

Areas of Learning

Physical development – Fine Motor Skills



What are fine motor skills?

Fine motor skill is the term used to describe the small but complex movements we make that require the co-ordination of both muscles and the brain. This differs to gross motor skills, in that it refers to the movements made with small muscles group in the wrists, hands, fingers, toes, feet and eyes only, as opposed to the whole body. For example, grasping a spoon with a palmar grasp, building a tower of blocks, turning the pages of a book, holding a pencil with a tripod grasp, pinching pegs using a pincer grip, fastening a button, passing an object from one hand to another etc.

Whilst gross and fine motor skills refer to different kinds of movement, it is essential that practitioners recognise how the two interlink. For example, to be able to master holding a small tool such as a pencil, the child will first need to be able to sit up (requiring core strength and stability), move their arm to reach for the pencil (requiring strength and co-ordination in the shoulder and arm etc.) which all require the develop gross motor skills. Recognising the stages of physical development will enable you to provide a curriculum that is rich with opportunities to develop children's fine motor skills.

Task 1

Try to think about the wide range of opportunities you already provide within your curriculum to focus on development of fine motor skills. Are you making the most of opportunities indoors and out? Do you optimise use of the routine?

What new opportunities could you provide that would engage the children, nurture their curiosities, and allow them to develop their fine motor skills? Some ideas have been provided already to get you started:

- Cutting cooking spaghetti
- Twisting nuts and bolts or lids on to jars
- Cotton bud painting
- Threading bobbles or elastic bands on to a rolling pin
- Writing in the mud with collected sticks
- Whisking coloured sensory soap
- Podding peas
- Chalk targets on to a wall and task the children to wash away the marks with their super squirry water bottles
- Making tea - herbal tea bags, cups and mugs, spoons, water, strainers, tea pots etc.

Task 2

Enhancing your existing provision. Playing with dough is a firm favourite in the early years. Why not build on what you already provide by creating your own Dough Station or Dough Treasure Chest!

Work as a team to pull together some of the following items. Consider the age and stage of the children you are working with, and any particular interests you could accommodate.

- Forks
- Cutters
- Pipe cleaners
- Beads
- Rollers
- Scissors
- Googly eyes
- Lollipop sticks
- Birthday candles
- Cupcake cases
- Shells and pebbles
- Toy bugs and minibeasts
- Buttons

Explore the following links for more information.

[Early Movers — Fine motor skills](#)

[EYFS – Physical development – Fine motor skills](#)

[Fine motor skills - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK \(education.gov.uk\)](#)