

## Fine Motor Skills Activities.

### Scissors – preparing to use

First, make a loose fist. Now, using your thumb, index and middle finger make a bird's beak (or alligator's mouth) and open and close it, keeping the ring and little finger tucked away. See if you can open and close the "mouth" rhythmically – this is the action you will use for cutting.

Pick up the scissors and position the wrist so that the thumb is turned upward, the thumb joint resting inside the thumb loop. Make sure the tip of the middle finger is inside the opposite loop. Some scissors have enough space for the middle and ring fingers to be positioned inside this loop.

Place the index finger outside the loop, in front of the middle finger serving as a "guide". The ring finger and little should be curled into the palm (unless the ring finger is inside the loop with the middle finger).

If the child is struggling to hold the wrist in the 'thumbs up' position, try holding the paper above eye level or taping it to the wall so that the child is cutting upwards.



Correct scissor grip. Thumb is facing up and index finger is outside the loop.

You can try **drawing a smiley face on the thumbnail** of the cutting hand: you should always be able to see the smiley face while cutting.

*Repeat this preparatory exercise each time you use scissors, until the technique is mastered.*

### Scissors – cutting up straws, cutting up playdough sausages

Roll out the playdough sausages so they are really thin, then cut them up into little pieces using the scissors. Focus on a good scissor technique, with thumbs facing upwards. Make sure the elbows aren't resting on the table, squeezed against your ribs, or up in the air: they should just be gently by your sides. Demonstrate how to hold the scissors, and give hand-over-hand guidance if required. Next, cut up some straws, using single cuts.

### Pencil skills – colouring on a vertical surface

Attach some paper to the wall (or use a chalkboard). Using stubby crayons or chalks, colour in the paper. If the children are at a scribbling stage, that is fine. If children are able to, they can create a picture, or colour in a large, simple shape.

### Coin posting

Position the coins on your dominant side (on your right side if you are right handed), and steady the posting box with your non-dominant hand.

Start by picking up one coin or counter at a time and posting it into the box.

Make sure to use a **pincer grip** (fingertips) not the side of your finger.

Next, pick up two coins, and hold one in the palm of the hand, using the ring and little finger to keep it in place, while posting the other.

Try placing a coin in the palm of your hand and using the fingers and thumb of that hand to move the coin up to your fingertips. Don't cheat by tipping the hand to slide the coin down the palm!

*You can use this activity to work on numeracy or coin recognition.*

### **Unicubes/ pop-together beads/Lego**

Make a chain using unicubes, lego or pop together beads. Use a pincer grip.

*You can use this activity to work on matching or sequencing colours, or numeracy. See if the child can copy a pattern you make.*



### **Threading on straws**

Place a lump of playdough on the table, on your non-dominant side (left for a right-handed child) and insert some straws, long spaghetti or kebab sticks.

Steady the playdough with the non-dominant hand, and then thread Cheerios, dried pasta, or beads onto the straws or sticks, making sure you are using a pincer grip and tucking the ring and little finger away. You can use a spare Cheerio or a piece of blutak under these fingers to make sure they stay tucked.

Check beforehand that whatever you are threading fits onto the straws or sticks! For an even bigger challenge, thread Cheerios or beads onto dried spaghetti – start with shorter sticks and progress to longer sticks.

### **Scissors – cutting up narrow strips of card**

***Repeat the scissors preparation exercise (Week 1, Session 1) before beginning.***

Prepare some narrow strips of card, some about 1cm wide and some about 3cm wide. Start with the narrower strips, cut these up using a single cut. Then move on to the wider strips, using two or more cuts. Focus on a good scissor technique, and make sure to steady the card with your thumb on top.

*You can extend this activity by using the pieces of card to make mosaic pictures.*

### **Tearing paper into strips**

Take a sheet of tissue or newspaper. Using a pincer grip, try to tear it up into neat strips. Now roll the strips up into little balls.

*You can extend this activity by using the strips or balls of paper to make pictures.*

### **Playdough and peg treasure hunt**

Take a lump of playdough and warm it up by squashing and squeezing it. Now hide some beads or pegs in it and scrunch it up again. Find the pegs by using both hands to dig, stretch and press into the putty. Have a race!

### **Button sorting**

Place an empty eggbox or ice cube tray on your non-dominant side and hold it steady with that hand. Place a pot of buttons or different coloured mini pompoms on the dominant side. Using a pincer grip, pick up the items one at a time and sort them into the container by colour (or size or number of holes).

To make this more challenging, pick up the mini pompoms with tweezers, or using clothes pegs.

### **Bubblewrap popping**

Take some bubblewrap and pop the individual bubbles, using a pincer grip.

### **Finger football**

Use a small ball or scrunch up some little pieces of paper to make a ball. Set up a goal at each end of the table and play a game of finger football. Use the index finger and thumb to flick the football towards the goal.

### **Pencil skills – Curved lines**

Attach some paper to the wall, or use a chalkboard or whiteboard. Draw curved lines. Draw the shape in the sky first, then the board. Make sure you are reaching across your body, from left to right. You can start with a simple rainbow shape, then try a row of smaller curves. These can be hills, or a frog jumping from lily pad to lily pad. Use stickers as targets to help with aim and make sure you work from left to right. Try to keep the curves the same size. Now try while sitting at the desk. Make the curves smaller.

### **Pencil skills – Horizontal Lines**

Attach some paper to the wall, or use a chalkboard or whiteboard. Mark some dots or a line or place some stickers along the left-hand side – this will be the starting point. The instructor should demonstrate how to draw the line, verbalising to start at the left and draw straight across to the right. Draw the shape in the sky first, then the board.

Using chunky crayons, markers or chalk, draw horizontal lines. Start at the left and draw right. A line or stickers on the right may help with aim.

You can use a template to help, for example, some widely spaced lines to keep between. If children are having real difficulty, stick some lolly sticks, pipe cleaners or straws to the paper to form a tactile guideline to draw between.

Once you have tried on a vertical surface, sit down at the table and repeat the task.

### **Pencil skills – vertical lines**

Attach some paper to the wall, or use a chalkboard or whiteboard. Mark some dots or a line along the top, or place some stickers along the top – this will be the starting point.

The instructor should demonstrate how to draw the line, verbalising to start at the top and draw straight down to the bottom. Draw the shape in the sky first, then the board.

Using chunky crayons, markers or chalk, draw vertical lines. Start at the top and draw down. A line or stickers at the bottom may help with aim.

### **Pencil skills: diagonals / crosses**

Draw a diagonal from right to left in the sky, then from left to right in the sky to make an 'x'. Repeat on a whiteboard or chalkboard. Remember to talk through what you are doing. Now, repeat while sitting down. Use stickers or markers to help with the start and end points initially. You can also try drawing an 'x' within a square box or between two horizontal lines. Try with eyes open and with eyes closed.

### **Pencil skills – Circles**

Attach some paper to the wall, or use a chalkboard or whiteboard. The instructor should demonstrate first, emphasising the movement and shape. Draw the shape in the sky first, then the board.

Draw big circles then smaller circles. Now try while sitting at the desk.

### **Pencil skills – squares**

Attach some paper to the wall, or use a chalkboard or whiteboard. Mark dots or place some stickers to form the corners of the square. The instructor should demonstrate how to draw the square, verbalising to start each movement as they draw it. Draw the shape in the sky first, then the board. Using chunky crayons, markers or chalk, draw some big squares. Add some smaller squares inside to make windows and turn the shapes into buildings.

Once you have tried on a vertical surface, sit down at the table and repeat the task.

### **Scissors - playdough hedgehogs**

Make a ball of playdough and place it on the table. Now snip with your scissors to make the spikes of the hedgehog. Add some beads or pegs for nose, eyes, legs.

### **Mini sponge/ pom pom painting**

Take some mini pompoms or little pieces of sponge and use these as little paintbrushes. Hold them in a pincer grip or use clothes pegs as handles. See if you can make some of the lines and shapes that you have been practicing



### **Threading – lacing cards**

Lacing games are available (see resources). Concentrate on using one hand as a steadying hand and the dominant hand for threading the lace. Try to use a pincer grip (fingertips) rather than the sides of the fingers.

If you don't have access to a commercial game, you can use the holes of a pegboard, or punch some holes in a piece of card, or around the edge of a paper plate.



### **Buttoning – large buttons, shirt in front**

Use a shirt or cardigan with large buttons. Place it in front of you on the desk. The instructor should demonstrate how to post the button through the hole, verbalising as they do it. Now have a go.

Use a pincer grip to hold the button and the top. Pull the buttonhole open and post the button through. Say what you are doing out loud as you do it. Watch each other and see what techniques work and what don't.

## **Resources:**

Please use the following links for printable resources, if you do not have a printer the sheets can be hand drawn.

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t-l-154-pencil-control-worksheets>

<https://www.yourtherapysource.com/fine-motor-activities-free-stuff/>

<https://www.activityvillage.co.uk/cutting-skills-printables>

[http://www.dltk-kids.com/crafts/miscellaneous/scissor\\_skills.htm](http://www.dltk-kids.com/crafts/miscellaneous/scissor_skills.htm)

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t-m-470-scissor-cutting-skills-workbook>

<https://theimaginationtree.com/40-fine-motor-skills-activities-for-kids/>

## **Warm up exercises**

### **Rubber band stretch**

Place a rubber band around the fingers and thumb. Now slowly stretch the fingers out and then relax them back in. Start with five and then build up to ten. Add extra bands or thicker bands if it is too easy.

A loop of playdough can be used instead of rubber bands.

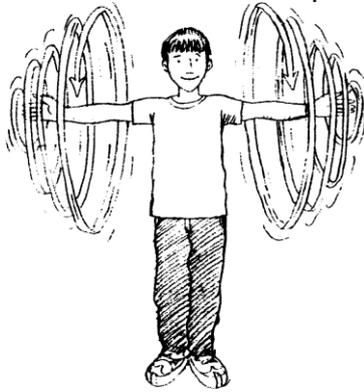
### **Shoulder spirals**

Hold both arms out horizontally to the side and start to circle them, initially making small circles but gradually getting larger until the circles are as large as possible, (this should take about 5 rotations).

Keep the circles controlled – don't rush them! Try some in slow motion.

When the circles have reached full size, change direction and gradually reduce the circles, (again taking about 5 rotations) to get back to the smallest size.

Start by trying to complete 3 spiral sequences then gradually build up the number you can do. Aim to do 10 spiral sequences comfortably



### **Wall push-ups**

Stand in front of a wall about arm's length away from it. Lift your arms up to shoulder level and place your hands on the wall so they are a little bit wider than your shoulders. Breathe in as you slowly bend your elbows to lean into the wall.

Breathe out as you push to straighten your arms.

Start with five and see if you can build that up. Don't rush the move!

A lot of children have "bendy" elbows – in this case, try not to "lock" your elbows when you straighten them. Instead, don't straighten your arms all the way.



### **Arm wake-ups**

- Shrug your shoulders to your ears then back down.
- Touch the sky, keeping your shoulders down.
- Touch your shoulders – hand to same shoulder
- Touch your shoulders – hand to opposite shoulder
- Push down on the desk
- Hold your hands out, palm up, then palm down
- Push palms together
- Pull hands apart
- Link your hands together and circle your wrists, one way then the other
- Make a fist, thumbs up and give them a wiggle
- Touch each finger to your thumb, one at a time, making a big circle.
- Shake your hands out – you're ready to begin!