

Home Activities for Developing Strength and Coordination in Hands

Here are some ideas about how you can encourage the development of strength and coordination in your child's hand/wrist at home. These skills need to be well developed before successful handwriting can take place. These are small activities - not meant to take up a lot of time but they're fun for 3 and 4 year olds. You may want to join in, too! You'll want to watch for "fluid movement" and the ease at which your child can complete the tasks. If your child has difficult writing recognizable letters and numbers you'll see why when you watch how he does these activities. You'll see fumbling, dropping at objects and maybe even confusion about how to handle the tasks. Check these activities off as you do them to visually remind you what you've tried.

- Stack small objects into a tower (i.e., coins, cards, checkers, blocks, etc.)
- Screw and unscrew objects such as nuts and bolts, caps for jars, etc
- String beads or rigatoni pasta onto a shoelace or string.
- Fasten and unfasten safety pins (I like diaper pins the best!).
- Cut straight and curved lines/shapes drawn on paper, cloth, etc. with scissors. Let the children use those scissors!
- Crumple paper in a small ball and then flick it with your finger. (Play "soccer" with the paper ball.) Dads.....teach your child how to play "marbles."
- Shuffle cards: deal cards one by one; turn cards over; play Go Fish; sort the cards by number, color or suit.
- Roll a pencil between thumb and fingers without dropping it.
- Knead dough.
- Hide small objects in Play-doh for the child to pull out (popcorn, pennies, beans, legos, or craft beads.) They will be using the same pointer and thumb that they'll use when writing.
- Wind up thread on a spool evenly.
- Put rubber bands around various size containers and objects.
- Use tweezers to pick up small objects.
- Move spoonfuls of small objects from one bowl to another.
- Trace and copy letters.



Handwritten scribble

- Do connect the dot puzzles and regular puzzles.
- Put keys into locks to open doors. Have your child open the front door when you come home!
- Put paper clips onto paper.
- Place clothespins on the edge of a box or container.
- Dial a telephone. Even though most of us have touch tone phones now, this is still a difficult task for many children. They may know which number they want to push--- but have trouble aiming their finger correctly. Let you child dial your number for you.
- Pick up or move marbles (or nuts in shells) using a melon baller. This could be made into a game - i.e. take turns rolling a die. Whatever number turns up, pick up that number of "marbles" and place them into an egg carton or ice cube tray.
- Use the flat side of a crayon to color. Put paper over leaves, stencils, and other objects to that the child gets sensory feedback as he/she colors.



Use spray bottles filled with water and sponges to have the child "clean" a counter top or table. Then they should s-q-u-e-e-z-e the excess water out of the sponge into a dishpan. This is a great pre-scissor skill and strength building activity.

- Use the Sunday supermarket flyers to cut out pictures of favorite foods. Glue them onto a poster.
- Use a stapler. Let them staple to their heart's content.
- Let children spread their butter on their OWN slice of toast. Managing the butter knife (children are old enough) and hanging onto the bread and turning it around at the same time is good for bilateral coordination. (Using plain bread is too difficult--- use toast or crackers.)
- Drop a big pile of pennies into a narrow opening of a pop bottle one by one. Picking up and managing the penny into the hole is often more difficult than it seems.
- Use shaving cream to fingerprint on a cookie sheet with raised edges.
- Write large shapes or letters on paper for the child. Lay it flat on the carpet and use a thumbtack to poke holes along the lines through the paper. Holding the small thumbtack forces them to use the same grip that should be used when holding a pencil.

