

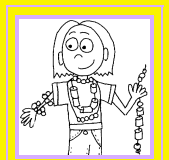
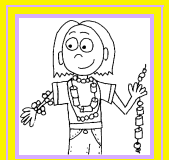
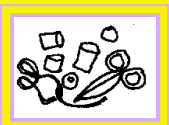
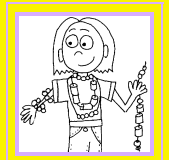
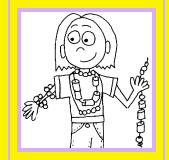
Hand Skills

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ABOUT
HAND
SKILLS



Hand skills are also called "fine motor skills". Having good hand skills means you're your child can use his or her hands in a precise, skilful and coordinated way. Fine motor skills develop through children using their hands to explore, play, stack blocks, thread beads, play with puzzles, scribble with crayons and make shapes with playdough. This type of play builds up the skills needed for more complex fine motor activities such as writing, cutting, using a computer, tying laces, using a knife and fork or playing a musical instrument.



HAND SKILLS AND DEVELOPMENT

Babies



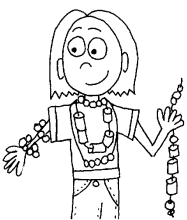
From around 4 months, babies will enjoy learning to coordinate eyes and hands such as bringing anything and everything to their mouth! Around 9 months most babies are able to pick up quite small objects with thumb and index finger, transfer objects from hand to hand and begin to place objects accurately.

Toddlers



Toddlers are able to use their hands in very precise ways. They can use a spoon, stack blocks and rings, post coins and shapes, turn pages, string beads, pour from one cup to another and begin to draw. As they grow and develop they decide which hand they prefer for fine work and which hand becomes the "helper". Hand preference usually develops around 3yrs after a child has had lots of experience with two handed activities and toys.

Young Children



The four to five year old has more control over tools such as pencils and scissors. By six they are nearly completely independent in self-care, able to copy letters, numbers and shapes, can cut and colour accurately and eat skilfully with a knife and fork.



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WHAT YOU CAN DO

- To use their hands well children need good posture and balance and strong trunk and shoulder muscles. Make sure your child is getting lots of fun, active play such as climbing, throwing and catching, playing on playground equipment, etc.
- Practice fiddly activities in a clear, well-lit, uncluttered space so your child is able to concentrate on the task at hand.
- Allow time for repetition - your child will want to try a new skill over and over again. This builds confidence.
- Simplify activities to allow your child to be successful. When cutting or colouring, make thicker lines to cut on or colour within. When threading start with tubing or thick cord and beads with larger holes and with puzzles only have two or three pieces to sort at the beginning.

SOME ACTIVITIES TO TRY

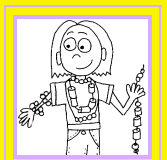
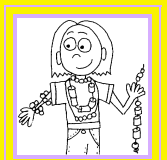
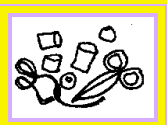
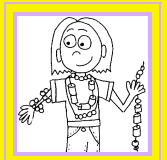
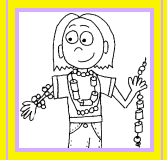
- **For baby** play hand/finger rhymes, give him or her soft squeeze toys and rattles, get some wooden blocks and show baby how to drop them in a box and bang them together. Finger feeding builds hand skills.
- **For toddlers** show your toddler how to build a tall tower with wooden blocks. Sing action songs. Put shapes in shape-sorters and try some simple puzzles. Make your own posting boxes from plastic containers or shoeboxes. Post coins, pegs, buttons, cards, or ping pong balls.
- **Threading beads** Show your child how to thread beads onto a shoelace. Also try stringing cheezles, fruit loops, pasta or cut up straws. Lacing cards can be fun too.
- **Playdough** Just use your hands, or throw in a plastic knife, scissors and shape cutters to develop more skill.
- **Cooking** Let your child help you opening jars, measuring, mixing, pouring and rolling.
- **Sand and water play** To build hand skills add some containers to the sand and water play. Try a set of measuring cups/spoons, an old muffin tin, colander, funnel and plastic jug.
- **Dress-ups** are a fun way to practice buttons, laces, zips, clasps, and ties.
- **Hammering** is good for eye-hand coordination. Start by hammering peg boards. Later try hammering pins into a cork board or real nails into scrap pieces of soft wood.
- **Musical instruments** are good for developing hand skills. Have a basketful of instruments available, or make your own drums, shakers, tambourines, and triangles.
- **Drawing and painting** Explore the different drawing materials around. There's painting, finger painting, textas, crayons, chalkboards, potato prints, blow pens, hand/foot prints, spray bottle on the path, magnadoodle, pavement chalk etc.
- **Cutting** You can introduce scissors when your child is about 3 years old. Teach "thumbs the boss on top" for correct scissor hold. Begin snipping thin strips of card into confetti. Allow lots of repetition to develop an easy open/shut action. Cutting up old greeting cards is fun.
- **More ideas** Try stickers, puppets, duplo/lego, nuts and bolts, craft sets, felt boards.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

- Children are able to pick up small objects and take them to their mouth before they are 1 year old. Supervise young children closely when playing with anything that could be a choking hazard, especially coins, buttons, beads, etc. Supervise children when using scissors and hammers.

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