



Cultivating Child Development Series

Fine Motor skills

Fine motor development is part of sensori-motor development. It basically includes eye-hand coordination, bilateral coordination, finger dexterity and grip strength. Fine motor skills is essential for learning of self-care, tools manipulation and prewriting skills in young children, which helps to promote their participation at home, in classroom and play activities.

My child is weak in fine motor skills, how can I help him?

Parents can encourage their young children to use their hands to explore different toys and objects in their environment under safe situations. They can provide suitable stimulation and chances for their children to learn fine motor skills through play and self-care activities. When choosing toys and arranging activities, parents should understand developmental stages of their children.

- **Infants of 0 to 2 years old:** They usually explore and learn through sensori-motor activities. Let them play with toys or engage in activities which provide rich sensory stimulation and encourage object manipulation, such as applying body cream, banging small musical instruments, pressing on sound-making toys, stacking blocks etc. In self-care aspect, let them grab food with fingers; take off and put on their own shoes, socks and pants etc. These activities could greatly enhance their fine motor development. Besides, parents can bring their children to the playgrounds or playrooms (e.g. playrooms in the municipal building under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department). Through playing in various activities, like swinging, sliding and jumping on soft mats, it can enrich the children's multi-sensory experiences and enhance their adaptive responses which in turn build up their body concept and motor coordination skills.



- **Toddlers of 2 to 3 years old:** They are at the stage of active development of fine motor skills which prepare them for their pre-school stage. Parents should provide them with toys which enhance their eye-hand coordination, bilateral coordination and fingers dexterity (e.g. joining parts of construction toys, inserting shapes onto shape boards, turning knobs, etc.). Parents can also accompany their children to play with playdough with different moulding tools. In self-care aspect, let them feed themselves with spoon, fold towel, put on clothes, do buttons, etc. All these activities can promote their fine motor development.

My child has poor pencil grip. Teacher said that his pre-writing skills lagged behind his classmates. How can I help him?

Children start to hold pencil with their first three fingers (thumb, index and middle fingers) at around 3 years old. If your child has not acquired the skill, the following activities can be done:

- Encourage them to use their first three fingers to manipulate toys or utensils e.g. opening small screw cap of bottle, manipulating spoon or fork.
- Encourage them to manipulate pencil with their first three fingers, e.g. colour with short thick crayon, draw lines on magnet drawing board.
- Besides, stamping on grid paper can build up the concept of area and border which helps to establish their basic pre-writing skills.

Do not force child to use right hand to hold pencil if he tends to use left hand to draw. Parents should observe and let child develop hand dominance naturally.

**If you find your child having persistent fine motor difficulties, please consult occupational therapist for further advice.*



References and further reading:

1. Handprints – Home programs for Hand Skills.
Authors: Valerie Pieraccini, & Darla K. Vance; Publisher: Arizona: Imaginart.
2. Developing Scissor skills - A guide for Parents and Teachers.
Author: Sue Mahoney & Alison Markwell; Publisher: United Kingdom: Peta (UK) Ltd.



Child Assessment Service, Department of Health
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government

Copyright© July 2021

