

# FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

*Play-based activities help children build strength, coordination and confidence through everyday fun.*

Fine motor skills are important for writing, dressing, eating, using tools and completing everyday tasks. The following activities help strengthen hand muscles, improve finger coordination, and support independence through play.

Use these playful activities to help children build hand strength, finger coordination, in-hand manipulation, scissor skills and early writing readiness. Choose activities that match the child's age and abilities and keep practice short, fun and encourage.

## Key Benefits

- Builds hand and finger strength for everyday tasks such as dressing, opening containers, and using school tools.
- Improves coordination, finger control, and the ability to use both hands together.
- Supports early writing readiness, pencil control, colouring, tracing, and drawing.
- Develops scissor skills, tool use, and confidence with classroom materials.
- Encourages attention, persistence, problem-solving, and independence through playful practice.
- Helps children practise fine motor skills in natural routines at home, school, and play.

**Safety note:** Adult supervision is recommended, especially when using small objects, food items, scissors, toothpicks, rubber bands, coins, beads, marbles, or sensory materials. Avoid choking hazards for younger children.

## How to Use This List

- Choose one or two activities at a time based on the child's interests, age, and current abilities.
- Keep practice short and positive. A few minutes of successful practice is better than a long activity that becomes frustrating.
- Start with easier activities, then slowly increase the challenge by using smaller objects, firmer materials, or more precise movements.
- Encourage good posture, relaxed shoulders, and a comfortable hand position during table activities.
- Use these ideas during play, classroom routines, or home activities so

practice feels natural and enjoyable.

- If a child shows pain, strong frustration, or ongoing difficulty with fine motor tasks, consider consulting an occupational therapist or another appropriate professional.

## Tips for Parents: Tracking Progress

- Choose two or three skills to watch at a time, such as pencil grasp, cutting accuracy, hand strength or ability to use both hands together.
- Keep a simple weekly note with the date, activity tried, how long the child participated and what seemed easier or harder.
- Take occasional photos of drawings, cutting work, bead patterns, or writing samples so progress can be seen over time.
- Notice small improvements, such as less frustration, longer attention, better control, stronger fingers or more independence with everyday tasks.
- Repeat the same activity every few weeks to compare changes in speed, accuracy, comfort and confidence.
- Celebrate effort and participation, not just perfect results. Positive feedback helps children stay motivated.
- Share notes or examples with the child's teacher, therapist or support team if extra help or follow-up is needed.

## Common Challenges and Helpful Tips

- **“My child gets frustrated quickly.”** Start with easier activities, offer choices and stop before the child becomes overwhelmed. Short, successful practice builds confidence.
- **“My child avoids colouring, cutting, or writing.”** Try playful alternatives first, such as stickers, playdough, tweezers, stamps or wall drawing, then slowly add pencil or scissor tasks.
- **“My child presses too hard or too lightly.”** Use different surfaces such as a clipboard, chalkboard, whiteboard or paper over sandpaper to help the child notice pressure.
- **“My child has trouble using scissors.”** Begin with tearing paper, snipping strips, cutting playdough or cutting thicker paper before moving to lines and shapes.
- **“My child switches hands or seems unsure which hand to use.”** Place materials at the centre of the body and watch which hand the child naturally chooses most often. Avoid forcing hand preference.
- **“My child rushes through activities.”** Use simple goals such as “try five careful cuts” or “place ten stickers slowly” and praise careful effort rather than speed.
- **“My child has difficulty sitting for table activities.”** Try movement breaks, vertical surface activities or short practice times built into play routines.

## Ways to Personalize Activities

- Use the child's favourite themes, such as animals, vehicles, sports, superheroes, food or seasonal topics, to make activities more motivating.
- Let the child choose between two activities or two materials so they feel involved and more willing to participate.
- Adjust the difficulty by changing the size, firmness, or number of objects used. Larger and softer materials are usually easier; smaller or firmer materials are more challenging.
- Match the activity to the child's energy level. Use movement-based activities when the child needs to move, and quieter table activities when the child is ready to focus.
- Use familiar routines, such as snack time, clean-up, dressing, crafts, or homework, as natural chances to practise fine motor skills.
- Adapt for sensory preferences by offering choices such as dry materials, playdough, shaving cream, rice bins, markers, chalk or stickers.
- Make activities social by taking turns, playing with a sibling or working together on a shared craft or game.
- Celebrate personal progress by comparing the child's work to their own earlier attempts rather than to another child's work.

## Adapting Activities for Different Ages

- **Toddlers:** Use large, safe materials such as chunky crayons, large beads, big pompoms, playdough and simple posting toys. Keep activities very short and focus on exploration, squeezing, poking, stacking and putting objects in and out of containers.
- **Preschoolers:** Add simple goals such as snipping paper, placing stickers on a line, sorting colours, stringing large beads, using tongs and tracing basic shapes. Offer choices and keep the activity playful.
- **Kindergarten and early primary:** Increase precision with smaller beads, simple mazes, cutting lines and shapes, copying patterns, colouring within spaces and using short crayons or pencils for better control.
- **Older children:** Make activities more purposeful by connecting them to hobbies, school tasks, crafts, cooking, building projects, board games or keyboard practice. Increase challenge with timing, accuracy, sequencing and independence.
- **Mixed-age groups:** Use the same theme but change the materials or expectations. For example, younger children can tear paper for a collage while older children cut shapes, plan the design or add written labels.

## Activity Examples

- **Playdough Treasure Hunt:** Hide small beads, buttons, or coins inside playdough and have the child find them using pinching and pulling movements. This supports hand strength and finger coordination.
- **Tweezer Sorting Game:** Place pompoms, cereal or small toys in a bowl and have the child move them into an egg carton using tweezers or tongs. This practises grasp, control and eye-hand coordination.
- **Sticker Path:** Draw a simple line, shape, or maze and have the child place stickers along the path. This builds finger control, visual tracking and early writing readiness.
- **Wall Drawing:** Tape paper to a wall and let the child draw, colour, or trace shapes while standing. This supports shoulder stability, wrist position and pencil control.
- **Bead or Cereal Necklace:** Have the child string beads, macaroni, or cereal onto yarn or a pipe cleaner. This helps with bilateral coordination, finger control and sequencing.
- **Cut-and-Glue Picture:** Ask the child to cut strips or simple shapes, then glue them onto a picture. This practises scissor skills, hand use and planning.

## Hand Strength and Finger Warm-Ups

- Play with playdough, silly putty, clay, or therapy putty by rolling, squeezing, pinching and hiding small objects inside.
- Use clothespins for finger “push-ups,” pin them around a container or use them to pick up small pieces of paper.
- Stretch a rubber band around the fingertips and gently open the fingers against the resistance.

## Finger Coordination and In-Hand Manipulation

- Pick up coins, pegs, clips, marbles or small game pieces one at a time while holding the others in the same hand.
- Stack, sort, and place coins into a container.
- Roll dice inside one hand before releasing them.
- Move a rubber band from one end of a pencil to the other using only one hand.
- Make an “O” shape with the thumb and index finger, then try with the thumb and each finger.
- Use a small musical keyboard to practise moving one finger at a time.
- Play string games such as Cat’s Cradle.
- Spin small tops or twirl markers between the fingers.

## Tools, Tweezers and Small Object Play

- Use tweezers, tongs, chopsticks, or hand tools to pick up small toys, pompoms, cereal, or craft items and place them into containers.
- Place dried peas, popcorn kernels, or small objects onto the suction cups of a soap holder using fingers or tweezers.
- Use an egg carton for sorting small objects, buttons, pegs or snack items one at a time.
- Use a small cup for snacks so the child practises a tripod grasp when reaching in.
- Use a rice bucket or sensory bin to find hidden shapes or named objects.
- Secure items with twist ties or open and close zip-lock bags

## Threading, Lacing and Building

- String beads, buttons, macaroni, cereal or Fruit Loops onto yarn, pipe cleaners, spaghetti or laces.
- Cut coffee stirrers or drinking straws into small pieces, then lace the pieces onto string.
- Build with toothpicks and marshmallows or small foam balls.
- Make simple candy sculptures using soft candies and toothpicks.
- Use travel-sized games such as Connect 4 for added finger control.
- Play pegboard games or place small items onto picture outlines.

## Scissor Skills and Art Activities

- Make and complete mazes to trace or cut along.
- Cut out handprints, shapes, balloons, cakes or seasonal pictures for classroom displays.
- Tear construction paper into small pieces and glue the pieces onto a picture or design.
- Create a mosaic picture by gluing coloured rice, paper pieces or cereal onto a traced outline.
- Use stamps, sponge stamps, and firm stamps for hand strengthening and coordination.
- Make a fishbowl scene with crackers or cereal, then colour in the bowl for extra practice.

## Vertical Surface Activities

- Use a chalkboard or whiteboard for drawing, tracing, writing and mazes.
- Tape paper or worksheets to a wall for drawing, colouring or tracing.
- Place vinyl stickers on a vertical surface and have the child peel and place them.
- Draw overlapping shapes or mazes on a large paper taped to the wall for figure-ground and tracing practice.
- Use wall activities to support shoulder stability and wrist positioning for writing.

## Writing Readiness and Pencil Support

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- Hold a small sponge, eraser, or cosmetic wedge under the last two fingers while writing or colouring to encourage separation of the hand.
- Place sandpaper under paper during colouring for extra sensory feedback.
- Use markers, short crayons or short pencils to encourage stronger finger control.
- Try a squiggle pen or erasable pen for motivation and novelty.
- Use a light wrist weight only when recommended by a therapist or appropriate professional.
- Try rubber band pencil supports only with supervision and when appropriate for the child.

## Games, Sensory Play and Everyday Practice

- Use shaving cream for drawing, tracing and finger play.
- Make finger shadows on the wall using a flashlight.
- Use computer games or simple keyboard activities for finger isolation and coordination.
- Try small toys such as bouncy balls, finger puppets, stretch animals or Chinese exercise balls.
- Have the child place small stickers on a reward chart or in specific squares.
- Use everyday classroom jobs such as opening containers, handling clips, sorting items and cleaning up small materials as fine motor practice.



<b>Child:</b> _____	<b>Age:</b> ____	<b>Week:</b> _____
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<b>Main skill or goal:</b> _____
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**Support level choices:** Independent | Gestural prompt | Verbal prompt | Modelled example | Partial physical help | Hand-over-hand support

#### Activity Entry 1

<b>Date:</b> _____	<b>Activity:</b> _____
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<b>Skill practised:</b> _____
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**Support used:** Independent / Gestural prompt / Verbal prompt / Modelled example / Partial physical help / Hand-over-hand support

<b>Child's response:</b> _____ _____
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<b>Notes or next step:</b> _____
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#### Activity Entry 2

<b>Date:</b> _____	<b>Activity:</b> _____
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<b>Skill practised:</b> _____
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**Support used:** Independent / Gestural prompt / Verbal prompt / Modelled example / Partial physical help / Hand-over-hand support

<b>Child's response:</b> _____ _____
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<b>Notes or next step:</b> _____
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#### Activity Entry 3

<b>Date:</b> _____	<b>Activity:</b> _____
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<b>Skill practised:</b> _____
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**Support used:** Independent / Gestural prompt / Verbal prompt / Modelled example / Partial physical help / Hand-over-hand support

<b>Child's response:</b> _____ _____
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<b>Notes or next step:</b> _____
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#### Activity Entry 4

<b>Date:</b> _____	<b>Activity:</b> _____
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<b>Skill practised:</b> _____
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**Support used:** Independent / Gestural prompt / Verbal prompt / Modelled example / Partial physical help / Hand-over-hand support

<b>Child's response:</b> _____ _____
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<b>Notes or next step:</b> _____
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**Family reflection:** What support helped the most? \_\_\_\_\_ What activity went well?  
What should we try next? \_\_\_\_\_

## Note

Small steps count. Fine motor skills grow through repeated play, encouragement and everyday practice. Celebrate effort, creativity and participation and remember that progress may look different for every child.

# FINE MOTOR

## Development Activities

Fine motor skills help children use the small muscles in their hands and fingers. These activities build strength, improve coordination, and support everyday tasks like writing, buttoning, eating, and more!

### 1. HAND STRENGTHENING

Build strength in hands and fingers.

- Playdough, clay, or theraputty
- Squeezing shaving cream
- Clothespin games
- Crumpling paper
- Rubber band finger exercises
- Finger "push-ups" with clothespins



### 2. PINCER GRIP & FINGER CONTROL

Improve small movements and finger coordination.

- Picking up beads, coins, buttons, or pegs
- Using tweezers to move small objects
- Sorting pennies
- Picking up cereal pieces (Cheerios, Goldfish)
- Sticker activities



### 3. SCISSOR SKILLS

Practice cutting and hand control.

- Cutting straws
- Cutting along lines and mazes
- Cutting out shapes
- Creating paper crafts



### 4. BILATERAL COORDINATION

Use both hands together in a controlled way.

- Stringing beads
- Lacing activities
- Making necklaces
- Pipe cleaner activities
- Twist ties and zip-lock bags



### 5. PRE-WRITING & WRITING SKILLS

Build skills for writing and drawing.

- Drawing on a vertical surface
- Whiteboard and chalkboard activities
- Tracing shapes and mazes
- Coloring activities
- Short pencils and crayons



### 6. FUN FINE MOTOR GAMES

Games make practice fun and engaging.

- Connect 4
- Chinese Checkers
- Pegboards
- Cat's Cradle
- Dice games
- Building with toothpicks and marshmallows



### 7. EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES

Practice skills during daily life.

- Using chopsticks
- Opening containers
- Sorting coins
- Helping with simple crafts
- Picking up snacks with fingers or tweezers



### 8. SENSORY & FUN TOOLS

Tools that build strength and coordination.

- Stress balls and squeeze toys
- Small wrist or hand weights
- Spin tops, twirl markers
- Bouncy balls
- Finger puppets and crafts



### 9. IMPORTANT TIPS

- ♥ Keep activities fun and playful.
- ★ Follow your child's interests.
- 🕒 Practice for short periods (5–15 minutes).
- 🏆 Celebrate effort, not perfection.
- 👥 Choose activities that match your child's developmental level.



Every small step builds independence and confidence!  
Have fun, be patient, and celebrate progress!



Have your own favourite fine motor activity? Add it to the list! Children often learn best when activities are fun, meaningful and connected to their interests.

## Fine Motor Development Activities List

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### Hand Strengthening

- Playdough, clay, or theraputty
- Squeezing shaving cream
- Clothespin games
- Crumpling paper
- Rubber band finger exercises
- Finger "push-ups" with clothespins

### Pincer Grip & Finger Control

- Picking up beads, coins, buttons, or pegs
- Using tweezers to move small objects
- Sorting pennies
- Picking up cereal pieces (Cheerios, Goldfish)
- Sticker activities

### Scissor Skills

- Cutting straws
- Cutting along lines and mazes
- Cutting out shapes
- Creating paper crafts

### Bilateral Coordination

- Stringing beads
- Lacing activities
- Making necklaces
- Pipe cleaner activities
- Twist ties and zip-lock bags

### Pre-Writing & Writing Skills

- Drawing on a vertical surface
- Whiteboard and chalkboard activities
- Tracing shapes and mazes
- Coloring activities
- Short pencils and crayons

### **Fun Fine Motor Games**

- Connect 4
- Chinese Checkers
- Pegboards
- Cat's Cradle
- Dice games
- Building with toothpicks and marshmallows

### **Everyday Activities**

- Using chopsticks
- Opening containers
- Sorting coins
- Helping with simple crafts
- Picking up snacks with fingers or tweezers

### **Important Tips**

- Keep activities fun and playful.
- Follow your child's interests.
- Practice for short periods (5–15 minutes).
- Celebrate effort, not perfection.
- Choose activities that match your child's developmental level.