

LIZELLE KEYSER
Paediatric Occupational Therapist

Dear Parents,

The activities in this handout are focusing on strengthening the hands to refine movement, for cutting and pre-writing skills. These activities have been developed for you to do at home with your child, with resources which you most likely might have within your home. You can choose from the activities, which best suit your child. The week schedule has an overview of all the activities.

Fine motor skills:

The pincer grasp is the fine grip between the tips of the thumb and index finger, where the thumb and index finger together form a circular shape. Practice lots of activities that increase the accuracy or strengthen pinch. Any activity that involves pinching with fingers against resistance will increase strength with regular practice.



Posting pompoms:

Materials needed: 10 Pompoms and an empty container such as yogurt, butter or a small tea box. If you do not have pompoms you can use any small toy or even rolling small pieces of paper in balls or cotton wool balls.



Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Cut a hole in the container's lid, a little bigger than one pompom to fit through the hole.
- Place about 10 pompoms next to the container.

Play:

- The aim of the game is for your child to pick up the pompoms one at a time and post it through the hole.
- If they try to take more than one, remind them to only pick up one.

Feed the rubber bands:

Materials needed: 5 to 10 rubber bands or hair bands, cardboard tube or even a muffin pan turned over (use the back of the cups)

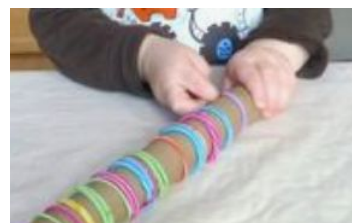


Steps to play:

- Hold the rubber band with two hands and place over the container, one at a time.

Posting straws:

Materials needed: Straws, scissors, any container with small holes (a box with small holes will also work)



Steps to play:

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Preparation:

- If you only have a cereal box, poke a few small holes on the large flat side of the box.
- The holes in your container must be large enough for a straw to fit through.

Play:

- Let your child cut the straws in large pieces e.g 5cm. If your child can not cut, then cut the pieces before hand for them.
- The child should post the straw pieces through the holes, one at a time.



Tapping the colours:

Materials needed: Coloured lollipop sticks or coloured paper strips. 5 different colours

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Let your child spread their hand out on the table.
- Place the lollipop sticks (or paper strips) on a table, one colour under each finger.
- It might be necessary to tape it at the one end with Sellotape if the paper slips.

Play:

- When an adult calls the colour they must touch the lollipop stick with that finger. One finger at a time.



Posting pipe cleaners:

Materials needed: Pipe cleaners and box (any size box works even cereal boxes or larger boxes)

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Poke small holes on the top and sides of a box with a screwdriver.
- The holes need to be large enough for pipe cleaners to fit through.
- Place a bunch of pipe cleaners next to the box.

Play:

- The child must take one pipe cleaner at a time and post it into a hole.

Alternatives:

- If the child finds pipe cleaners difficult, practice first with long straws. As the straws are firmer, it is easier to do.
- If your child is able to match colours, you can colour each hole with a colour of the pipe cleaners. They then need to match the pipe cleaner to the correct coloured hole.
- If your child is able to match numbers or letters, you can sellotape a small paper number at the end of each pipe cleaner. Write the number or letter next to the hole on the box.



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They need to match the number/letter on the pipe cleaner with the number/letter on the box.

Two handed activities:

Feed the cotton monster:

Materials needed: kitchen tongs, cotton wool balls, 2 bowls

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Place cotton wool balls into one bowl.
- Place an empty bowl near it.

Play:

- The child must pick up the cotton wool with the tongs and place it one by one in the empty bowl.



Squeezing pegs:

Materials needed: clothing pegs, empty shoe box

Steps to play:

- Give your child an empty shoe box and some clothing pegs.
- The child needs to press the clothing peg and place it on the edge of the shoebox.
- You might need to assist them the first few tries, to understand how to open and close the peg. Do this by putting your fingers over theirs when pressing.



Alternative:

- You can place stickers on the edge of the box. The child needs to place the pegs on the stickers.
- If you use coloured pegs, you can place a coloured dot on the edge of the box. The child needs to match the colour of the peg with the colour on the box.

Peg Numbers:

Materials needed: four containers, clothing pegs

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Tape numbers onto the containers e.g 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Play:

- The child needs to place the same number of pegs as the number on the container, on the edge of the container.



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Peg balls:

Materials needed: smaller pompoms or cotton wool balls (4 different colours), 1 peg, 4 containers

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Place one coloured pompom in each of the containers to indicate which colours go where.



Play:

- The child uses the peg to pick up the pompoms and place it in the correct coloured container.
- Alternative: Place a written number in the bowl. The child needs to place the correct amount of pompoms (one at a time) in the bowl.

Threading heart:

Materials needed: Cardboard or selofame takeaway container, screwdriver, string or wool

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Cut a shape out of the cardboard or takeaway container.
- Press holes about 1 cm from the side and 1cm from each other, all along the edge.
- Tie a knot in the string and put it through the first hole.



Play:

- The child must lace the string all along the edge.



Strengthening with play dough:



PLAYDOUGH

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 2 cups of plain flour
- 2 cups of warm water
- 1 cup of salt
- 2 tbsp of vegetable oil
- 1 tbsp of tartar (optional)
- Food colouring
- Mixing bowl
- Saucepan

HOW TO MAKE IT

Mix all the ingredients together and stir over a low heat. The dough will begin to thicken and resemble mashed potato. When the dough pulls away from the sides and clumps in the centre, remove the pan from the heat and allow the dough to cool. If the dough is still sticky, you simply need to cook it longer. Keep stirring and cooking until the dough is dry.

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Pinch the snake:

Materials needed: Play dough

Steps to play:

- The child rolls the play dough into a sausage. Make sure they keep their fingers straight. Rolling enables you to use your whole arms, bending and straightening the elbow.
- Once you have rolled out the dough, using your thumb and index finger, pinch the dough as hard as you can.
- Pinch all along the snake.
- Alternative: Roll snakes to make a face on a turned over bowl.



Press in holes:

Materials needed: Play dough

Steps to play:

- Using both hands, press down onto the play dough, keeping arms straight. It is a good idea to stand up or kneel at a table, this encourages further pressure.
- Once the dough has been rolled out you can use different fingers to make prints in the dough. Keep your fingers straight as if you were pointing.
- Alternative: Find other objects to press into the dough, to make play dough prints.



Roll large balls:

Materials needed: Play dough

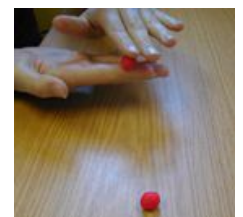
Steps to play:

- Roll large balls between the palms of your hands.
- Stick cut up straws or pieces of pasta in it to make a hedgehog.



Roll small bird eggs:

Materials needed: Play dough



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Steps to play:

- Use the tips of your fingers to roll small balls. Make a basket with eggs.

Find the toy:

Materials needed: Large piece of play dough, small toys. Some children are safe with the use of beads (which works very well), others need larger objects such as small plastic insects or animals; or even pasta pieces.



Steps to play:

Presentation:

- Hide the toys inside of the playdough.

Play:

- The child must find all the toys in the playdough.



Pencil control:

Developing good pencil control is an important prerequisite for drawing and writing.

- Markers is easier to use than pencils, as they give immediate feedback, without much pressure used.
- If a student finds it difficult to hold a pencil in a stable grasp, it might be worth trailing a few pencil grips, to encourage and prompt a more stable pencil grasp. Pencil grips such as:
<https://www.tinknstink.co.uk/3-step-training-pencil-grips.html>
- Using a poster of how to hold your pencil as a reminder:
<https://www.sparklebox.co.uk/5941-5950/sb5947.html>

Drawing on your back:

Materials needed: Paper, markers/crayons, tape, coffee table or dining room chair

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Tape a paper to the bottom of a low coffee table or dining room chair. The height needs to be as such, for the child to lay on their back under that chair and draw on the paper. This again encourages hand motions, rather than full arm motion when drawing.

Play:

- The child can draw a picture in this position. It can also be a colouring in page to colour.



Follow the road:

Materials needed: Paper, marker, car or train

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Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Draw with the marker various lines on the paper. You might want to draw a few different pages.
- Start off with simple lines e.g. straight, wavy and zig-zag; then others that are more complex.

Play:

- The child must place the car at the start of the line and follow the line with the car or train to the end. You might need to demonstrate and guide their hand initially.
- This develops the concept of pencil control and following lines, as what you would do when using a pencil.



Button the pattern:

Materials needed: Buttons (or even stickers), marker and paper

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Draw a pattern with the marker on paper.

Play:

- The child needs to start at the one end of the pattern and place the buttons next to each other along the pattern.
- You can also do this with stickers.



Draw on your tummy:

Materials needed: Paper, crayons or markers



Steps to play:

- The child lay on their tummy to draw. This encourages the use of hand movements, rather than using the whole arm in drawing.
- Draw a picture, by using curly and wiggly lines.



Draw a path:

Materials needed: Crayons/markers, paper and wooden blocks/lollipop sticks/large stickers

Steps to play:

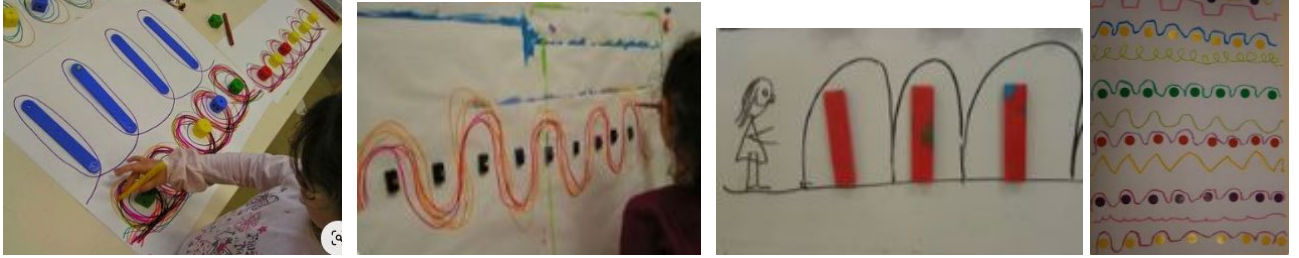
Preparation:

- Place the blocks in a row, at least 5 cm apart.
- Draw the pattern you want to practice, between the blocks, as in the picture.

Play:

- The child draw the pattern between the blocks/stickers
- Some ideas:



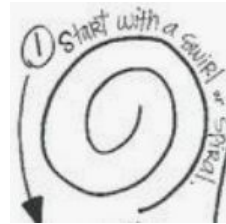


Draw a tornado:

Materials needed: Paper, crayons/markers

Steps to play:

- Practice to draw curly patterns, as if you draw a tornado or the shell of a snail.
- The parent can add in the detail to change the picture into a dance or snail, if your child is unable to.



Colour in the circles:

Materials needed: Pencils/markers/crayons, paper

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Draw small circles on a page. The size of the circles will depend on the ability of your child.

Play:

- Provide the child with small crayons or pencils to colour in the circles. Try to stay in the lines.
- Alternative:
 - Draw larger circles, if your child finds the small circles harder to colour in.
 - Use a few colours. Colour in the circles with the same colours.



Fruit paths:

Materials needed: Paper, stickers and markers

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Place the coloured stickers across the page as in the picture. If you do not have stickers, you can also draw a simple picture or shape instead.

Play:

- Demonstrate what you expect to your child with a pencil.
- The child needs to draw the pattern from one end to the other, without touching the stickers.



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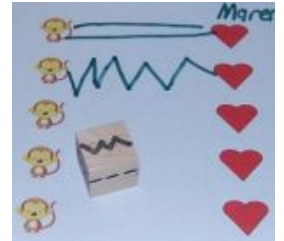
Draw a pattern:

Materials needed: Paper, pencils/markers, stickers

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Place stickers on a paper in a row, down either side of the page.
- Draw a few simple lines and curves you want to practice with your child, on another page e.g. four patterns/lines. You can also use a wooden block and draw the patterns on each side of the block (as in the picture).



Play:

- The child closes their eyes and presses their finger on the pattern page. They need to draw the nearest pattern. If you use the block, they need to throw it as a dice and draw the top pattern.
- Use your sticker page. Draw the pattern from the one sticker to the other, from left to right. You might need to demonstrate the first one.
- If your child finds it difficult to do, focus on doing easy lines e.g. draw a line across, draw only one zig-zag for the line, draw a curve line. You can also make it easier, by doing less stickers e.g. only two or three lines to do on a page.
- The aim is for them to draw from the one picture to the counterpart picture on the other side of the page.

Match the peg:

Materials needed: Pegs, paper, crayons/pencil/marker

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Place pegs around the edge of a page.
- If you want to add a matching element to the game, you can draw either with colours, numbers or letters on the pegs.
- Make sure that you place the matching pegs on opposite sides of the page.

Play:

- The child draws from one peg to the matching peg on the other side.



Pre-writing skills:

We teach letter formation in letter groups. The letters in a letter group are formed the same way. We will start by focusing on the 'Curly Caterpillar' letter group - c a d g q o e s f. Thus, we will start to focus on doing curly and circular patterns, before looking at the letters.

I've attached the **lowercase formation chart** and **number stories** handouts, which tells you how each letter and number should be formed. You will notice that by starting with the 'magic' c letter, you can write numerous other letters such as o, a, d, g by starting with c.

Writing in paint:

Materials needed: Paint, food storage bag, sellotape, earbud

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Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Put some paint (or shaving foam/hand wash gel) in a food storage zip-lock bag.
- Make sure all the air is out of the bag, before you zip it up.
- Secure the opening with Sellotape.
- Secure the bag to the table with a piece of Sellotape at the top and bottom.

Play:

- The child writes with the cotton earbud or their finger on the bag.
- First start off with drawing circles, horizon lines from the left to right and vertical lines from the top to bottom. You can demonstrate on a paper next to them.
- Make sure it is fun, by drawing pictures e.g. drawing circles to draw a caterpillar and lines to cage a lion.
- Then practice the 'magic' c letter. Make sure you demonstrate it in the correct formation. See the handout for directions. Can they draw other letters by using the 'magic' c such as the letters a, d, g, q, o.



Drawing with sand:

Materials needed: Tray, play sand (or flour or salt)

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Place the sand spread out in a tray. You can also use any other substance e.g. flour or salt.

Play:

- The child draws with their index finger in the sand.
- Do the same activity as above (writing in paint).



Writing in playdough:

Materials needed: Playdough, stick, rolling pin or tin/glass

Steps to play:

Play:

- Help your child to roll the playdough out flat by using a rolling pin or even a long glass or tin (if safe to use).
- Draw the circles, lines and letters you've practiced above on the play dough with a stick.
- It might be necessary for you to demonstrate how to write it on paper or on another piece of playdough. The child can copy you.
- It will benefit the child to verbally tell them how to form the letter or shape e.g. start at the top, go around and stop.



Writing with playdough:

Materials needed: Playdough, paper and marker

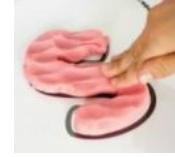
Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Write the letters you want to practice in large bubble writing e.g. c, a, d, g, q, o

Play:

- The child rolls snakes from the playdough.
- The child places the snakes on the letter you've written e.g. if you wrote a 'c', they start putting the snake from the top to the bottom of the 'c', to fill the bubble.



Write with sweets:

Materials needed: Sweets, paper and marker (you can also use pasta, beans or beads instead of sweets)



Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Write the letters you want to practice in large bubble writing e.g. c, a, d, g, q, o

Play:

- Start at the top and follow the bubble to place the sweets all along the bubble to write the letter. Tell them the directions of writing while they do it e.g. start at top, go down and around, then stop.

Scissor skills:

Snipping is one of the first steps in learning to cut with a scissor. When holding a scissor, make sure your child holds it in a thumbs up position. It sometimes helps to draw a small smiley face on their thumb to remind them that the thumb needs to be at the top.



You might want to consider Mini Easy-Grip scissors, if your child finds standard scissors difficult to use.

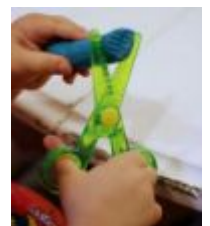
<https://www.tinknstink.co.uk/mini-easi-grip-scissor.html>

Snipper play dough:

Materials needed: Play dough, scissors

Steps to play:

- Roll a playdough snake. Cut the snake into pieces with a scissor.
- Roll the pieces between your palms into balls and squish them flat with your index finger.



Snipper straws:

Materials needed: Straws, scissors

Steps to play:

- Cut the straws into pieces.



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- Use a string to thread the straw pieces to make a necklace.

Snip paper strips:

Materials needed: Strip of paper about 1 inch wide, scissors

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Draw lines across the paper 1 inch long, and about 1 inch apart.

Play:

- The child needs to snipper cut on the lines.



Chomp the sticker:

Materials needed: Paper, stickers, scissors

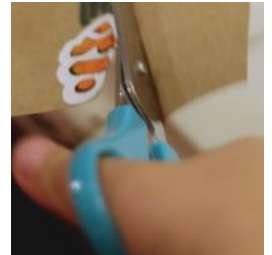
Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Place stickers on the edge of a paper. The stickers should be 1 inch apart.

Play:

- Cut the stickers in half, by snipper cut. (Same as previous activity.)



Cut out a sun:

Materials needed: Paper plate or round paper, yellow crayon, scissor, pencil

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Draw a smaller circle on the paper plate or round paper with the pencil.

Play:

- Colour in the paper plate with yellow, as the sun.
- Cut from the edge of the plate to the circle.
- Do this repeatedly, to form the rays of the sun, about 1 inch apart.



Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further advice or have questions.

Kind regards,

Lizelle Keyser

Independent Occupational Therapist