



Experiences and Activities to Develop Fine Motor Skills

Birth–18+ Months

Fine Motor Words to Know. Teach infants vocabulary words related to small muscles and fine motor skills. Use the words in the chart below when appropriate.

| | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| Button | Hold | Squeeze | Twist |
| Carry | Open | Throw | Unwrap |
| Catch | Pick up | Thumb | Wiggle |
| Close | Pinch | Tie | Wrap |
| Fingers | Pull | Toes | Wrist |
| Grasp | Push | Track | Zip |
| Hands | Smile | Turn | |

Books About Fine Motor Development. Read books that promote fine motor activities and concepts. Here are some favorites:

Clap Your Hands by Lorinda Bryan Cauley

Hand, Hand, Finger, Thumb by Al Perkin

Here Are My Hands by Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault

Piggies by Audrey Wood

Ten Little Fingers by Annie Kubler

Birth–6 Months

Finger Grasp. Encourage babies to practice grasping. Place your finger in a baby's palm. He will grasp your finger by automatic reflex. Encourage him to continue holding your finger. Say the "Grasping Rhyme," if you like.

Grasping Rhyme

I place my finger in your left palm.

You grab it and hold on tight.

Your left hand is growing stronger.

Now let's try it with your right.

Sensory Glove. Give infants a Sensory Glove (appendix page 233). Encourage them to squeeze the fingers. **Safety Note:** Supervise closely to ensure that infants don't bite off pieces of the glove.

Follow This. Move a rattle slowly from left to right in front of a baby—about 14" from his face. Does he follow the rattle with his eyes? Repeat this activity often. When baby gets good at following (tracking) the rattle, try increasing the distance from his face.

Watch the Rattle. Place a baby on his stomach. Face him and dangle a rattle directly in front of his face. Slowly lift the rattle so that he has to raise his head to follow it. Encourage him to use his arms to push up. Celebrate his success.

Follow the Ball. Lay the baby on his tummy, or if he can sit up, put him in a sitting position. Roll a ball in front of him. Say, *Watch the ball*. Is he able to keep his eyes on the ball? Play the game several times. This activity will help him with his visual tracking.

Hand Pals. Give baby Canister Shakers (appendix page 226). These little shakers are a perfect size—easy to grasp and big enough not to be swallowed. Give infants a Canister Shaker for each hand. It will help develop their grasp. For a variation, hand the baby Canister Bells (appendix page 226).

Finger Watching. Put the baby in a position where he can see you well. Sit in front of him and sing songs with finger movements, such as "Where Is Thumbkin?" and "Five Little Fingers." Additional fingerplays are in the appendix on pages 199–203.

Where Is Thumbkin? (Traditional)

Where is Thumbkin? (hands behind back)

Where is Thumbkin?

Here I am. Here I am. (bring out right thumb, then left)

How are you today, sir? (bend right thumb)

Very well, I thank you. (bend left thumb)

Run away. Run away. (put right thumb behind back, then left thumb behind back)

Other verses:

Where is Pointer?

Where is Middle One?

Where is Ring Finger?

Where is Pinky?

Where are all of them?

6–12 Months

Scarf Pull. Make a Scarf Pull (appendix page 233) and give it to infants to explore.

Feely Box Fun. Make a Feely Box (appendix page 228). Encourage infants to feel the items inside the box.

Paper Crunch. Give infants paper to crunch and tear. Supervise closely so that bits of paper don't end up in their mouths.

Slot Drop Can. Make a Slot Drop Can (appendix page 233) and invite infants to explore dropping the chips or buttons in the can. Supervise closely to ensure that children do not put the chips or buttons in their mouths.

Spoon on a String. Cut a 24" piece of yarn. Tie one end of the yarn around the baby's spoon and the other end of the yarn to the baby's feeding table. When baby tosses his spoon, show him how to retrieve it.

Goop Bags. Mix a batch of Goop (appendix page 222). Place a ball of Goop in a resealable plastic bag and glue the bag shut. Give the Goop Bag to the infants and encourage them to squeeze the bag, flatten the bag, twist the bag, and so on. **Safety Note:** Supervise closely to ensure that infants don't bite off pieces of the bag.

Squish, Squash. Place sliced bananas on children's feeding trays. Can they pick up the slippery slices?

Ball Bounce. Bounce a ball across the floor in front of the baby. Does he follow the ball?

Gelatin Jigglers. Give babies Gelatin Jigglers (appendix page 219). Are they able to pick up the jigglers? Talk with them about the feel of the gelatin. Recite the following "Gelatin Jiggler Rhyme" while the children eat their Jigglers. **Note:** Provide sweet treats to children in moderation. Large amounts of sugar are not conducive to keeping the brain alert, and the only thing we get from sugar is calories.

Gelatin Jiggler Rhyme by Pam Schiller

Gelatin Jigglers in my tummy.

Gelatin Jigglers yummy, yummy, yummy.

Gelatin Jigglers wiggle, jiggle, wiggle.

Gelatin Jigglers make me giggle.