Fine Motor Activities for Pre-School Aged Children

The area of fine motor skills is crucial to a child's success throughout school. Fine motor skills refer to one's ability to grasp and utilize an object with their hands. This is important in almost all activities of life such as dressing, bathing, writing, & cutting. Consequently, fine motor skills are of utmost importance in the classroom and throughout life.

The following activities will help your child refine their fine motor abilities.

1. Scissor Ships: Draw broad, straight lines on a sheet of paper. Tell students that the scissors are like big ships breaking through ice, and they have to be opened wide before moving on.

2. Pizza Making: Give each student a piece of clay approximately the size of their palm. Have students roll the clay into a ball with both hands. Do not let students roll the clay on the table. Once the clay is in the shape of a ball, have students flatten the clay with their hand. Ask students to pinch off small pieces of clay and roll them into little balls with the thumb and first finger of one hand to represent the pepperoni or sausage for the pizza. Students must place the "toppings" on the pizza.

3. Secret Key: Place a padlock on a box filled with a goodie of some kind (fruit, stickers, etc.). Place several keys in front of the box with only 1 key being the right key. Students must manipulate the keys in order to get a prize.

4. Rubber-band Wrap: Give students various sizes of rubber bands and several different sized jars and cans. Students must stretch the rubber bands over the cans and jars.

5. Scissor Cutting Activities: Students cut old magazines, greeting cards, and newspapers to find a specific letter or picture, and paste it into a collage.


7. Building Block Activities: Students use plain blocks, legos, or tinker toys to build and copy designs.

8. Coloring: Students use crayons, colored pencils, or markers to color pre-drawn pictures.

9. Push Pegs: Draw circles or any shapes on a piece of styrofoam. Give students golf tees or small wooden dowels. Students must push the pegs through the circles on the styrofoam. This reinforces tip-to-tip grasp with the thumb and index finger.

10. Sand Writing: Place a layer of sand (or flour) in a baking pan. Ask students to write or draw in the sand with their fingers.

11. Chalk Scraps: Give students small pieces of colored chalk. Instruct students to hold the chalk piece between their thumb and first two fingers (the last two fingers can remain next to the second finger, but not touching the chalk). Allow students to draw on the chalkboard using this grasp. This grasp reinforces proper grasp for future pencil writing tasks.

12. Pick Up Objects: Have students pick up small objects such as pennies, marbles, or beans and place them in a bottle with a small opening or small opening in a box.

13. Q-Tip Art: Have students paint pictures with a Q-Tip.

14. Card Bowl: Cut a small rectangular shape in the lid of a bowl (Cool Whip sized). Have students put playing cards through the hole one at a time.

15. Spoons: Have students pickup beans with a spoon and transfer them from one container to another. Students should be reminded to maintain proper grasp (which is the same as their pencil grasp).

16. American Sign Language: Teach students basic letters and/or signs.

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In-Hand Manipulation is made up of 3 parts:

Rotation, Translation, and Shift

Rotation is being able to turn or roll an object held with the tips of fingers.

Ways to practice Rotation:

- Peg puzzles and interlocking puzzles
- Unscrewing lids from jars, bottles, etc.
- Placing objects through shape sorting container
- Spinning Tops
- Etch-I-Sketch using all finger and wrist to move knobs

Translation is being able to move and object from the tips of the thumb and pointer finger into the palm of the hand and back to the tips of the thumb and pointer finger.

Shift is the ability to move an object in a linear motion with the thumb and pointer finger flexing and extending at the same time.

Ways to practice shift:

- Stringing beads
- Unscrewing nuts and bolts with pointer finger and thumb
- Peel stickers or colorforms with pointer finger
- Etch-I-Sketch using only thumb and pointer finger to move knobs
- Use small squirt guns or a squirt bottle with a trigger in the tub, or with colored water to draw in the snow
- Use a body splash bottle
- Use thumb to switch on and off a flashlight

Ways to practice translation:

- Pick up pennies one by one and move the pennies from fingers to palm and the back out to the fingers and place pennies in a piggy bank.
- Practice before each turn or when putting away small pieces to games like Travel Connect Four, Perfection, pegs, mini dice.
- Practice translation with snacks like cheerios, raisins, or popcorn (put ants on a log: celery with peanut butter and raisins on top)
- Using paper ask child to crumple paper into a tight ball with both hands and then try with only one hand

Strengthening:

Finger strength is needed to be able to move and hold objects in hands.

Ways to strengthen fingers:

- Using a small rubber band ball take rubber bands and with all fingers inside the rubber band stretch them wide enough to place them back on the ball.
- Using a tennis ball cut the ball so that it will open like a mouth when squeezed from the side and small objects can be taken out and put in it.
- Play-doh can be rolled into a ball and squeezed by all fingers or rolled into a snake and each finger squish the snake.
- In the bath tub a squirt water bottle can be used and squeezed with both hands together.
- Squeeze a turkey basting bulb, bulb syringe, stress ball, or balloon full of sand
- Hole punch different thickness and textures of paper randomly, then increase challenge by indicating dots to hole punch or make a path to hole punch.

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