

Fine Motor Skills

What are fine motor skills?

Fine motor skills involve the coordination of small muscles in the wrists, hands, and fingers, allowing children to grasp, manipulate, and control objects. Developing strong fine motor skills is important for a child's independence and participation in various activities, such as writing, buttoning clothes, using utensils, and manipulating small objects.

Fine motor skills can be tricky for some children. You may notice if a child avoids participating in certain activities at home, playgroup, kindy etc., they may have some fine motor difficulties. Sometimes fine motor challenges are not recognised until a child starts school and there is a higher demand for fine motor activities, such as writing and cutting.

Some children with disability or developmental delay may struggle a bit more with fine motor activities and it can take longer for them to develop these skills, movements and control.

Why are fine motor development important?

- **School readiness** - Supports writing, cutting, turning pages of a book and using other school tools
- **Activities of daily living** - Enables independent dressing, feeding, and hygiene tasks, like brushing teeth and hair.



- **Cognitive development** - Activities that improve fine motor skills like puzzles, stacking blocks, or threading beads enhances hand-eye coordination and problem solving.
- **Supports brain development** - Fine motor activities stimulate areas of the brain responsible for planning, problems-solving, and coordination. This helps with overall cognitive development, including focus and attention, memory and spatial awareness.

How can we support fine motor development at playgroup?

Playgroup is a great opportunity to explore activities that encourage children to use their hands and fingers and develop their fine motor skills! Check out some fun fine motor activities below:

- **Craft** – craft activities like drawing, painting and cutting can help children develop fine motor skills, engaging the small muscles in the hands and fingers, whilst also showing off their creativity! Have a variety of different materials available – crayons, paintbrushes, or you can encourage finger painting
- **Playdough** – playdough is also a great activity for developing our small muscles in our hands and fingers. Try squeezing, pinching, rolling or using playdough tools like cutters and extruders
- **Puzzles and building blocks** – Puzzles and building blocks are fantastic activities for developing fine motor skills because they provide hands-on opportunities for children to manipulate, grip, place, rotate, and align objects, all of which require precise, controlled movements of the small muscles in the hands and fingers.
- **Make snack times fun** – Snack and mealtimes are great opportunities to naturally develop fine motor skills with no extra activities or toys required! These everyday moments involve grasping, pinching, scooping, pouring, spreading, and manipulating small items, all of which help strengthen the small muscles in the hands and fingers. Try turning snacks into art by making fruit faces or allowing children to prepare their own snack.
- **Dress-ups** – playing dress-up is a great opportunity for children to work on their dressing skills. Having costumes available with buttons, zips, laces etc., will support fine motor development, as well as increasing independence with dressing.

