



## Gross and Fine Motor Development

Over the last couple of years, Early Years settings have noticed an increased need for support around both gross and fine motor development.

Electronic devices are becoming more and more popular as a play choice for children, but we need to

remember the importance of physical play. Developing the skills used during physical play is fundamental to a child's development.



If your child struggles with tasks like writing, drawing, and using scissors, you may have heard people mention the term 'fine motor skills' when describing the challenges. However, what are fine motor skills?

Fine motor skills are the ability to make movements using the small muscles in our hands and wrists. Children rely on these skills to carry out key tasks in school and in everyday life.

We use fine motor skills to make small movements. These movements come so naturally to most people that we usually do not think about them, however, fine motor skills are complex. They involve the coordinated efforts of the brain and muscles and they are built on to allow us to make bigger movements.

### What can parents do to support their child?

Begin by working on gross motor skills to ensure that your child has developed upper body and arm strength. The following activities will all help to build the strength needed to develop their fine motor skills:

- Using monkey bars
- Sweeping with a broom
- Climbing up and down climbing frames
- Using the fire pole at the park
- Swinging from arms on play equipment
- Climbing walls
- Up and down arm movements with paint brushes and rollers (water and a fence or wall is great for this)
- Walking on your hands (adult holding legs up)

Support your child to develop their [fine motor skills](#) by focusing on activities that involve a refined use of the small muscles, which control the hand, fingers and thumb.

The following type of activities support children's fine motor development, and will help to build the strength and dexterity necessary to hold and use a pencil appropriately:

- Threading pasta onto a lace
- Cutting lines/shapes/zigzags
- Water in spray bottles
- Playdough
- Using tweezers and tongs
- Using clothes pegs

There are some fantastic fine motor activities online. Have a Google and try some! Investing time in developing these key skills is vital to your child's development.

# Gross Motor Development



- Swings arms when in a hurry
- Runs well avoiding obstacles
- Walks up and down stairs with rail, 2 feet on a step
- Jumps off a step, 1 foot leading
- Tries to stand on 1 foot
- Stands on toes momentarily
- Can bring chair, and seat self at table
- Propels a ride-on toy with feet on floor



3 years

- Walks with a rhythmical arm swing
- Walks on tiptoes 6 + steps
- Walks on stairs without rail, 1 foot per step upstairs, 2 feet per step downstairs
- Stands on 1 foot for about 5 seconds
- Runs well turning sharp corners, stopping, dodging, and avoiding obstacles
- Jumps from bottom step, feet together
- Jumps from 18 inch height with one foot leading
- Hops on one foot 2+ times
- Climbs in/out, under/over objects easily
- Climbs jungle gym with agility
- Enjoys swings
- Appreciates body size and space in relation to surroundings when playing
- Throws small ball 7 feet, overhand
- Catches large ball with straight arms
- Kicks a ball forcibly



- Walks up and down stairs without rail, alternating feet
- Walks forward on elevated balance beam alternating feet; takes several steps backwards.
- Stands on one foot 5-8 seconds
- Jumps off 2 steps, both feet together
- Hops on each foot 4-6 times
- Climbs ladders, trees, and high playground equipment
- Pumps swing while maintaining balance
- Somersaults
- Rides tricycle quickly and turns sharp corners
- Catches large and small ball with flexed elbows
- Throws large ball well enough to be caught by another person
- Begins to bounce ball and use a bat



5 years

- Stands on one foot, with eyes closed
- Walks on balance beam forward, backward and sideways
- Skips or gallops
- Rides a bicycle
- Imitates complex body movements
- Jumps over a rope 8 inches high
- Jumps rope
- Catches bean bag with one hand
- Throws tennis ball with trunk rotation
- Dribbles a ball
- Uses skates, sled, wagon, or scooter well
- Kicks a rolling ball

# Fine Motor Development

## Two Years

- Towers 8 one-inch blocks
- Imitates a train of 2-4 blocks
- Holds a thick crayon in the palm
- Imitates & copies a vertical line
- Imitates a horizontal line
- Hand preference usually obvious
- Does 3-piece puzzle of something familiar
- Undresses mostly independently
- Unbuttons large button
- Turns pages singly
- Opens a door (turns door knob)
- Screws and unscrews a jar lid
- Threads shoelace through large hole



## Three Years

- Towers 9 one-inch blocks
- Grasps marker with thumb, index and middle fingers
- Copies horizontal line & circle
- Colors picture in general area
- Draws a simple design with some recognizable features
- Completes 4-5 piece puzzles
- Dresses self including medium-sized buttons
- Cuts paper in half
- Strings 12 small beads easily
- Finds objects in sand without looking
- Enjoys finger paint, paste, clay, etc.
- Does finger play while singing little songs



## Four Years

- Towers 10 one-inch blocks
- Builds various 5-6 block structures (e.g. stairs)
- Holds a pencil in adult fashion; dynamic tripod grasp
- Copies a ladder Copies a ladder, +, /, |, □, X
- Colors within 1/4" of the line
- Draws a recognizable person (head, extremities)
- Completes larger puzzles with logical division (e.g. person, animal)
- Manages fasteners with occasional help (snaps, large buttons, zippers)
- Cuts within 1/4" of a large circle
- Imitates movements in hand games e.g. Eensy Weensy Spider
- Pours milk from small pitcher
- Threads small beads with a needle
- Traces own hand



## Five Years

- Towers 13 one-inch blocks
- Copies triangle & asterisk
- Wants to write
- Prints own name, some words and numbers to 5
- Reversals common
- Large variable sized letters
- May write right to left
- Little awareness or control over spacing
- Draws a person with 6 parts
- Imitates 6-block designs (e.g. steps, mountain)
- Completes 6-12 piece puzzles
- Manages clothing fasteners independently
- Cuts well with scissors
- Paper manipulated with fingers and wrist of assisting hand to cut complex shapes

