

# Fine Motor activities and exercises for improving hand coordination

## **Increase hand awareness**

Rub hands together briskly for 20 seconds.

## **Seat push ups**

Sit upright on chair, hands either side of chair and push down through straight arms and hands, lifting body off the chair, repeat 5-10 times.

## **Hand Rhythm**

Child places both hands on the table, palms down. Ask the child to turn over the left hand. Now ask them to switch and turn over the right palm, whilst turning the left palm down at the same time. Repeat this again and again, slowly increasing the speed until the rhythm breaks down and hands fail to coordinate correctly. Encourage them to beat their own score.

## **Fingers and thumbs –**

- a) Use left hand first. Rotate thumb clockwise, then anticlockwise. Repeat with each finger, then with right hand.
- b) Using one hand at a time, call out instructions to child such as ‘thumb to touch middle finger’ etc.
- c) Ask to put hands together (as for praying) and ask in turn to bend thumbs, index fingers, middle fingers etc. Ensure that the child straightens their fingers between each action.
- d) **Finger opposition** (Movement of thumb to finger) . Start with thumb to index finger and work was down to little finger and back again. Repeat this until you build up a good speed. Now try with eyes closed.
- e) **Drumming** – Once child is able to oppose fingers, place hands on the table top, start tapping one finger, then each consecutive finger on the table top . Start with either little finger or index finger. Repeat quickly until, you hear the drumming sound required.
- f) **Finger taps** – Sit at a table with hands on top of the table, spread fingers apart. Point to each of the child’s fingers in turn and ask him to lift each finger, without moving the others.

- g) **Make a tent** – Now try finger taps again but with hands in a tent or bridged position, keeping fingers straight, open the door (thumb) then the windows (little finger, middle fingers and so on).
- h) **Creeping thumbs** – For this you need a bandage or scarf about 75cm long. With the child seated at the table, place the unrolled bandage in front of them, stretching it out horizontally. Ask the child to put their writing hand at one end of the bandage, placing it on the right hand end if they are right handed and vice versa. Then ask them to see if they can gather up the bandage, tucking it under their hand, using the thumb of that hand only and keeping their wrist still. Try to beat their time.
- i) **Creepy crawlies** – with the child seated at their table, place an unrolled bandage in front of them, this time stretching it out vertically. Ask the child to place their hand on the end of the bandage nearest to them to anchor it. The child tries to gather the bandage up, keeping the wrist still and using the fingers of that hand only. The fingers move together to pull the bandage in. Try to beat their time.
- j) **Simple and complete rotation** – you will need a jam jar. Ask the child to remove the lid of the jam jar with one hand at a time and replace it with the same hand.
- k) **Write and Erase** - You will need a pencil with a rubber attached to the other end. Make a mark with the pencil on a piece of paper then rub it out with the small rubber on the other end of the pencil, all the time holding the pencil in the same hand.
- l) **Dice** - You will need a dice. On request, ask the child to turn the dice to find the number you request to see, all the time holding the dice in one hand only.

### Exercises using playdough/theraputty

- a) **Group**. Ask the child to make a ball with playdough and place the ball in the palm of their hands. Making sure that the thumb is included, squeeze 10-20 times using alternate hands – keeping the shape of the ball.
- b) **Finger extension**. Squeeze the playdough into a rough sausage shape. Using the fingers only, roll the playdough slowly into a longer sausage, making sure it is the same thickness all the way along. Repeat with both hands.
- c) **Finger opposition**. Ask the child to hold the sausage of playdough with one hand. Ask the child with the other hand to pinch the sausage with her thumb and index finger, thumb and middle finger etc. Make indentations with the fleshy pads of the fingers and thumb without breaking the sausage. Repeat with alternate hands.
- d) **Tripod pinch**. (Pinching with thumb, index and middle finger) Ask the child to make a sausage out of playdough. Place the sausage flat on the table and ask the child to pinch into small pieces using the thumb against the middle and index fingers.
- e) **Toothpick hedgehog**. Ask the child to place the toothpicks into a ball of playdough to make a hedgehog. The child can then pull the toothpicks out using their fingers initially and then with a pair of tweezers.

- f) **Squashing 'Peas'** – make an array of 'peas' (small balls) out of dough. Lay them on the table and ask the pupil to squash each one with a different finger or thumb (as directed by the leader of activity). This can be timed if the pupil is competitive.

### **Preparation for pincer/tripod grip**

- a) Texture rubbing using mini crayons – about 3 cm.
- b) Use mini chalks – about 3 cm - on blackboard or pavement.
- c) Small spinning tops – spin with just finger tips.
- d) Sort a pile of mixed, small objects, putting them into screw top containers – race against the clock!
- e) Winding wool or laces around a cotton reel
- f) Nuts and bolts

### **Exercises using beads/marbles - Isolation exercise**

- a) Place 3 small beads or marbles on the table. Position the beads between the child's fingers at the edge of the fingers. Child must then pick up the beads between the fingers and drop them into the pot one by one. Repeat with each hand.
- b) Thread beads on string. How many can you complete in a minute. Try to beat your time.

### **Clothes pegs**

- a) Ask a child to draw a face on a paper plate and then place clothes pegs around the edge (using index finger and thumb).
- b) Ask child to pick up beads, marbles pieces of cotton wool etc. with pegs. How many in a minute? Can they beat their score?

### **Coins - Isolation exercise**

- a) Post coins into a money box – make it harder by using the index finger and thumb only. How many coins in a minute? Can you beat your time?
- b) Lay coins in a row – how many can you turn over in a minute?
- c) Sort coins into different denominations – how many can you place in a pile? How long does it take you to pile 10 coins, 15 coins?
- d) How many pennies can you pick up using just one hand – one at a time?

### **Pressure on paper.**

Use carbon paper – 3 layers with paper between and a piece of paper to draw on at the top of the pile. – can you make a mark on all three pieces of paper.... Then just the first and second pieces.

Can you make a mark the first piece only?

### **Posting Peas**

Pick up dried peas from a bowl, one at a time, and post them into a bottle. Time for one minute then ask the student to count how many they got in. To extend this, you could ask the student to pick the peas up between thumb and middle finger, then thumb and ring finger etc.

### **One handed pick up**

Use one hand to pick up small objects and hold them in the palm of your hand. How many can you hold at once? This can be timed/recorded if the pupil is competitive.

### **Potato printing**

Use a large piece of paper and ask pupil to fill the page with prints from one side to the other using only one hand. Paper must be large enough to ensure pupil has to 'cross the midline'.

### **Pouring**

Practice pouring liquids from one container held in one hand to a container held in the other hand and back again.

### **Spoons and Ladles**

Use spoons, ladels, cups, containers to transfer items from one place to another (eg between bowls).

### **Lego**

Lay out some lego already stuck together. Ask pupil to pull them apart and then make a 'tower' or a simple structure using a set colour (all the red bricks) or using a set number of bricks.

### **Sand Drawing**

Fill a baking tray/classroom tray with sand and ask the pupil to draw patterns with fingers. Try different materials such as cornflour mixed with water, flour, fish tank gravel etc

### **Wind up**

Provide a variety of wind up toys for the pupil to play with.

### **Sorting games**

Lay a variety of objects onto the table and ask the pupil to sort them by a given value (colour, size, type etc). You can make this easier or harder by choosing larger or smaller items. Also, the pupil could try it with a hand behind the back or a hand resting on their head.

## **Card games**

Picking up, dealing, laying down etc

## **Tied-up fingers**

Wind an elastic band around the four fingers on each hand. Without using the other hand, try and wriggle the elastic band off. To make harder, you could try both hands at the same time. This can be timed if the pupil is competitive.

## **Bandage scrunching**

Place a long bandage on the table and ask the pupil to scrunch it into their hand whilst resting their wrist on one end. This can be timed if the pupil is competitive.

## **Big Drawing**

Drawing and writing on a large vertical or sloped surface such as a blackboard or whiteboard. Then rubbing out. Try doing the whole board with one hand – crossing the midline.

## **Flick Ball**

Ask the student to rip scrap paper and screw into small, marble sized balls. Create a goal on the opposite end of the table – the student has to flick the paper balls into the goal.

## **Dot to Dot/Mazes/Complete the Picture/Tracing**

There are a lot of books available now with these kinds of activities and there is a lot of free downloadable content on the internet which can be found through simple Google searches.

## **Useful Games:**

- Solitaire
- Lego/duplo – how tall can you make the tower in ...?
- Jacks/marbles
- Nuts and bolts – these can be purchased in hardware plastic – how many can you screw/unscrew in a minute?
- Pick up sticks
- Real life activities include: buttons, zips, laces, lids – on and off.

There is more information and many more activities/ideas to be found at the following sites:

[https://www.canchild.ca/en/diagnoses/developmental-coordination-disorder/related\\_resources](https://www.canchild.ca/en/diagnoses/developmental-coordination-disorder/related_resources)

<http://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/>

<http://www.boxofideas.org/Welcome/Welcome.html>

<http://www.scotens.org/sen/resources/dyspraxiadcd.pdf>