

# Ideas for Supporting your Child's Learning at Home



## Introduction

In this leaflet we hope to give you some ideas that you may want to use which could help your child at home and prepare them for school life. It includes information about physical development which includes, fine motor skills and managing self-care and independence. There are also some very simple things that can be done to help with your child's communication and language.

## Fine motor skills

### What are Fine Motor skills?

Fine motor skills involve the use of the smaller muscles in a child's hands, commonly in activities like using pencils, scissors, construction with lego or duplo, doing up buttons and opening lunch boxes. Fine motor skill efficiency significantly influences the quality of the task outcome as well as the speed of task performance. Efficient fine motor skills require a number of independent skills to work together to appropriately manipulate the object or perform the task.



### What skills do 'fine motor skills' include?

#### Academics skills, including;

- Pencil skills (scribbling, colouring, drawing, writing)
- Scissors skills (cutting)

#### Play

- Construction skills using lego, duplo, puzzles, train tracks
- Doll dressing and manipulation
- IT use (e.g. touch screen, mouse and stylus manipulation)

#### Self-care, including;

- dressing – tying shoelaces, doing up sandals, zips, buttons, belts
- eating – using cutlery, opening lunch boxes and food bags
- hygiene – cleaning teeth, brushing hair, toileting.

### Why are fine motor skills important?

Fine motor skills are essential for performing everyday skills as outlined above as well as academic skills. Without the ability to complete these every day tasks, a child's self esteem can suffer, their academic performance is compromised and their play options are very limited. They are also unable to develop appropriate independence in 'life' skills (such as getting dressed and feeding themselves) which in turn has social implications not only within the family but also within peer relationships.

### What can you do at home?

Your child will now have their fine motor pack and inside are some things that can be used to help with the development of their fine motor skills at home.

Playdoh – While children are busy rolling, poking and squishing dough, they are building strength in the little muscles in their fingers and hands. These same muscles are used for later skills such as cutting and holding a pencil with a pincer grasp.

Here is a link to a youtube video that the children will love called dough disco.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-lfzeG1aC4> In the video, the children can dance along and exercise their hands using their playdoh.



Pompoms and tweezers – The pincer grasp is the coordination of the index finger and thumb to hold an item. Each time you hold a pen or button your shirt, you're using the pincer grasp. While it may seem like second nature to an adult, to a young child this is an important milestone in fine motor development. Encouraging your child to pick things up using the pincers is a great way of exercising these muscles. It doesn't have to be pompoms, it can be anything.

Whiteboard and pen - Mark making simply refers to the creation of different patterns, lines, textures and shapes. As a child's mark making develops, they begin to progress onto drawing directional lines and full shapes, which then brings them onto forming letter. They can use the whiteboard to begin practising creating some basic shapes, writing their name or forming numbers.



Other things that are great for developing fine motor skills include; threading beads, threading laces, weaving, model making. Here is a link that you may find useful as it has lots of different activities that can help. <https://theimaginationtree.com/40-fine-motor-skills-activities-for-kids/>

### Language and communication

This is a key factor in a child's development and good language development leads to good development in other areas.

Below are some ideas on how to help develop your child's language;

- model the correct word/sentence when you hear your child's saying something incorrectly (e.g. 'I runned to school', repeat sentence back 'you ran to school didn't you')
- encourage children to ask questions
- use vocabulary children can understand in everyday instructions
- give children time to respond
- give a running commentary on your child's activity rather than ask questions all the time
- ensuring that your child has the opportunity to interact 1:1 with an adult if they wish
- play alongside your child without always directing their play
- using questions that invite conversation or encouraging reasoning skills rather than yes/no answers
- make time to say rhymes as well as sing with your child
- read and reread favourite stories and talk about the book
- help your child to develop and extend imaginary play (dressing up, playing shops etc)



### Basic skills

Children learn lots through play so don't under estimate the value of playing games with your child. Below are some games that help develop basic skills in a fun way as well as helping children understand how to take turns and be a good sport;

- I spy (enables children to identify initial sounds in words)
- Snakes and ladders (counting in steps and number recognition)
- Snap (observation skills)

Any other games your child enjoys! They all help to develop language skills as well as taking turns, team work etc.

### Managing self-care and independence

There are many other ways that you can help your child to develop in all areas one of the most important being their increasing independence. Some ideas for helping develop independence;



- Let them get dressed/undressed by themselves
- Putting their coat on and zipping it up themselves
- Give them small 'jobs' (responsibilities) e.g. buttering the toast, feeding the family pet, putting their washing in the washing basket, making the bed.