



Fine Motor Skill Activities by Age

Building Hand Strength, Coordination & School Readiness

What's Inside This Guide

- 1 Why fine motor skills matter**
The foundation for writing, self-care, and play
- 2 Activities by age (0–5 years)**
Fun, hands-on practice for every stage
- 3 Pencil grasp development**
Understanding typical grasp progression
- 4 Tips for parents**
Making fine motor practice feel like play
- 5 When to seek help**
Signs your child may benefit from OT

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1 Activities for Babies & Toddlers

Fine motor skills involve the small muscles in the hands and fingers working with the eyes to perform precise movements. These skills are essential for writing, self-care, school tasks, and play. The good news: they respond very well to practice!

0–12 Months: Foundation Skills

- **Tummy Time Reaching**
Place colorful toys just out of reach during tummy time to strengthen shoulders and arms.
- **Finger Foods**
Around 6–8 months, introduce small finger foods (puffs, soft pieces) to build pincer grasp.
- **Transferring Objects**
Encourage passing objects from one hand to the other to build coordination.

1–2 Years: Developing Grasp

- **Stacking Blocks**
Start large, progress to smaller. Target: 2 blocks at 12 months, 6+ at 24 months.
- **Playdough Play**
Squeeze, pinch, roll, poke. Use cookie cutters and rollers to build hand strength.
- **Peeling Stickers**
Place large stickers on a sheet. Toddler peels and sticks them — great for pincer grasp.
- **Crayons & Scribbling**
Chunky or triangular crayons. Tape paper to the table and let them scribble freely.

2–3 Years: Skill Refinement

- **Scissors Introduction**
Start with tearing paper, then snipping with child-safe scissors (single cuts).
- **Stringing Beads**
Medium beads on string. Builds bilateral coordination and concentration.
- **Puzzles**
Knob puzzles progressing to interlocking. Builds spatial awareness and manipulation.



2 Preschool & School Readiness

3–4 Years: Pre-Writing & Self-Care

- **Cutting on a Line**
Draw a thick straight line. Progress to curved lines and simple shapes.
- **Buttoning Practice**
Practice on a buttoning board or large-button shirt. Start with bottom buttons.
- **Lacing Cards**
Thread a lace through holes in cardboard shapes. Builds bilateral coordination.

4–5 Years: School Readiness

- **Letter Formation**
Practice writing letters. Start with straight-line letters (L, T, I, H) before curved.
- **Small Construction**
LEGO, small blocks, Perler beads. Builds precision and finger strength.
- **Coloring Within Lines**
Small coloring sheets build pencil control and writing endurance.

3 Pencil Grasp Development

- **1–2 years: Fisted/Palmar grasp**
Whole hand around crayon, arm movements from the shoulder.

- **2–3 years: Digital pronate**
Fingers pointed down, movement from the wrist.

- **3–4 years: Modified tripod**
Held with fingers, may use 4 fingers instead of 3.

- **4–5 years: Tripod grasp**

Held with thumb, index, and middle finger — the mature grasp.



4 Tips for Parents



Make it fun

Fine motor work should feel like play, not homework. Follow your child's interests and build activities around what they enjoy.



Short sessions work best

5–10 minutes of focused practice is better than 30 minutes of frustration. Keep activities brief and positive.



Use vertical surfaces

Drawing and painting on a wall or easel naturally strengthens the wrist and promotes a good pencil grasp. Tape paper to a wall!



Strengthen the core first

A strong core supports stable shoulders, which supports hand control. Outdoor play, climbing, and tummy time all build the foundation.



Celebrate effort, not perfection

Focus on the process, not the product. "You worked so hard on that!" is more encouraging than correcting the result.

Pro Tip from Our Therapists

If your child is 5+ and still uses a fisted grasp, experiences hand fatigue during writing, or avoids all drawing activities, consider an occupational therapy evaluation.





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Get Started

We're Here to Help

Book a free 15-minute phone consultation with an experienced therapist.

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