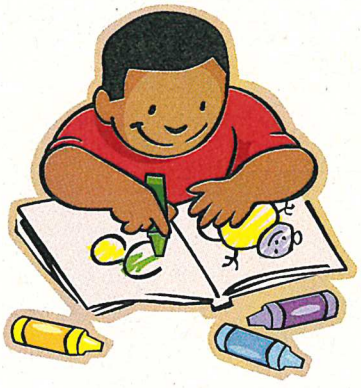
Activities to improve manual dexterity and fine motor skills

It is important to remember that dextrous fine motor skills are dependant on well-developed postural control and central stability, ocular motor control, bilateral co-ordination, body awareness and motor planning. Dextrous fine motor skills are important for playing with toys, eating with utensils, doing fasteners when dressing, cutting with scissors and handwriting. By encouraging your child to spend 5-10 minutes on a different fine motor task each day would benefit him greatly.

- Clay modelling/playdough activities.
- Making collages, sticking activities, using small stampers.
- Pencil activities e.g. mazes, dot-to-dots, stencils. Encourage your child to draw the following pre-writing shapes | — O + / □ \ X △ to help him with letter formation in the future. Start on a large vertical surface (e.g., easel, black or white board, tracing shapes in the air etc.) before going onto paper. Then teach him easier letters first and those in name. Emphasise top to bottom and counter clockwise circles.
- Pre-writing shapes and letter formation can also be practiced in sand using a stick or finger to trace the shapes.
- Provide shorter chalks, pencils or crayons to encourage your child to hold his drawing/writing tool with the tip of his fingers. (If necessary a pencil grip, or triangular pencil are useful aids for helping to correct an unorthodox pencil grip).
- Playing card games such as snap.
- Finger songs and games.
- Finger puppets.
- Pegboard games.
- Spinning tops.
- Posting coins into a money box (this can be done to time also).
- Games that encourage fine motor skills such as connect.4, kerplunk, pop-up pirates.
- Using a computer keyboard.
- Jigsaws
- Pop-apart beads, popoids, lego, magnetic blocks, mobilo and other construction activities.
- Threading activities – use smaller beads as your child becomes better at threading.

Developed by Worcestershire Paediatric Occupational Therapy Service



- Wind-up toys, using keys or toys with keys, using bottles with lids during water play, helping open jars at home, and screwing nuts onto bolts are all good activities for developing pronation / supination.
- Bubble wrap to pop using opposing thumb and fingers.
- Scrunching paper to make balls and flicking with thumb and finger in turn e.g. flick football.
- Shoebox and 24 spring clothes pegs. Placing pegs around the top of shoebox, using index finger and thumb to open and close them. Grade in terms of number/time/sequence of colours.
- Cotton wool bud sticks or similar. Making forms or copying shapes from sticks.
- 10 coins and 10 empty little boxes. Open each box, place in one coin and close. Start with first coins box; take out coin, close box, place coin on top of box. This could also be done to time.
- Sorting games – Place a variety of objects onto a small plate and get your child to sort them out into types. Vary the objects according to your child's manipulative ability. E.g. macaroni, lentils, rice, peas, coins, buttons.