



Month 6: Developing Hands and Fingers

Preschooler

Finger Painting

Using only their fingers, have the children paint a picture or draw specific shapes with nothing but their hands. Shapes like circles, lines, squares, triangles, rectangles, and letters could be drawn to make it a fun learning activity too.

Lacing

This activity develops your child's hand-eye coordination, an important skill for many sports and daily activities. You can use lacing cards or make your own using stiff cardboard and a hole punch. You can also use everyday objects around your home that already has holes in it - shoes, sewing bobbins, etc.). Give your child a shoe lace or a length yarn with the end taped narrow. Encourage your child to lace the string through as many holes as he can.

Beading

Start using pipe cleaners and a larger bead or even a piece of uncooked pasta. The pipe cleaner is stiffer and will be easier for your child to place bead onto. Once your child is proficient with this, try using a shoe lace and a smaller bead to make necklaces, bracelets, key chains, etc. You can also work on colour recognition and patterns when beading with your child.

Containers

In preparation for lunches at school, start having your child practice opening all of those little containers all on their own. Have picnics (at home or at the park) where you can help your kids master their juice boxes, small tupperware containers, thermoses, ziplock bags, etc. These activities not only boost their self-esteem ("I can do it myself!"), but also help improve their fine motor skills in a functional way.

Hand Strengthening

It is necessary to strengthen the small muscles of the hand to ensure the appropriate development of a dynamic tripod grasp for later pencil use. There are many fun activities that can assist with this:

- Tong use – using a pair of large tongs in one hand, encourage your child to pick up small soft toys or bean bags and sort them by colour, shape, or animal.
- Tweezers – teach your child to use tweezers to pick up small sequins, bits of yarn, beads, or googly eyes when working on a craft project.

- Spray bottles – clean and fill spray bottles with water for your child to use. Pulling back the trigger on these bottles is a great strengthening activity. They can use these water bottles to water indoor and outdoor plants, clean outside play equipment, fill with water and food dye and spray pictures in the snow during the winter months. Kids can also use these spray bottles in the bath.
- Wind-up toys – provide you child with various wind-up toys to practice using on their own. Spin tops are another fun activity that promote a tripod grasp.
- Play-dough or silly putty – rolling into snakes and then making letters with the lines of play dough, using a rolling pin to flatten the play-dough and cookie cutters to make shapes, using an old garlic press to swish the play-dough through, etc.

Turtle – fingerplay

This is a turtle (make a fist)

He lives in a shell.

He likes his home,

Very, very, well.

He pokes his head out when he wants something to eat

(stick out thumb from fist)

And puts it back in when he goes to sleep (fold them into fist again)

Thumbs Up Please

Sitting with your child ask them to listen to your questions. Explain that their thumbs not their voices will answer the questions. If the answer is yes then it's THUMBS UP, if the answer is no then it's THUMBS DOWN. Some examples are:

"Do you like ice cream?"

"Do you like to play outside?"

"Does a cow give juice?"

Finger People – a fingerplay

Two fine gentleman met in a lane (hold thumbs up)

Bowed most politely and bowed again (bend thumbs towards eachother)

How do you do, how do you do and how do you do again?

(move thumbs like talking to eachother)

Continue with:

Index finger – *Two fine ladies met in a lane...*

Middle finger – *Two nice teachers met in a lane...*

Ring finger – *Two nice children met in a lane...*

Little finger – *Two little babies met in a lane...*

Scissor Fun

- **Cut & Paste Activities:** See the attached sheets for two ideas.
- **Practice, practice:** During actual scissor practice, (i.e., cutting activities), encourage the children to cut with "thumbs up". The child should not be holding their thumb toward the floor while cutting. At first, it may be hard for the child to maneuver both the paper and the scissors at the same time. Try helping them by holding their hand on the paper for them while they get scissor practice by snipping with the scissors. However, don't encourage them to use tow hands to maneuver the scissors; this does not help them develop the appropriate skills.
- **Jungle Fun:** Have the children snip around the edge of a green paper to make grass for a jungle or farm. This step comes before cutting across a whole page.

References:

Invest in Kids Foundation. (2001). What a child will be depends on you and me: A resource kit for a child's first five years. Toronto (ON): Invest in Kids Foundation.

SPARC: Sports and Recreation New Zealand (2008). Developing hands and fingers. Active Movement.