



# HAND SKILLS

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## Introduction

The development of precise finger movements is required for the progression of many of the fine motor activities completed by children every day in the home and nursery environment.

They are required for the development of pencil skills, scissor skills, playing with toys and independence skills such as doing up the zip on a coat and using cutlery.

Fine motor skills can be developed by developing a child's sensory awareness and by practicing games involving finger isolation and manipulation.

## General Tips

- Prepare the child's sensory system prior to fine motor activity by providing deep pressure and touch input e.g. push hands together or clapping games play with play dough or messy play activity.
- The child will need supervision during these activities so that you can encourage them to isolate their fingers instead of using a whole hand grasp.

## Isolating Finger Movements

Isolation of the index finger is an important skill. It is a pre-requisite for developing a pincer grip. This is essential for performing activities of daily living such as dressing, feeding and writing.

## Activities

- Finger painting.
- Pinching and poking play dough or plasticine. Use marzipan in place of playdoh if the child tends to eat it.
- Finger puppets.
- Pointing at pictures in a book.
- Popping bubbles.
- Finger action songs e.g. "Tommy thumb", "round & round the garden", "head, shoulders, knees and toes", "two little dicky birds", "wind the bobbin up".
- Tracing down a path with index finger on paper or chalk board.



- Counting small objects on the table.

### **Encouraging Use of a Pincer Grasp**

The pincer grasp is when small items are held between the tip of the thumb and tip of the index finger.

### **Activities**

- Encourage sensory play to develop the child's tactile sense e.g. sand, water and lentil play. If the child tends to put non-edible items in their mouth then use food for sensory play e.g. baked beans, jelly, cheerio's.
- Use of toys that encourage the use of one finger e.g. push button toys, toys with telephone dials.
- When feeding with finger foods encourage the child pick food from the table/plate independently or offer it between your index finger and thumb. It is very difficult to take food precisely with a palmar grasp and therefore, by presenting the food in this way, it will encourage the use of a pincer grip instead.
- Begin to use toys requiring a pincer grip such as form board puzzles with handles (larger handles to start with), pop-up farm, and 'dial' toys requiring different grips. Pop-up men are also good for encouraging index finger.
- Sticking stickers.
- Playing with basters or eye droppers during water play.
- Placing plastic coins in a money box.

