

Sharpening Your Kid's Fine Motor Skills

Fine motor skills refer to small, precise movements of the hands, wrists, fingers and toes. They are crucial because they are a necessary step towards **physical independence** and developing **good hand-eye coordination**. By the time your child is 5 or 6 she should be able to write her name, colour within the lines and hold her pencil like an adult.

Here are some easy and fun activities to help your child develop her fine motor skills:

★ **Filling and emptying with different materials** such as water, sand and balls. Emptying stuff is much easier and more fun than filling containers because far less precision is required. But dumping is also a significant cognitive exercise inasmuch as she's learning that one thing (like a bucket) can hold another thing.

★ **Working with giant puzzle pieces**. Besides improving fine motor skills, putting together pieces of a jigsaw puzzle also supports a plethora of other essential mental and physical abilities, such as comparing shapes and identifying the correct places for them. Wooden puzzle pieces with knobs are recommended for 3-year-olds and younger.

★ **Threading big cubes and balls**. Threading a shoelace through a cube or ball refines hand-eye coordination as well as patience with precision. This activity is better suited for 3-year-olds and older kids.

★ **Sorting and stacking a variety of objects** are genuinely fun ways for your child to sharpen her fine motor skills and figure out how to balance things. She'll also learn that a bigger object can't fit into a smaller one. To enhance these feats of structural engineering still further as well as stimulate her imagination, offer her building blocks made of different materials, shapes, sizes and colours.

★ **Dabbling in paint**. Provide your little artist with large sheets of sturdy paper, non-toxic paints in a rainbow of colours and experiment with unconventional materials such as cotton buds, bundled-up leaves and crushed paper as painting tools instead. Not only will she learn to control drawing and writing tools through the practice of grasping and holding, she'll also be giving her creativity a workout!

Patience and experimentation are keywords in encouraging your little kid's evolving fine motor skills. Let her dress herself and tie her own ribbons and shoelaces; allow her to spread jam on bread at breakfast. Don't be afraid to foster independence. Let her explore her world and discover what she can do.

Coming next month:

Does your child need help with handwriting?



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Ask Elly anything regarding your child's English language challenges. Email her at elly@jan-elly.com