



Fine Motor Skills Advice and Activities 3yrs+

Children's Occupational Therapy

What are Motor Skills?

This pack focuses on fine motor skills but it is important to have an awareness of both of the motor skills

Motor skills are part of your child's everyday life, and are the basic movement skills that allow us to do the things we want and need to do throughout the day. They allow us to do everything from walking down the stairs to playing our favourite sport and without them we simply could not function. Motor skills can be separated into gross motor skills and fine motor skills.

Gross Motor skills use the large muscle groups, which work together to produce actions such as rolling over, walking, running, jumping, catching and throwing. Children need a good deal of strength, control, balance and whole body co-ordination for good gross motor skill action.

Fine Motor skills use only the smaller body parts, such as the hands and fingers. These include skills such as using cutlery, writing, using scissors, fastening buttons and manipulating toys.

In young children, gross movements develop first, and these relate to the early developmental milestones of rolling, sitting, crawling and walking. As gross motor skills improve and allow children to walk around and explore their environments fine motor skills then begin to form as children play and explore toys, games and tools.

Regardless of what type of motor skill it may be, children need to experience movement in order to learn about themselves, and how they fit into the environment around them. To move well, a child must be able to:

- Know where all the parts of their body are.
- Control the body as it moves.
- Co-ordinate the different parts of their body so that movement is smooth.
- Judge the amount of force, strength, and speed needed.
- Understand directions – up/ down, back/ front, left/ right, top/ bottom etc.
- Appreciate the rhythm and timing of movements.
- Make safety decisions about when to move, and where to move too.
- Be able to stay still.

How can we help motor skill development?

The answer to that question.....is practice practice practice. Children develop, strengthen and master their motor skills through everyday activity, whether at home, school or playing with others but some children may require increased adult support to build on and develop these.

When encouraging a child to develop or build on a skill, we must ensure the activity is **Just right**. Just right activity refers to providing a child with an activity that is aimed at their current level of ability or function so provides them with a challenge that is achievable. If we provide them with a task that is too difficult, the child will become upset, frustrated and disengage with the task altogether. If we provide them with an activity that is slightly more challenging than the first and gradually increase the motor planning needs or difficulty, then we are encouraging the child to develop that skill in a manner that maximises the chances of success and increases confidence and engagement.

What are the skills we are working on?

As previously discussed, Fine motor skills are made up of a number of different aspects such as thumb strength, in-hand manipulation and grasp to name a few. It is these skills that the fine motor activity section of this motor skill pack are designed to target and therefore it's important we know what these skills actually are.

Skill	What it Means
Pincer grip	Using the thumb and first finger to pick up a small object/ hold a crayon/ pencil.
In-hand manipulation	The ability to turn/manipulate an object in the palm of the hand. This allows a child to turn an object around and place it down with accuracy, such as a coin, peg or button.
Pronation and Supination	Turning the palm, wrist and forearm down (pronation), turning the palm, wrist and forearm up (supination).
Finger isolation	The ability isolate and move each finger, one at a time/ using one finger to perform a task. Finger isolation often refers to using the index finger independently from the rest of the hand.
Thumb and finger strength	If children don't develop strength in their thumbs and fingers then they may have difficulty holding and gripping objects appropriately or may begin to hold them awkwardly, limiting speed and efficiency.
Bilateral Integration	The ability to co-ordinate and use both your left and right hands together. Many childhood activities of play, self-care and productivity require the child to use both hands together efficiently. For example, holding paper still in one hand, whilst cutting with the other.
Control of force/power	Being able to generate just the right amount of force, being not too much or not too weak to complete the activity.

How does this pack work and how can I use it?

The following activities have been put together to support the development of the skills discussed in the table above. By completing these activities we are working on the core and transferable abilities required for fine motor skills. This activities list should not be viewed as comprehensive however and should serve only as ideas for improving motor skills. It is also important to understand that children are individual, therefore don't be afraid to adapt or be creative with these activities to meet your child's interests and encourage engagement and challenge.

How often should these activities be completed?

Improving Motor skills takes time and practice; there are no quick fixes and therefore activities such as these provided should be used as long as you feel necessary. In order to get the best out of these activities however, we recommend focusing on no more than 5 activities a week, and completing these daily (aiming for 20 mins + per day) with the aim of challenging your child to improve on their score/outcome each time and in turn practice and improve on their skills

Activity	Description	Skills Worked on
Clothing Peg Placing	The child must pick up different colour clothing pegs from the table and clip them on the edge of matching coloured cardboard boxes (red peg on red box etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -pincer grip. -Pronation/ supination. -Palmer/ finger/ thumb strength. -Elbow extension and flexion
Ball rolling	Use tape to make a simple path on a table with a white board pen. The child must roll the ball using their hand along the path. Start with a simple path first and use ball slightly larger than a tennis ball if you can.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pronation/ supination. -Elbow extension. -Wrist extension/ flexion. -Control of fine movements.
Finger/hand painting	Using fingers/ hands in paint to make creative art. Encourage using the index finger for lines and patterns and also bring in tools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sensation of textures. -Pronation -Wrist extension and flexion. -Finger isolation.
Sponge prints/painting	Same as above but use utensils to paint or make patterns with including large sponges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pincer grip -Force of movement/ grip -Pronation/supination - Palmer/ finger/ thumb strength. -Wrist movement.
Feely bags	Picking out items in a bag. Could fill the bag with small beads and child must pick out large Duplo blocks for example. Use large items to prevent child becoming frustrated, and then grade to smaller items as they become more proficient in this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pincer grip -Sensation of different textures. -Finger isolation.
Sandpit Play	Another great task for arm control, sensation and grasp. Bury items in the sand for the child to find such as toys, or Duplo blocks, or encourage them to use a small spade to fill a bucket with sand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pincer grip. -Pronation/ supination. -Elbow extension and flexion. -Sensation of textures.

Threading pasta/ beads onto string/ lace or pipe cleaner.	Encourage the child to grasp the string/ pipe cleaner with one hand and thread the beads/ pasta with the other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pincer grip. -Grasp strength -Thumb and finger strength -Bilateral integration -Pronation/supination -Hand- eye coordination.
Finger Puppets	Individual small puppets which sit on each individual finger. Can be great for imaginative play.	-Isolation/ coordination of fingers.
Lego Bricks	Build a tower, house or design of the child liking and then it pull apart. Picking up and manipulating individual pieces supports many areas of fine motor development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pincer grip. -Pronation/ supination. -Manipulation through finger movement to turn brick in hand. - Grip/ thumb/ finger strength and force in putting bricks together and pulling apart. -Bilateral integration between hands, passing from hand to hand and holding to build.
Play- Doh Activities	Using tools and doh, kneading, rolling, squeezing, placing doh on doh for example.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Thumb and finger strength. -Wrist and palmer strength. -Wrist extension and flexion. -Manipulation of tools to gain effect. -Whole hand/ tripod/ pincer grip. -Bilateral integration. -Sensation of textures.
Sorting out objects with tweezers, e.g. pom poms, or beads	Using tweezers to pick and move small objects from box to box or plate to plate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pincer grip. -Thumb and forefinger strength. -Pronation/ Supination.

Bubble Wrap in different sizes.	Pop bubbles by placing the thumb underneath and index/ middle fingers on top, or vice versa. Use each finger in turn. Try popping bubbles with both hands together.	-Pincer grasp. - Strength in thumb/ fingers. -Finger isolation. - Identifying force required in tasks.
Small screw top jars in different sizes.	Unscrew lid and fill with buttons, peas, beads etc. and screw up again. Once full, the child must empty the jars by picking out the objects as quickly as possible to increase the challenge.	-Whole hand grasp -Whole hand strength -Finger/ thumb strength. -Pronation/ Supination. -Pincer grip -Wrist flexion/ extension.
Lacing boards/ card/ felt.	Pull the lace through the holes and/ or practice tying laces. These can be downloaded and printed off easily and often encourage lacing around patterns or animals.	-Pincer grip. -Wrist flexion/ extension. -Pronation/ supination. -Hand eye co-ordination -Bilateral coordination.
Pebbles.	Pick up a handful of pebbles and drop onto the carpet/ foamy soft surface one at a time, keeping the remaining pebbles in the palm of the hand.	-Pincer grip. -Isolation of finger control. -In-hand manipulation
Commercially available games/ travel games with small parts.	For example Connect 4, Jenga, Battle Ships, Pop Up Pirate, Marbles, and other games that encourage grasp and/or a steady hand.	-Pincer grip. -Pronation/ supination. -Hand eye Coordination. -Elbow flexion/ extension. -Force of movement. -Wrist flexion/ extension
Cutting and sticking creative activities.	Encourages the child to practice using scissors efficiently, and using both hands to help with gluing and sticking onto surfaces. Can do art pieces/ collages/ make crafty boxes to keep things in/ imagination toys etc.	-Efficient use of scissors. -Finger isolation. -Pincer grip. -Palmer and finger / thumb strength.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Bilateral integration when cutting/ gluing/ sticking. -Pronation/ supination.
Lid/ coin posting game	<p>Easy to make with a shoe box the child picks up different weighted coins or buttons and posts them. Difficulty can be increased by timing the child and encouraging them to work quickly and efficiently. Try to encourage a pincer grip (thumb and index finger) to pick up the coins.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pincer grip. -Awareness of force required. -Hand eye coordination. -In-hand manipulation -Pronation/ supination.
Squeezing out sponges	<p>Fill a bucket with water and encourage the child to dunk the sponge in one bucket and squeeze it out in another to fill it as quickly as possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Bilateral integration -Palmer/ finger/ thumb strength. -Pronation/ supination -Grasp/ grip.
Paper Tearing	<p>Draw large shapes like squares or circles on paper and ask the child to tear the shape out trying to keep on the line. Encourage holding the paper with the finger and thumb (pincer) and control each tear.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Bilateral integration -Pincer grasp -Control of force/power
Peg boards	<p>Easily accessible and cheap to buy. Encourage the child to make patterns on the boards using different colour pegs. Ensure child uses a pincer grasp when picking up and placing the pegs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pincer grasp -Control of force/power -In-hand manipulation
Ruler/Stencil work	<p>Use different objects around the room like cups, pots or books and encourage the child to stencil around them. One hand must hold the object steady whilst the other draws around it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pincer grasp -Control of force/power -In-hand manipulation -Bilateral integration
Hama Beads (children 5+)	<p>A great product for encouraging design and fine motor skills. Hama beads allow children to design pretty patterns which glue together and form designs when ironed over. Encourages pincer grasp, accuracy of placement and some element of design and motor planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pincer grip. -Pronation/ supination. -Thumb and finger strength -Hand-eye coordination.
Foam Door plaques	<p>Another arts and crafts activity which ends in a final product the children can take pride in. Using art foam, scissors and glue, children must try and make a foam door hanger design. Give them 2 or 3 designs to copy to aid them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pincer grip. -Hand eye coordination. -In-hand manipulation -Pronation/ supination. -Bilateral integration
Paper clip chain	<p>The child or children must work as fast as they can to join paper clips together to make a chain that goes from one end of the table to the other.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Bilateral integration -In-hand manipulation -Pincer grip

Penny turning	Basic but can be made very fun. Place 10 pennies or 2p's on a table in a row. Child must turn them over from heads to tails as quick as possible. Line up two row and race the child to increase the fun	-Pincer grasp -Control of force/power -In-hand manipulation
Button Work	Start by using a cardigan or wool like jumper with large buttons. Place the jumper on the table in front of the child and give them a visual demonstration. When they practice, use hand on hand practice only when needed. When fastening and unfastening is mastered, move on to smaller shirt buttons. Then move onto practice with the shirt on.	-Pincer grasp -In-hand manipulation -Hand eye coordination -Bilateral integration
Collage Work	Encourage child to make a landscape scene or a portrait of themselves. Use glue and lots of different textures to keep it fun. Household sponges, dried pasta, bottles lids and string are ideal	-Pincer grasp -In-hand manipulation -Bilateral integration