

FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Strategy: Hand Strength and Dexterity

Audience: Kindergarten to Grade 4

What:

- The small muscles of the hand, as well as the larger muscles in the forearm, are used together when performing fine motor tasks
- The muscles of the forearm provide strength and stability, while the smaller intrinsic muscles of our hands allow for more skilled and isolated movement
- Finger dexterity refers to the ability to coordinate small finger movements to complete fine motor tasks
- Coordination of finger movements and overall strength is required during a variety of daily tasks, including self-care activities (manipulating buttons and zippers) and school activities (holding and manipulating a pencil, printing, colouring, and using scissors)

How:

- Children complete a variety of weight bearing, squeezing, and pushing/pulling types of activities daily to develop hand strength and dexterity. Playing with smaller items to build dexterity is also recommended
- Activities could include:
 - weight bearing exercises: animal walks, donkey kicks, etc.
 - playdough/clay: squeezing, rolling, and pinching. A fun activity is making “eggs” for a bird’s nest. Play treasure hunt by hiding small items (i.e., buttons, beads) in playdough, then have children pick items out
 - dressing self: zippers, buttons, snaps, Velcro, and buckles
 - crafts: tape or paper tearing, gluing, lacing, and beading activities
 - home chores: setting the table, unloading the dishwasher, baking, etc.
- Encourage play with activities/games that have small pieces such as Lego, checkers, and board games

Materials:

- Playdough and clay
- Lego and Duplo
- Velcro, zippers, and buttons
- Craft supplies: tape, paper, glue, etc.
- Popper beads and pony beads
- String/laces and lacing cards
- Potato Head toy
- Household items: sponges, clothespins, spray bottles, tongs, tweezers, bubble wrap, eye dropper or turkey baster, etc.

Example: click image to play the video



Inclusive Practices to Consider:

- Play is the work of children and active play will help to develop strength and dexterity required for everyday fine motor skills
- Be creative and have fun with your child. Consult your school’s Occupational Therapist for more great ideas

Reference and Links:

Hand Strength: 35 Fun Activities for Kids
<https://theinspiredtreehouse.com/hand-strength-35-fun-activities-for-kids/>

Fun Learning Activities to Build Skills
<https://www.ot-mom-learning-activities.com/>

Use Play Dough to Increase Hand Strength
<https://www.yourtherapysource.com/blog1/2018/12/16/use-play-dough-to-increase-hand-strength/>