

Fine Motor and Handwriting Skills Activities

DISCRIMINATION OF LEFT AND RIGHT

- Massage each hand – Accompany it with the song “This is the way we massage the RIGHT hand” to the tune of *Here We Go Round The Mulberry Bush*, or make up a story about Mr. Right and Mrs. Left hand and make each of the fingers a different child as you massage (e.g. This is Mr. Left, he is good at holding apples, this is Billy Left, he likes to play football. This is Charlotte Right she likes to ride a bike etc.)
- Use puppets – Ask the right hand to choose a puppet and play with that on the right hand, then ask the left hand to choose a puppet and play with that. Encourage the students to interact with each other. You could finish by having both puppets – can the students say which one goes on which hand correctly?
- Shake hands – Use a red ribbon for RIGHT and a yellow ribbon for LEFT – tied around the wrist or a finger, or a felt tip mark on the back of the hand as a visual prompt and say, “I want to shake your right hand” as you hold up a piece of red ribbon. Can they extend the correct hand? Sing a song such as “If you’re happy and you know it, shake your left hand”, while you shake it
- Treasure hunts – Use a tray, placed on either the left or the right of the student. Show them a raisin, Smartie or crisp being placed on the tray, and say “I want you to find this with your right hand” – touch that hand as a prompt as you say it. Then blindfold them, and encourage them to feel around on the tray for the treat and pick it up

EYE-HAND CO-ORDINATION

- Target activities – Throw a range of equipment at targets – such as balls in a bucket, beanbags in a hoop, quoits on a stick, balloons in a basketball hoop, bowling at skittles. Encourage the appropriate grasp / release of each object (see below)
- Magnetic fish – Encourage students to pick a fish and target it. Use a visual cue, like putting a ring around, or a mark on, the fish they are trying to catch
- Lacing and threading – Use different shape and sized beads – square, cylinder, oval, and flat ones. Set the activity in context – can you make a necklace for Teddy? Use lacing cards and encourage a left to right orientation, as well as visual focus. Try a simple sewing activity – again set it in context
- Tracing activities – Non-paper based, such as tracing a car left to right along a road, using the touch screen to trace a route, tracing in damp or dry sand, dipping one finger in paint (or a mixture of paint and sand) and tracing on paper, tracing a path on velvet or hessian. Make it tactile and multisensory!

CROSSING THE MIDLINE

- Balls and balloons – Encourage students to cross the midline when playing with balls and balloons, or using a hockey stick
- Treasure Hunt 2 – Play the game outlined above (Discrimination of right and left, 4), but place the tray on the opposite side to the hand you want them to use
- Figures of eight – With physical prompting initially, draw a large, sideways figure of eight in the air, or holding a pencil on a large vertical piece of paper. Make sure the centre of the body is the midpoint of the eight. Can the student sustain this action when the physical prompt is withdrawn?

IN-HAND STRENGTH

- Water transfer – Challenge the students to transfer water from one receptacle to another using a sponge. Demonstrate how to soak up the water from the first receptacle, and then squeeze it into the second receptacle. Ask them to practice making a closed fist without the sponge first, then with it. They could also practice wringing out their flannel during PSE time after lunch.
- Playdough – Encourage students to manipulate playdough, clay (harder) or plasticine (harder still). Get them to squeeze it, so it oozes between their fingers, squash balls flat, roll sausages on the table or between their hands (if you start it off, it will be easier) or roll small and big balls of it. Try to put the activities in some sort of context, such as “Poor dolly is hungry. Shall we make her some sausages and potatoes for lunch?”
- Banging – Use a wooden hammer to bang in pegs, or a beater to hit a drum or triangle. Encourage eye-to-hand coordination and accuracy as well as strength of hit.
- Cutting – Use loop or normal scissors to encourage cutting. Cut along lines or find things in catalogues to cut and stick. Alternatively just do free cutting.
- Tongs – Use tongs to pick up objects and move them from one container to another. Make it into a game by making it a race between teacher and student (give lots of commentary), or between the two students.
- Whistling tubes – Encourage students to hold the tube firmly and spin it around fast. Set challenges such as “Who can make the loudest sound?” or “Who can make the longest sound?”

FINGER / IN-HAND MANIPULATIONS

- Scrunchy paper – Crumple or screw up little bits of paper using the fingertips. Use a range of papers – e.g. tissue, crepe, foil, coloured, thin card. Set in a context, such as a collage activity or making a dinner for a puppet.
- Finger Rhymes – Encourage signing along to favourite songs and counting rhymes, such as “Twinkle-Twinkle Little Star” or “Here’s the Church” etc.
- Construction Toys – Use a range of construction equipment that requires different manipulations, such as Duplo, Interstar, Stickle Bricks, Popoids or Snappit. Set challenges, such as “Who can make the tallest tower?” or “Who can make a dog?”
- Opening things – Encourage students to open a range of packets, jars and bottles, preferably in a real context, such as taking the lids off the squash bottles or opening the milk to help to prepare drinks, or opening packets of crisps or biscuits for snack time (and practice using the “pull apart pinch”). Also set challenges such as “Which lid goes on which bottle?” with a selection of three of various sizes. Can the students match the lids to the correct bottles and screw or push them on?
- Mr Potato Head – Ask the students to make faces with potatoes (if these are too difficult then use softer fruit or vegetables, such as courgette or pear). Encourage them to think about the positioning of the features, and concentrate on hand-eye coordination.
- Wind up toys – Ensure there is a variety of different wind up mechanisms – big and small, cylindrical and wing nut. Make sure the toys are motivating!
- Fastenings – Use a zipper board and ask students to open or close all of the zips. Alternatively, use the fastening cubes from the ball pool and concentrate on the range of manipulations needed to open or close them. Also, encourage students to attempt fastenings on their clothing, in context (such as zippers on coats, Velcro on shoes, etc.)

- Inset puzzles – Use a range, both with and without holding pegs
- Pegs – Have a selection of multi-coloured plastic pegs, and sheets of card or boxes of the same colour as the pegs. Ask the students to sort the pegs by colour, by pegging them on the appropriate card or box.

FINGER ISOLATION SKILLS

- Bubbles – Pop bubbles with the index finger (or other named fingers) as they are blown, or while they are in the air.
- Finger painting – Focus on two fingers, one on each hand, and assign each a different colour. Can students put the right finger in the right colour?
- Piano play – Or other keyboard instruments, or thumb piano. Encourage free play, but also demonstrate, such as using one finger to go up the keyboard, and then back down again.
- Checkout Till – Put the activity in context – play shops and ask one student to be the shopper, the other the shopkeeper. The items to buy should be small things that require a pincer grip, such as Smarties, raisins or Hula Hoops, so that the shopper has to use fine-motor skills too. The shopkeeper must ring up the purchase on their till before taking the money. Swap roles.
- Telephone – The students can take in turns to ring each other, dialling the number on a push button telephone. Encourage them to use one finger to press the buttons in a controlled way. Alternatively they could phone up puppets.
- Computer Keyboard – Encourage free play on the computer keyboard. Draw attention to the correlation between the buttons pushed, and what appears on the screen. Also try more structured tasks, such as using a keyboard mask with just two or three keys showing. Can the students push the keys that are indicated (either by pointing or a visual cue)?
- CD / Cassette Player – Can the students press the play button to hear a favourite tune? Or the stop button to stop a horrible racket? Can they turn the volume control to make the sound louder or quieter? The appropriate button could be marked with a coloured sticker to make it clearer.

GRASPS

- Spherical grasps – These can be encouraged with tennis, or other similar sized balls – pick up, hold and throw. Alternatively use apples or oranges in the home corner – can they pass them to dolly?
- Pincer grasps – These can be encouraged by picking up raisins etc., popping bubble wrap, turning pages of a book, pointing at picture or words in a book, holding marbles or money.
- Cylindrical grasps – These can be encouraged by holding cups without handles, kaleidoscopes, rainmakers or other cylindrical shakers.
- Tripod grasp – These can be encouraged by holding small pieces of chalk or Hand-Hugger (triangular) pencils or pens.
- Three jaw chuck grasp – These can be encouraged with holding blocks or cubes.

RELEASES

- Connect Four – give each student a colour each and take it in turns to pick up and release pieces into the frame. Could focus on making patterns rather than playing the game.
- Lids – putting lids on pens, bottles, etc.
- Towers - building towers with wooden bricks and releasing them accurately
- Marble run – releasing marbles into a marble run accurately

PENCIL CONTROL SKILLS

- Colouring in, focusing on marking a specific area of the picture
- Colouring in, focusing on staying between the lines
- Draw around own or others hand, trying to stay close to fingers
- Draw around stencils, trying to follow contours of shape
- Draw vertical lines with control, stopping before the edge of the paper
- Draw vertical lines of varying lengths, with control
- Draw horizontal lines with control, stopping before the edge of the paper
- Draw horizontal lines of varying lengths, with control
- Draw diagonal lines with control, stopping before the edge of the paper
- Draw diagonal lines of varying lengths, with control
- Draw enclosed shapes, joining the starting and finishing point
- Draw circles of various sizes, with control
- Follow straight tramlines, staying within boundaries
- Follow wavy or zigzag tramlines, staying within boundaries
- Trace then copy wavy lines with control
- Trace then copy zigzag lines with control

DRAWING SKILLS

- Copy a modelled drawing of a face, making a mark for each of the basic features
- Draw a face, focusing on including all the basic features (eyes, nose, mouth, hair)
- Draw a face, focusing on the correct positioning of features
- Draw a face, including more detail, such as eyebrows, eyelashes, lips, teeth, ears, glasses, etc.
- Copy a modelled drawing of a house / cat / person / etc.
- Draw a house / cat / person / etc. including the basic features
- Draw a house / cat / person / etc. including more detail

HANDWRITING: LETTER FORMATION

- Trace then copy (select) letters in name
- Trace words, focusing on correct starting point for letters
- Trace words, focusing on left to right directionality
- Copy write words with stencils
- Trace then copy “curly caterpillar” family of letters (c a d o s g q e f), focusing on starting position and formation pattern
- Trace then copy “long ladder” family of letters (l i t u j y), focusing on starting position and formation pattern
- Trace then copy “one-arm robot” family of letters (r b n h m k p), focusing on starting position and formation pattern
- Trace then copy “zigzag monster” family of letters (z v w x), focusing on starting position and formation pattern
- Have-a-go independent writing

HANDWRITING: SENTENCE FORMATION

- Trace sentences, then copy write, focusing on leaving spaces between words
- Trace sentences, then copy write, focusing on staying on the line
- Have-a-go writing sentences, trying to remember to leave spaces and stay on the line