



Fine Motor Skills

Fine motor skills describe the use of small muscles in the fingers, hands and arm to manipulate, control and use objects and tools as part of everyday activities (NCAC, 2008). Fine motor skills are essential in enabling children to perform everyday tasks required for play, self-care and learning. Fine motor skills enable student's participation in activities such as writing, brushing teeth, dressing and manipulating toys. Development of these skills is crucial for independence as well as academic success.

Keywords: *fine motor, handwriting, grasping, in-hand manipulation*

Types of Fine Motor Skills

In-hand manipulation skills

The ability to move and position objects within one hand without the assistance of the other hand. There are three primary types of in-hand manipulation skills:

- Translation: moving objects between the palm and fingertips
- Shift: moving objects between fingers
- Rotation: turning an object around using the pads of the fingers

Bilateral hand use

The ability for each hand to take on different roles to complete an activity – one hand is used for doing (e.g. twisting a lid open) and the other for assisting (e.g. holding the jar).

Grasping

The ability to hold objects using fingers. As children get older, they are able to master more advanced grasps (e.g. the pincer grasp where the index finger is “tip to tip” with the thumb is used to pick up small items and is important in the development of pencil grip, dressing skills, etc.).

Hand strength

Hand strength is required for most self-care, play and pencil-paper activities, and can impact on pencil grip.

Shoulder girdle stability

The amount of stability in the shoulder joint. A strong shoulder girdle stability is important to provide a steady base of support for performing fine motor movements, particularly during handwriting.



Activity Ideas to Improve Fine Motor Skills

- Playing with marbles
- Using spinning tops
- Tearing or scrunching paper
- Building with Lego
- Squeezing a stress ball
- Creating using playdough
- Playing card games – especially shuffling and dealing
- Squirt pump bottle painting (e.g. old hair spray or cleaning bottle)
- Threading beads

Commercially Available Games to Improve Fine Motor Skills

- Mr Potato Head
- Hungry Hungry Hippos
- Buckaroo!
- Jigsaw Puzzles
- Flipping Frogs
- K'nex
- Kerplunk
- Whac-a-mole

Want to learn more?

To learn more about Language Disorder and how to support children and young people for whom language is their primary disorder, please **contact us**. Language Disorder Australia provides holistic, innovative and effective therapy, education and support services and has a transdisciplinary team of speech pathologists, occupational therapists, educators, psychologists and physiotherapists.

Contact: 1300 881 763 or hello@languagedisorder.org.au

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