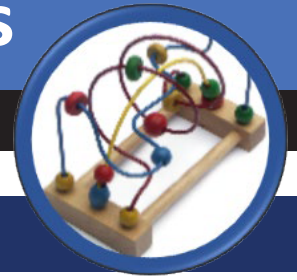


Small Motor Manipulatives

Creating an Engaging Interest Center



What Children Are Learning



- Holding utensils to eat
- Pouring liquid into a cup
- Getting dressed
- Wiping the table
- Opening and closing containers
- Cutting with scissors



Developmental Skills Typically Acquired

As children develop, they will show increasing skills with:

- Control of small muscles in the hands and feet
- Independence in self-help skills, such as dressing, toileting, and feeding
- Control to scribble, draw, write, and cut with scissors
- Coordination with hand and eye activities



NOTE: This is not an exhaustive list; children will develop according to their own individual timelines.

Materials and Storage

Toys and Games

- Table and floor puzzles
- Pegboards and pegs
- Shape sorters
- Board games
- Hand and finger puppets
- Vehicles with road mat or tracks
- Small toys for sorting, grouping, and patterning

Tools

- Scissors and hole punches
- Markers, crayons, and pencils
- Paint brushes
- Child-size tweezers
- Materials to pound, roll, cut, and stamp play dough



Additional Materials

- Paper in various sizes, colors, and textures
- Stickers
- Paint
- Play dough, putty, and clay
- Pompoms or other small items to pick up with fingers
- Beads and lacing cards with strings
- Items related to topics of study, children's interests, and family experiences

All Materials Are Appropriate Practice for All Age Groups

NOTE: Materials must be modified for children based on interest and developmental skills.

IMPORTANT: Make safety the top priority to avoid choking hazards.

Storage



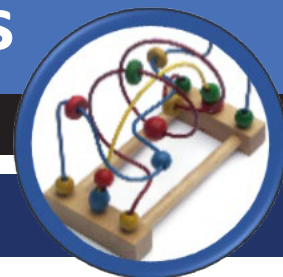
- Organize items using baskets or tubs with a picture of each item that belongs inside.
- Place them within children's reach.

Contact the OECOSL Child Care Support Line at 1.800.299.1627 for assistance.



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Best Practices

Watch for choking hazards. Items that are small enough to fit in a toilet paper tube are choking hazards for children who may put them in their mouths.

Provide plenty of opportunities to build finger muscles before expecting children to be able to hold crayons or pencils and draw or write their names.

Offer a variety of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) scissor-styles, such as:

- Training scissors with extra holes for adult fingers or a lever that helps open the blades after each cut
- Craft scissors with decorative edges for older children



Activities and Project Ideas

Pre-Writing and Writing

- Use play dough to form letters and numbers and spell names and words.
- Write or draw with colored chalk on the sidewalk.



Tracing

- Print shapes and maze-like paths on paper.
 - Place in clear plastic page protectors. Allow children to trace shapes with dry erase markers.
 - Allow children to trace the shapes using finger paint.
- Use paintbrushes and water to trace chalk lines on the sidewalk.

Using Fingers

- Transfer water from one cup to another cup with eye droppers or clean medical syringes.
- Use hands to find toys or nature items hidden in sand or shredded paper.
- Build with small blocks and interlocking blocks.

TIP: Scratch-and-sniff paint can be made using 1 tablespoon of water, 1 tablespoon of white glue, and 1 teaspoon of flavored gelatin powder.

Family Engagement

Encourage family engagement by suggesting they include practicing small motor movements as part of regular routines and experiences and when children are showing signs of readiness, such as:

- Allowing children to hold utensils, pour liquid into a cup, cut paper using age-appropriate scissors, open and close containers with lids, wipe the table, and get dressed
- Involving children with family activities, such as allowing the children to help with gardening tasks like digging holes, planting seeds, and watering plants
- Reviewing the Fine Motor Development Chart in the Additional Resources section of this handout



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **6 Fine Motor Skills Activities for Kids**
<https://www.understood.org/articles/en/6-fine-motor-activities-for-young-kids>
- **Fine Motor Development Chart**
<https://childdevelopment.com.au/areas-of-concern/fine-motor-skills/manipulation/>
- **Help Your Child Build Fine Motor Skills**
<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/help-your-child-build-fine-motor-skills>

