'oeuvre pieces.
- Use a strawberry huller (small tongs) for placing cheese cubes, pieces of fruit, or other small foods on a plate.
- Stir batter or dough.
- Use eye droppers to add liquids (specify a number of drops to practice control).
- Place small decorative toppings onto cookies or cakes.
- Decorate cookies and cakes with the tube frosting.
- Use a strawberry huller to prepare strawberries (with adult supervision!).
- Squeeze honey or maple syrup from a bottle.
- Squeeze water out of a sponge or washcloth.
- Spray water onto surfaces for cleaning using a spray bottle.
- Use a rolling pin to crush crackers or roll dough.
- Cut food with a plastic knife.

Games & play:

- Silly Putty fun such including: Stretch it; Roll it in a snake and then make the snake into a donut or other shape; Hold a small ball of putty between the thumb and index fingertip and make a putty pancake.
- Play games with small pieces such as Lite-Brite®, Perfection or similar pieces.
- Play games that use tongs or large tweezers such as Bedbugs or Operation.
- Play games that require coordination, such as magnetic fishing games or Jenga®.
- Play board games with dial spinners.
- Play with small hand tops, driedels, or Doodle-Tops™.
- Play with Legos®, K'NEK®, Tinkertoys or similar building toys.
- Make laminated game pieces and boards that use Velcro. Be sure the child is the one taking the Velcro® pieces off the board!
- Add an extra challenge by using clothespins to drop the Connect 4 pieces into the games board or to manipulate similar game pieces.

Everyday tasks:

- Place small stickers on chore charts or reward charts.
- Button buttons and snap snaps.
- Buckling and unbuckling belts.
- Sort loose coins into stacks of pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters.
- Put coins into the slot of a piggy bank. (To add a challenge to coin activities, ask your child to hold a number of coins in his or her hand and place them one at a time using only their thumb and index finger).
- Open combination locks.
- Use keys to open locks.
- Carry in the groceries, especially carrying jugs of milk or juice by the handle.
- Pinch and seal Ziploc bags, using the thumb in opposition to the index and middle fingers and keeping web space rounded.

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Resources used:
www.school-ot.com by Jennifer Dodge
TRICS for Written Communication by Susan J. Amundson