

Fine motor skills

A guide for Parents, Carers and Educators



The things
we do with
our fingers
and hands.

Fine motor skills – A guide for Parents, Carers and Educators

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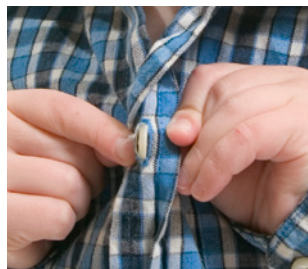
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Self-help skills – dressing, feeding and toileting.



Pretend play is essential for brain development.



School readiness – handwriting, using a keyboard and cutting.

What are fine motor skills?

Fine motor skills are finger and hand movements such as writing, cutting, feeding and tying shoelaces. They develop in a pattern, but children must have the opportunity to learn and practise them through play. If children develop good fine motor skills, they will be well prepared for thinking and learning at school.

**LEARN
THROUGH DOING**

1

**DOING
NOT JUST
WATCHING**

**EYES
AND HANDS**

2

**NEED TO
WORK
TOGETHER**

**GROSS
MOTOR SKILLS**

3

**SKILLS HELP
FINE MOTOR
SKILLS**

Remember that all children do things slightly differently. Some children do things early, some children take their time. If you are worried about your child, see a registered health professional or your general practitioner.

When I am a little baby (0-6 months) I can...

- Lie on my back, hit and reach for toys that I am looking at.
- Lie on my tummy, only when I am awake, and start to push up onto my elbows, making my body strong and letting me look around.
- Hold things that are put into my hands, but I can't control letting go.



These very early skills are driven by a baby's ability to look and see. Put things in sight and your baby will start to reach for them.

When I am a baby (6-12 months) I am learning to...

- Shake a rattle.
- Bang two things together.
- Move things from one hand to the other.
- Pick up little things with my finger and thumb.
- Sit.
- Crawl.
- Pull myself up to standing.

It is normal for me to put everything in my mouth so be careful what I can reach.



When I am 1, I am learning to...

- Help turn the pages in books, usually two or three at a time!
- Feed myself using my hands.
- Hold a cup to drink.
- Build small towers with blocks and other things.
- Explore the outside world, but I need someone to watch me.
- Walk.



Children learn through play

Play is vital to the healthy growth and development of children

Play helps small children to develop their gross motor skills, balance, and fine motor skills. It helps them to solve problems and learn about colours, numbers, sizes and shapes. They develop their language and learn how to deal with other people of all ages. They have to cooperate, negotiate, take their turn and learn to play different roles when mixing in groups.



Everyone has to help children to play. You might start by watching. This helps you to know what your child finds easy and interesting, and what is a challenge for them.

They may find running around easy but putting blocks together difficult. You sometimes need to join in.

This helps your child to know that you are interested in what they are doing.

You can help to direct them to try new things or give them support if they are finding something difficult.

Remember to always be creative and allow your child to be creative. One toy can do many things, or you can create play without any actual toys. Mud, sand, sticks and leaves are a great basis for creative play!



When I am 2, I am learning to...

- Turn the pages of a book.
- Use simple tools. These might be tongs or tweezers to pick up things. Doing this helps me to learn about using scissors and other tools.
- Eat using a spoon and not make too much mess!
- Scribble with a large pencil or crayon.



Remember that all children do things slightly differently. Some children do things early, some children take their time. If you are worried about your child, see a registered health professional or your general practitioner.

Activities you could try



When I am 3, I am learning to...

- Start using a fork and can feed myself well with a spoon.
- Pour myself a drink from a small jug.
- Use one hand more skilfully than the other. This will probably be my dominant hand.
- Build a tower of small blocks or use interconnecting blocks to make something.
- Use two hands together to pull things apart, thread or poke objects into mud pies or clay.
- Make lines, when I am painting or drawing, up and down and around in a circle.
- Draw pictures of things I see. Most of the time you won't recognise what they are!



Activities you could try



When I am 4, I am learning to...

- Use only my dominant hand to do tricky activities like holding a pencil, while the other hand is a helping hand.
- Dress myself with a little help.
- Draw a simple picture that you can recognise as a face or a person.
- Hold a pencil in my fingers to copy some shapes and letters.
- Snip paper using my preferred hand, while holding the paper with my helping hand.
- Thread large beads or cereal rings onto a lace or plastic string.
- Hop on either leg.



Activities you could try



When I am 5, I am learning to...

- Cut out simple shapes with scissors.
- Use glue and tape to make things out of paper scraps and old boxes.
- Print many letters from memory, including my own name.
- Draw a person with lots of parts, which others can recognise.
- Dress and undress independently.
- Use the toilet on my own, but I might need help wiping my bottom.
- Skip with a step hop pattern.



Activities you could try



When I am 6-7, I am learning to...

- Cut out complex shapes with scissors.
- Write familiar words and create the letters correctly.
- Tie my shoelaces.
- Ride a bike.
- Skip with a rope.
- Move small toys around in my hands.
- Make shapes with my hands.
- Prepare a snack for myself, such as a sandwich.



Activities you could try



When I am older!

As children get older, they learn to use their hands like an adult. If they are interested in an activity, they can develop very high levels of skill, commonly seen when fads occur at school. Practice and repetition are what make the difference. Children can learn to play musical instruments with great skill, sew, knit, build mechanical devices etc. There is nothing a child cannot do if they are motivated and interested.

Children should now be able to do many household tasks, like preparing food, tidying and cleaning. It is time for them to use their fine motor skills to take on day-to-day responsibilities. Children are now learning to look after themselves in preparation for living independently.

Don't forget that children need to continue to play. This may be through playing games, playing sport or spending time with friends. Computers and technology become more important to many children. Remember that they must stay active and limit TV, computer and other screen time to a maximum of two hours a day.

Creative pursuits encourage creative thinking. Critical learning happens during these years.



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