

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.

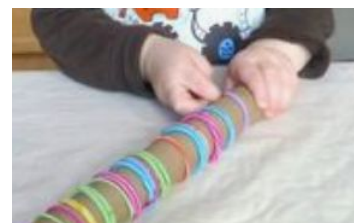
Feed the rubber bands:

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.

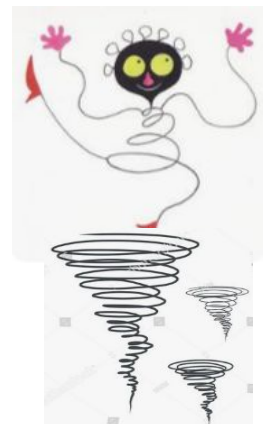
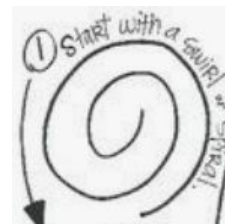
- Markers is easier to use than pencils, as they give immediate feedback, without much pressure used.
- If a student finds it difficult to hold a pencil in a stable grasp, it might be worth trailing a few pencil grips, to encourage and prompt a more stable pencil grasp. Pencil grips such as:
<https://www.tinknstink.co.uk/3-step-training-pencil-grips.html>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

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:



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- 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.



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.

Connect the dots:

Materials needed: Markers/pencils, paper and stickers (optional)

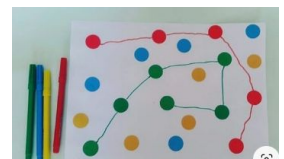
Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Choose 4 colours. Draw dots spread out on a page. Alternatively place coloured stickers spread out on the page.

Play:

- The child draws with the same coloured maker, matching up all the same coloured dots.
- To make it easier, use less colours.



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Draw a path:

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

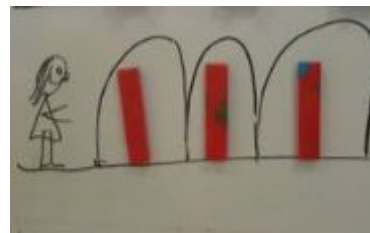
Steps to play:

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 the line:

Materials needed: Pencils, Paper

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Draw two lines 2cm apart from each other.

Play:

- The child draws from the top line to the bottom line, each time a different colour.
- They must make sure that they start on the top line and stop on the bottom line. Try to not draw over the line.



Highlighted patterns:

Materials needed: Highlighter pen (preferably yellow), stickers, pencil

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Place stickers or draw simple pictures underneath each other along the left side of the page. It should be about 4 cm apart.
- From each sticker, draw a pattern (as in picture) to the other side of the page, using the highlighter pen.



Play:

- The child starts to draw with a pencil from the sticker along the path of the highlighter pen.

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- Make sure you start first with the easier lines e.g. a straight or curvy line, before the more difficult lines.

Follow the shape:

Materials needed: Highlighter pen (preferably yellow), stickers, pencil



Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Use the highlighter pen and draw nine shapes, as in the picture.
- The top shape has clearer and wider lines, the middle one (underneath) as thinner lines and the bottom row has very thin lines.

Play:

- The child starts at the top row shapes and draws the shapes, following the highlighted path.
- Remind them to draw corners and stay within the lines, if they go too fast.

Bigger and bigger:

Materials needed: Markers, paper



Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Draw a small square in the middle of the paper.

Play:

- The child needs to draw a square around the square you've drawn. Each time with a different colour. If their square gets misformed, you can draw another perfect square, for them to draw from.
- This is to develop line awareness for writing.

Scribble art:

Materials needed: Coloured markers and paper



Steps to play:

- Draw large scribbles across the page with a black marker.
- Colour each of the shapes within the scribbles a different colour.



Handwriting 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.

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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.

Use the worksheets below to practice this group of letters. Simply demonstrate one letter at a time on a separate page. Be sure to say the directions out loud while you model the letter.

Letter formation worksheet:

Materials needed: Printout of **Letter formation worksheet** first 3 pages (curly Caterpillar letters), pencil (If you do not have a printer, you can draw single lines across a page and let your child practice these letters)

Monday: Worksheet page 1 - letters c, a, o

Tuesday: Worksheet page 2 - letters q, g, d

Wednesday: Worksheet page 3 - letters e, s, f

Steps to play:

- The child first imitates your letter, by tracing over the letters in the boxes.
- The child imitates your letter, by writing it on the line.

Write my name worksheet:

Materials needed: Printout of **Write my name** worksheet, pencil (again, if you do not have a printer, you can draw single lines across a page and let them practice on the line)

Thursday & Friday: Split the worksheet across the two days and follow the instructions

Steps to play:

- The child practices writing their name between two lines.

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>



Cut the short pattern:

Materials needed: Scissor and worksheets

Steps to play:

Preparation:



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- With printer - Print out **cutting shapes printable** handout. Ideally on coloured cardboard, but white paper would also work fine.
- Without printer - Cut strips of paper about 5 cm wide. Draw the patterns on the strips of paper as in the picture.

Play:

- Cut the strips of paper on the lines.

Cut across stickers:

Materials needed: Paper, marker, stickers and scissors

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Draw a thick black line across the page.
- Place stickers along the line.
- If available, firmer cardboard (e.g. cereal box) is easier to cut than paper.

Play:

- Cut across the page, but stay on the line. Try to snip through the stickers.



Cut across railway:

Materials needed: Paper, marker and scissors

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Draw a railway track across the page.
- If available, firmer cardboard (even from a thin box) is easier to cut than paper.

Play:

- Drive your train across the track, by cutting across the track. Make sure you stay in the middle of the track.



Cut across a line:

Materials needed: Highlighter, black marker, stickers, paper and scissor

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Place a sticker on either side of the page (or cardboard)
- Draw a thick straight line with the highlighter across the page.
- Draw a thinner black line in the middle of the highlighter line, across the page.

Play:



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- Cut from the one sticker to the other sticker across the page, by cutting on the black line. Make sure you stay within the highlighted area.

Cut across a motor track:

Materials needed: Highlighter, black marker, stickers, paper and scissors

Steps to play:

- The same activity as above, but draw dotted lines, instead of a straight black line.
- Tell your child a story about the stickers, to make it more motivating e.g. the bunny needs to eat the carrot or the train needs to go to the station.



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

Kind regards,

Lizelle Keyser

Independent Occupational Therapist