



Month 6: Developing Functional Hand Skills Pre-School Activities

Gel Writing

In order to make your child their own gel writing pad you will need coloured hair gel (such as Dippity-Do brand) and a self-sealing (Ziploc) plastic bag. If the gel isn't dark enough add some food colouring. Place the gel into the plastic bag. Have your child help you with this step, either squeezing the tube of gel or using a spoon to scoop the gel from the jar to the bag. Make sure not to fill the bag too much and once there is enough seal the bag, in order to avoid any accidents or spills you may want to double bag the gel. Now you're ready to write in gel. Lay the gel bag flat and using your index finger like a pencil, model simple impressions in the gel such as dots, simple lines or shapes. Encourage your child to hold all other fingers in a fist while using just the index finger to write. It may help if they hold something small in their hand. Erase the image by gently patting on the surface. Encourage the child to imitate your impressions.

To make this activity harder:

- Have your child hold a small pencil and press the gel bag with the eraser end.
- Have your child practice first tracing, then copying, then creating letters in the gel.

Thumbuddies In Ink

To make Thumbuddies you will need non-toxic inkpads, paper and markers. Demonstrate how to make fingerprints, one at a time, by straightening each finger and pressing the pad into the inkpad and then onto the paper. Encourage the child to use all fingers to decorate his paper with fingerprints. Make sure your child tucks the remaining fingers into his palm. Invite the child to use a marker to attach arms and legs to each fingerprint.

To add challenge to the activity tape the paper to the wall.

* See the Fingerprint Calendar attached as an example to use to create thumbuddies.

Snip-It Designs

Provide your child with ½" strips of paper (the stiffer the paper the easier the activity, so you may want to start with cardstock and progress to construction paper). Instruct your child to hold the strip with one hand and use the scissors with a thumbs up pattern with the other hand. Have your child to target the strip and snip numerous times to make small pieces. Glue the cut pieces of paper onto a paper to create a design. Or have your child fill in a template to create a design. If your child has difficulty with snipping paper have her snip straws and par-cooked pasta noodles, they are easier to handle in order to be success in snipping.

To make this activity more challenging:

- Have your child snip wider strips of paper so she'll have to make consecutive snips to cut across the paper.
- Have your child target a line to cut along.

* See the templates of the mitten and snowflake as shapes to fill in. Remember they can also fill in block letters or numbers.

Name in Lights

You will need some construction paper, a marker, a carpet square or carpeted area on the floor and a golf tee. To start print your child's name in pencil on the paper and then using the marker make small dots along the letters as a guide where to poke holes. Make sure she uses her thumb and index and middle fingers to hold the golf tee and the other hand to stabilize the paper on the carpet. Instruct her to push the tee through the paper at each dot. Direct her to poke the dots in a consecutive order, starting at the top and left and proceeding down and to the right, as in reading and writing. When the child is completed hold the name up to the window to see her name in lights!

Adaptations:

- Teach simple shapes by using the same procedure for creating circles, squares or triangles.

Big-Button Button-Up

To practice the skill of buttons you will need a buttoning board or vest with 3 or more buttons $\frac{3}{4}$ " to $1\frac{1}{4}$ " in diameter. Or you can make a buttoning board by sewing buttons and buttonholes on a piece of fabric. Before you begin demonstrate how to push the buttons through the buttonholes. Then instruct the child to button all the buttons and unbutton them again (the child should try at least 3 buttons). Encourage the child to continue practising until he or she becomes proficient with them.

To make things more interesting use buttons that close a pocket (or make them yourself) and hide a treasure in the pocket for the child to find.

Adaptations:

- If you are noticing that this activity is very challenging and your child is becoming frustrated with it, make the buttonholes twice the size of the buttons, and once they become proficient with it decrease the size of the holes.
- When they get really good vary the size and type of buttons used.
- To make things more difficult have the child wear the garment to button up. Try to provide clothes with large buttons for the children to use when playing dress-up or house.

Tasty Shapes

In order to make some tasty shapes you will need a squeeze bottle of tube frosting, ketchup, pudding, or applesauce. And laminated sheets with shapes, letters, or numbers on them. And of course something to clean it up. Demonstrate to the child how to squeeze the bottle and follow the line of the shape without falling off the line. Now it's the child's turn. Be sure they use their dominant hand, and encourage them to go slowly. When the child is finished wipe the laminated sheet clean and start again!

Sticky Letters

Using glue and yarn the child will trace upper case letters with this activity. Start with the letters of the child's name, lay them out and see if she can identify the letters. Then using a bottle of glue (or glue stick) have the child trace over the lines of each letter with glue. Remember to instruct the child to always start the letter at the top. Then have the child go over the lines again (with the same pattern in starting at the top), sticking the yarn to the glue.

Options:

- Tracing shapes or numbers.
- Tracing their whole names.
- Have the child match their yarn letters to other letters in the classroom.

Stencil Fingerpainting

Fingerpainting is always fun! Before you start cut 8-10 stencils out of coffee can lids or Styrofoam meat trays. Let the child choose the stencil they would like and tape it to construction paper. Then let her spoon a small amount of fingerpaint into the middle of the stencil and using her finger to spread it around until the whole area inside is covered. Encourage her to use only one finger to spread the fingerpaint and the opposite hand to hold the stencil.

Variations:

- Stencil Murals: Cover the table with craft paper or butcher paper and stencil all over it.

Picture Puzzles

Encourage the children to draw and colour pictures large enough to cover or fill most of their construction paper (or use a colouring page with a ready made picture for them to colour in). As each child finishes his picture, ask him to help you draw several lines and curves from edge to edge thus making a puzzle design. Let the children cut out their pieces following the line (or tear along the line). Now the children can put the pieces together to remake their pictures.

Beads in a Bottle

To complete this activity you will need 5 beads (about ½" diameter) and a small bottle such as a spice jar or hotel shampoo bottle. Have the child hold 5 beads in the palm of one hand (dominant hand). Hold the bottle in your other hand. Work one bead at a time from your palm to holding the bead with your thumb and first finger. Then drop the bead into the small bottle. Do this with all 5 beads. Try not to let any beads fall!

Flippers

Using a plastic milk/juice container cap is all you need to get the game of Flippers started. The goal of the game is to see how far you can flip a milk top. Make a fist with your hand and have your thumb tucked in. Place bottle top on side of index finger and thumb. Flick your thumb out and see how far the top goes. Try this 10 times to see if you can make it go further. Be sure to position wrist so the cap flies away from body. To make the game more challenging try to flip the caps into a can.

Hole Punch Art

Using a 3" X 3" piece of paper and a hole punch a child is ready to create some art. Have the child draw a picture or a design on a piece of paper or imagine one in their minds. Use a hole punch to create or outline that picture. You can create letters or numbers this way. Or for holidays you can make hearts, pumpkins, or trees.

Paper Chains

These are always a great activity the children can do to help decorate for a party or for the Christmas tree. Give each child a piece of paper that's 3 inches wide, on it draw a line every $\frac{1}{2}$ ". With "thumbs up" have the child cut along the lines. If the child is still struggling with scissors have them carefully tear along the lines. Then using some glue, glue both ends of the first strip together to make a circle. Loop the second strip through the first and then glue those ends together, so that the two circles are chained together. Keep going until all the strips are in a chain. Make sure while cutting the last two fingers are curled into the palm. If not, have the student hold a pom pom with the last two fingers.

3D Snowflakes



To make these 3D snowflakes you will need white paper, scissors, tape, glue and yarn. To make them you will need a template of strips about $\frac{3}{4}$ " to 1" wide and have the child cut along the line to make the paper strips. If the child is still struggling with scissors provide assistance or you can let them carefully tear along the line. Roll each strip into circles, tape to secure. Make some circles big and some small. Glue your circles together to make your own unique snowflake.

Make a bunch of these snowflakes and string them with yarn or twine, they make a great winter decoration for the home or classroom.

Q-Tip Flips

Using paint and Q-Tips its time to create. Hold the Q-Tip in the middle with a tripod grasp (thumb, index and middle fingers). Dip it in one colour paint. Using only the thumb, index and middle fingers, flip the Q-Tip over and dip it in another colour paint. Now paint a picture, letter, or design with coloured dots, alternating between the two colours. Be sure the student is flipping the Q-Tip with fingers, not wrist. Keep checking to make sure the student is using a tripod grasp.

Straw Cut & String

Cut straws into inch-long pieces, using proper scissor grasp. Now it's time to string the straw pieces. Using two fingers to hold the straw pieces and the other hand to hold the string (or pipecleaner). Push the string through the straw. Continue pushing it through but

never letting go, until the straw piece is at the end of the string. Make a bracelet by knotting the two ends together once the straw pieces have been strung.

Seedy Collage

Using a large piece of green construction paper, glue, and several types of dried seeds and beans your child can create a seedy collage. Ask the children to squeeze out a long stripe of glue along the length of their paper. Have them spread the glue slightly, keeping the long thin shape, and sprinkle one type of seed along the glue strip. They should make two or three (or more) stripes of glue, adding different types of seeds to each. The finished collage should remind you of the rows of seeds planted in the garden.

Piggy Puppets

To make a piggy puppet each child will need one paper plate, pink constructions paper, paint, crayons, markers and glue. Have the children paint or colour their paper plates pink. Cut out a 3 inch circle (have children cut out following the line). Then cut that circle in half. This will be the ears. Also cut a two inch circle, this will be the nose. When the plate is dry (if you painted) glue on the ears and the nose. Then add the remaining facial features.

Cutting Shapes

Now that scissor skills are developing challenge the children to cut out shapes, circles, squares, triangles, etc. As always emphasize the importance of thumbs up with the cutting hand and manipulate the paper with the non-cutting hand. Go slow and follow the line. In order to have greater success have thicker lines to target and use sturdier paper until the children become skilled at cutting. Once the shapes are cut build something, an animal, a bug, a truck or a train!



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