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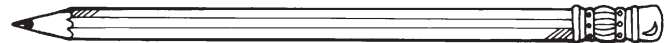
# Introduction to Fine Motor Skills

*Fine Motor Fun* is a large educational resource written especially for early childhood professionals, kindergarten, first grade, and special education teachers, as well as occupational therapists. Teachers will be delighted with the wealth of instructional suggestions, ideas, and reproducible activities designed to help develop and improve fine motor and visual-perception skills of young children.

For some children fine motor skills are easily learned. Art projects and paper and pencil assignments are viewed as fun and rewarding. However, for many other children, learning how to color, hold a pencil, cut with a pair of scissors, complete a maze, or putting together a puzzle can become an overwhelming task.

The development of fine motor skills is necessary for learning how to read and to write. Children who have poor handwriting find copying from the board difficult, struggle with low visual-perceptual skills, and have trouble identifying letters and numerals will benefit from daily fine motor instruction. Fine motor difficulties could actually be eliminated before they have even been identified, and children with identified fine motor difficulties may experience successful remediation.

All young children will experience greater success in school when they are provided with educationally sound activities that promote the development of fine motor skills. *Fine Motor Fun* can help all of the children in your class develop these important skills.



## Definitions and Activity Ideas

**Fine Motor Skills** – This term refers to the ability to use the small or fine muscles that control the movements of fingers, hands, and wrists. Acquiring fine motor skills is necessary for learning how to properly use writing tools, scissors, and for the ability to throw and catch objects. Fine motor skills are developed as the neurological system matures and through time and practice.

**Eye-Hand Coordination** – In order for a child to develop effective fine motor skills, the child must also acquire the ability to integrate and coordinate visual information. Eye-hand coordination is a common term that refers to the child's ability to coordinate the information that is seen with what the child tells his hands to do. Eye-hand coordination is obviously needed for throwing and catching a ball. As the ball is thrown, the child must make visual judgements about how fast and how high the ball has been thrown, and then make an appropriate and accurate motor response.

The following are some fun ideas to help increase eye-hand coordination:

- Bat balloons to music.
- Use a toy bowling game and practice rolling the ball to knock down the pins.
- Play catch with a soft "Nerf®" ball.
- Play bean bag games and toss to a specified target.
- Blowing and then trying to catch or pop bubbles.

**Visual-Motor Integration** – In early childhood, young children use visual-motor skills to put together puzzles, stack blocks, and play with balls. Children are learning how to accurately reproduce shapes. They are learning to link what they see with what their hands are producing. Without the development

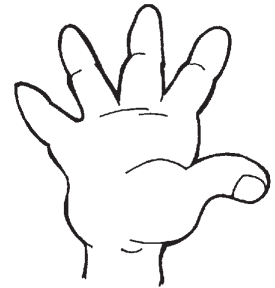


# Getting Ready

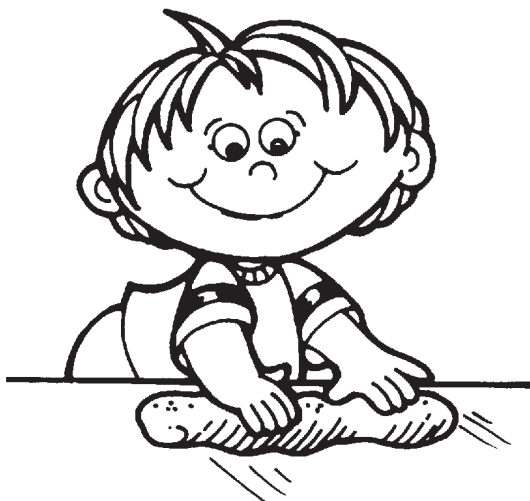
## Strengthening Hands, Wrists, and Fingers

### Play Dough

Play dough is always fun for young children to play with, and it is an excellent tool to help build and develop hand strength as well as manual dexterity. The following simple activities will be enjoyed by the children and they will help them to further develop their fine motor skills.



- Pretend you are baking cookies. Flatten the dough with a rolling pin and use cookie cutters to create shapes. Plastic lids, plastic cups, and plastic silverware may be used for cutting and making shapes with the play dough.
- Roll the play dough in long thin snake shapes. Cut the play dough snakes with scissors.
- Use a variety of kitchen tools. Play dough can be squeezed through a potato ricer, garlic press, or pushed through a funnel. Plastic forks, spoons, and knives can be used to cut play dough and to create impressions in the play dough.
- Place two small balls of play dough, each a different color, in a small plastic bag. Push and squeeze the play dough until it is one color. For example, squeezing a yellow ball of play dough with a blue ball of play dough will create green play dough.
- Children love making their own play dough. The following recipes have been tried and tested in classrooms and have been found to be incredibly successful.



### Great Play Clay

**You will need:** 1 cup cornstarch, 2 cups baking soda, 1 ¼ cups water, liquid tempera paint or food coloring, mixing bowl, and a microwave-safe bowl.

**What you do:** Mix the cornstarch and baking soda together in a mixing bowl. In a microwave-safe bowl, mix the water with the paint or food coloring. Slowly add the flour mixture to the water and stir. Microwave the mixture for several minutes, stopping to stir every 30 to 40 seconds, or cook on the stove over a low heat for approximately 15 to 20 minutes while stirring constantly. When air-dried this play dough will harden and can then be painted.

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## Tossing and Turning Activities

Tossing and turning activities can help develop wrist strength and increase eye-hand coordination. The following activities will assist in building these fine motor skills.

### Large Mat Beanbag Shape Game

You will need a discarded plastic window shade, a vinyl tablecloth, or a plastic shower curtain. With a permanent black marker, draw a 12-square grid with a shape in each square. Color each shape a different color.

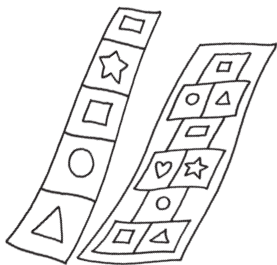
Give the children beanbags to toss onto the grid. They must tell you the name of the shape and its color. You can also play the game by telling the children which shape to aim for, and watch if they can toss the beanbag onto the shape that you have specified.



### Hot Potato

Play "hot potato" using a real potato. Have the children sit in a circle. Play some music and have the children toss the potato around the circle quickly. When the music stops, the person holding the potato gets to be the next person to start and stop the music.

### Hopscotch Games



You will need a discarded plastic window shade, a vinyl tablecloth, or a plastic shower curtain. Cut the plastic into strips that can be taped together to make a long indoor sidewalk. Divide the sidewalk into squares or prepare as a hopscotch grid.

Draw different things in each of the squares, such as shapes, colors, animals, or alphabet letters. The children can toss beanbags onto the sidewalk and then name the thing that appears on the square where the beanbag has landed.

### Flip and Catch

You will need plastic spatulas and tissue paper. The children will play in pairs. One child places the tissue paper on the spatula and then flips it to their partner. The partner tries to catch the tissue paper and flip it back to the other child.

### Pancake Restaurant

Make pretend pancakes from thick cotton batting. Let the children use a real frying pan and spatulas. They can pretend they are making pancakes and flip and turn them in the pan.



### Clown Beanbag

Find a cardboard box. Draw a big clown face on the box and then cut out the eyes, nose, and mouth. Children delight in trying to throw beanbags through the facial features.