

Activities to Strengthen the Small Muscles of the Hand and Fingers

1. Use thumb and finger in a pincer grasp to put pennies in a bank.
2. Use a pincer grasp to button a shirt with a 3/4" opening.
3. Screw a jar lid on and off.
4. Wring out the washcloth during and after use.
5. Squeeze a sponge.
6. Wind a clock (not a watch).
7. String Cheerios.
8. String beads on a shoelace.
9. Complete sewing cards.
10. Lace shoes.
11. Tie knots in pieces of string or broken shoelaces; try undoing the knots.
12. Put nuts and bolts together and then take them apart.
13. Teach your child to buckle and unbuckle his seatbelt.
14. Practice fastening and unfastening buttons, zippers and snaps.
15. Teach your child how to use scissors with the thumb in the small, top hole. Make sure the scissors cut easily.
16. Roll clay into rope and cut the clay ropes with scissors.
17. Use scissors to fringe edges of paper, cut straight lines, cut curved lines, and cut pictures out of magazines, catalogs, Christmas cards and paste them on bags.
18. Teach your child to snap their fingers.
19. Use tweezers to pick up popcorn kernels or grains of rice and drop into containers.
20. Play with clay: squeeze, roll, press and make simple shapes consisting of two or more parts.
21. Play with Tinker toys, Legos or other building sets. Begin with larger size if possible.
22. Color using the correct pencil grip.
23. Trace around large geometric stencils.
24. Pretend the pencil is a motorcycle that leaves "tire tracks." Have your child go around the racetrack ten times.
25. Practice holding a spoon correctly while eating. The food should rest on the first knuckle of the middle finger and be pinched by the thumb and pointer. The pointer finger should be slightly bent.
26. Practice getting dressed and undressed.
27. Practice putting on socks and shoes.
28. Water the outside plants using a squirt water bottle.

Remember to make activities fun. Work often but for short periods of time. Praise the work effort, not the product. "I like the way you are working hard on that." "I like the way you try to do that well." Quit before you or your child gets frustrated or angry.

