

FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Fine motor skills are the small movements we make with the muscles in our hands. These skills develop as children gain stability in their bodies. As their sensory, cognitive, and social-emotional skills grow, they can start to do more with their hands.

Manipulative items are objects children can move, sort, or arrange, like blocks, scissors, or pompoms. Using manipulatives helps children build hand strength, coordination, and control through play. It also supports focus, problem-solving, and creativity as they explore through touch and movement. Fine motor skills are essential for everyday tasks like eating, getting dressed, and eventually writing.

Supporting Children to Develop Fine Motor Skills

The activity ideas below support fine motor development. These activities can be adapted for children with different abilities or sensory preferences. Adult modelling, hand-over-hand support, and visual cues can help engage children in fine motor tasks. If children find fine motor activities frustrating or challenging, it's okay to try a little each day. All children develop at their own pace.

Important: Make sure any items you use don't pose a choking hazard or other danger.

Activities for Infants 0 to 12 Months

- Putting items in or out and taking things on or off (e.g., puzzles, stacking, linking, nesting toys).
- Grabbing or shaking (e.g., soft toys, infant easy-to-grasp toys, sock or wrist rattles).
- Looking at infant-safe books. Turning pages and pointing at images or objects.
- Eating. When the infant can eat larger solid foods, offer finger foods that need to be picked up (e.g., half blueberries, diced avocado, dry cereals).
- Connecting/closing (e.g., containers with lids, large building bricks, magnetic tiles, connecting large beads).
- Sensory play (e.g., water, mud, sand, bubbles, with cups, spoons, figures).
- Building (e.g., cardboard tubes, boxes, blocks, building bricks, stacking toys).
- Exploring and creating (e.g., loose parts or bits and bobs, sticks, rocks, pinecones, ribbons, lids and containers, pop-up toys).

Activities for Children 12 Months and Up

- Manipulating pieces to fit together (e.g., puzzles).
- Building (e.g., blocks, connecting toys, building toys, magnetic toys).
- Exploring (e.g., sorting rocks, building piles of leaves, collecting pinecones).
- Connecting/closing (e.g., connecting beads, building bricks, gears, magnetic tiles).
- Arts and crafts (e.g., sewing, drawing, finger painting, cutting playdough and large paper with child-safe scissors, beads).

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Supporting Children to Develop Fine Motor Skills Continued

- Using tools (e.g., drum and xylophone and drumsticks, cars and ramp, marble runs, building tools, pompoms and tongs, playdough and tools, clothespins and clothes, water and kitchen tools).
- Sensory play (e.g., mud, water, bubbles, sand, playdough).
- Eating (e.g., small finger foods).
- Dressing (e.g., helping themselves with Velcro, lacing, zippers, buttons).
- Making music (e.g., piano, shakers, ukulele, box or bucket).

Need More Support?

Local Resources:

- Local Pediatric Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy
 - [Kootenay Kids Society](#)
 - [Kootenay Family Place](#)

Resources Available at WKCCRR Library:

- Small Connecting Beads
- Nesting Toys
- Magnetic Tiles
- Pompoms and Tongs
- Board Games
- Constructive Toys
- Puzzles

Online Resources:

- [BC Aboriginal Child Care Society - To Help Children Develop Fine Motor Skills for Writing: Play!](#)
- [Movement Used in Storytelling: Indigenous Perspectives on Motor Learning](#)
- [.75 Fun Fine Motor Activities for Kids](#)
- [Occupational Therapy Fine Motor Activities for Toddlers](#)
- [Finger Aerobics](#)
- [Fine Motor Development Chart](#)
- [Happy Hooligans Fine Motor Activities](#)