

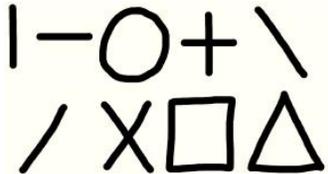
Developing Fine Motor Skills

When young children have difficulties with printing, adults often think the best way to improve is by doing even more printing. They buy work books or give out extra photocopies. Ironically, for kids who have difficulties printing, printing is usually the last thing they need to be doing in order to improve.

If you have a child who is having difficulties in some areas of fine motor development, some of the following ideas and strategies could help your child strengthen their muscles, resulting in improved fine motor control.

What you see:	Strategies to use:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Switches between left and right hand when picking up tools for drawing, cutting, printing, etc.• Switches hands when one hand tires	<p>Do activities to develop hand dominance and hand strength that requiring the child to choose a dominant hand and helper hand. Some of these activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Playing with nuts and bolts• Building toys (Lego, Kid K'Nex, train tracks, blocks, pop beads, etc.)• Using peg boards, Lite-Bright, etc.• Beading (beads, Cheerios, Fruit Loops, noodles, etc.)• Lacing (sewing, lacing cards, etc.)• Ripping paper• Picking up coins or buttons and putting them in a slot or small hole• Using tracers and stencils• Using tools such as a hammer or screwdriver• Scooping and pouring beans or rice or water• Making poke pictures (laying on belly with thumb tack and paper)• Opening snack containers• Wrapping food, presents, etc.• Using a hole punch, clothes pins• Rolling play dough with a rolling pin

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses whole arm movements (vs. smaller finger/wrist movements) 	<p>Work on a vertical surface:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On whiteboard (or SmartBoard) • On an easel (with paint, bingo dabbers, felt pens, etc.) • On the bathtub walls with bath crayons • On windows with window writers • On fridge with magnets <p>Use a slant board (a 3" binder with grip taped the bottom works well for this). Lay on tummy on the floor to colour. Tape paper under a table and have students lay on their back under the table to colour.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May hold pencils/crayons with fist, palm or more than 3 fingers • Letters and shapes are often very shaky • Pencil/crayon strokes are light 	<p>Do activities to develop proper pincer grasp and strength such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing with playdoh (rolling, squeezing, pinching, mixing colours together or mixing sparkles in) • Popping bubble wrap with thumb and finger • Using tongs and or tweezers to pick up/sort small items • Using turkey basters (either in water table, to have Ping-Pong ball races, etc.) • Using eye droppers (cover a plate with baking soda and give coloured vinegar to use with eye dropper) • Making poke pictures (laying on belly with thumb tack and paper) • Playing with nuts and bolts • Using clothes pegs • Using small broken crayons (this encourages pincer grasp). • Using peg boards, Lite-Bright, etc. • Painting with Q-tips • When working with crayons/pencils, give students something small (pompom, bead, etc.) to hold with their pinky, ring and middle fingers). • Use stamps, letter tiles and stickers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When printing his/her name, it is often illegible or very difficult to read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice drawing basic shapes (shown here in order of difficulty):  Make it interesting by drawing them in sand or shaving cream with finger paint or pudding, with Wikki-Sticks, with blocks, with a stick in the snow, etc. Use small broken crayons (this encourages pincer grasp). Do guided drawing activities (You draw, they draw) Have students do activities on vertical surfaces (see above) Teach them to print their name in capital letters (these are much easier to do with students who do whole arm movements, do not have proper (or strong) pincer grasp or do not have precise finger movements when drawing).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has difficulties reopening the scissors when cutting 	<p>Students with difficulties cutting may benefit from activities that develop hand strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cutting different materials (PlayDoh, Wax Paper, Tinfoil, newspaper/flyers, cardstock, the grass, etc.) Spring-loaded scissors (if they have difficulties opening scissors) Use peg boards, Light Bright, etc. Beading (beads, Cheerios, Fruit Loops, noodles, etc.) Lacing (sewing, lacing cards, etc.) Picking up coins or buttons and putting them in a slot or small hole Playing with Playdoh - use garlic presses and cut it with scissors. Punching holes in paper Use a spray bottle (with water to water plants, coloured water on snow)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not turn the paper with the "helper hand" when cutting 	<p>Have student lay on their stomach to cut which requires them to use their elbows to support their body and encourages them to use their helper hand to turn the paper.</p>

Sometimes as parents it's difficult to find the time to 'work' on increasing strength and practicing these skills. When possible, try to incorporate tasks into your routine so it doesn't feel like 'work'. Some suggestions to help children increase strength and coordination in day-to-day activities at home include:

- Carrying or pushing laundry in a basket
- Folding laundry and sorting socks
- Sorting coins
- Emptying the cutlery from the dishwasher (sorting)
- Setting the table (carry plates, count cutlery needed, fold napkins, etc)
- Wiping the table (strengthens shoulders)
- Pouring water/milk into cups for everyone to drink
- Carrying groceries into the house; helping push the cart at the store
- Helping with cooking or baking (measuring, using two hands together for tasks like rolling dough, leveling flour, stirring, etc)
- Carrying a few library books, collecting them to put in a bag to take back to the library
- Running errands to the basement (going up and down the stairs builds strength)
- Shoveling snow together
- Opening the mail (teach them how to open the envelope without ripping the contents)