

Hand Use



An important stage in the development of fine motor skills is the development of bilateral hand use. This is the use of two hands together to grasp and manipulate objects. This stage of development starts with bringing the hands together in the midline and develops to using one hand as the dominant hand and the other as a helping hand.

It is important when focusing on fine motor skills that your child is well supported and sitting in a stable position.

This will free them up to use their hands: even if you do not see your child propping with a hand in sitting, they will be using their arms and hands to balance. Examples of this would be sitting in their high chair or car seat and sitting on your knee.

With most activities start off doing them hand over hand with your child.

Activity Ideas for Early Years

Clapping rhythms and action songs – start with songs where both hands do the same thing and with lots of clapping. Ideas would be 'Clappa Clappa Handies', 'Wind the Bobbin Up' (words below), 'Twinkle Twinkle', 'Incy Wincy Spider'.

Start by doing any of these hand over hand with your child:



- Large items e.g. a balloon or ball – your child will need two hands to hold this. You can make the activity more interesting by having balls of different textures, tapping rhythms or making vibrations on the balloon.
- Treasure box – have a box with objects/toys of different sizes and textures inside e.g. wooden spoon, sponge, hair brush, plastic necklace, silk scarf, koosh ball, cotton wool, different sized balls etc. Encourage your child to explore the objects, tip the objects out of the box and put them back.
- Water play – use a ball in the bath to splash, encourage splashing with two hands and floating bath toys or cups which are large enough to need two hands to lift.
- Toys to bang together e.g. bricks, toy men, musical toys - one for each hand!
- Activities with cause and effect e.g. bursting bubbles, musical toys.

Wind the Bobbin Up

**Wind the bobbin up
Wind the bobbin up
Pull, pull
clap, clap, clap!**

**Wind it back again
Wind it back again
Pull, pull
Clap, clap, clap!**

**Point to the ceiling
Point to the floor
Point to the window
Point to the door
Clap your hand together
1, 2, 3
Gently place them on your
knee**



**ONE
TWO
THREE**

Further Activity Ideas



- Construction toys e.g. Megablocks, Duplo, Lego. Start by pulling pieces apart and then move onto building. Build towers and once your child is confident encourage them to use their imagination to build whatever they want.
- Threading - use cotton reels and laces, dried pasta tubes and wool, large beads (or drinking/craft straws cut into pieces) and buttons onto thinner laces, lacing cards (or a piece of card with holes punched into it)
- Playdough - Practice rolling, flattening the playdough (see homemade recipe below) and using tools such as plastic knives, rolling pins, cookie cutters.



- Water play - Spray plants, the windows or the pavement with a trigger type spray bottle. Use squeeze bath toys and squirters.
- Jigsaw puzzles - start simple e.g. 2 pieces and work up to more complex puzzles.
- Coin races - ask your child to place coins in a piggy bank (or a box with a slot cut in the lid). Encourage your child to pick up the coins with their "Tommy" thumb and "Peter Pointer" finger and use their helping hand to hold the piggy bank.
- Pegs races - ask your child to place clothes pegs on the side of an ice-cream tub as fast as they can. Encourage them to use their "Tommy" thumb and "Peter Pointer" finger to squeeze the pegs open. They should use their dominant hand to hold the pegs and their helping hand to hold the tub.
- Colouring in - this will help develop pencil control. Use thick, short crayons

to help encourage a tripod grasp (adult grasp). Use pictures with a thick bold outline to colour over. Try tracing around the outline with their "Peter Pointer" finger before beginning colouring. Try to stay within the lines.



- Working at an easel - this works muscles against gravity and can help to improve grasp when using tools. Your child can paint, draw, and use chalk or any other media to create pictures.
- Craft activities - gluing and sticking are great fun. You could make collages with pieces of a magazine, dried pasta, rice, wool, string, tissue paper etc.
- Tongs and tweezers - Pick up items using tweezers and salad/kitchen tongs. Start with tongs and larger items e.g. balls of cotton wool or balled up tin foil or paper and move onto smaller items with tweezers.



- Scissors - snip with scissors; don't worry about cutting straight through a piece of paper at this stage. Try cutting: through a sausage of play dough,

drinking straws, thick paper – snipping around the edge to make a “fringe”, corrugated card, craft or “Funky” foam sheets, bits of wool or string held tightly at either side by a grown-up.

- In the kitchen - Let your child try activities involving stirring, pressing, kneading, rolling out, measuring out, pouring, sieving, opening containers and using cookie cutters. It is likely to be a messy task so aprons at the ready!
- Self-care activities e.g. dressing and fastenings on clothes, using cutlery.
- Housework activities e.g. folding large sheets and towels, washing and drying the dishes, hanging up the clothes on the washing line.