

Fine Motor

These activities include children using the small muscles of the fingers and hands for reaching, grasping, releasing, and manipulating toys and household objects.



Ribbon play

This activity is designed for babies one to four months of age

What you need:

- A bright colored ribbon or scarf

What you do:

- Dangle a brightly colored ribbon or scarf near your baby's face.
- Let your baby reach out and touch the ribbon or scarf.
- As they grasp the ribbon or scarf, tug at it a little to help them hang on to it a little longer.



How it helps:

- Helps your baby learn how to use their eyes and hands at the same time.
- Helps your baby learn to reach to make contact with an object.
- Helps your baby learn how to grasp objects and how to hang onto them.
- Introduces color, texture and movement.

Fine motor

0-12 months

Rub-a-dub-dub

This activity is designed for babies 4-8 months of age

What you need:

- Plastic baby bath tub
- Plastic cups
- Plastic baby toys (rings, teethers, etc.)
- Baby bubble bath soap (optional)



What you do:

- Turn bath time into a fun time with your baby. Place baby in supported baby bathtub.
- Show your baby how to splash the water with your hands.
- Place the baby's plastic rings or toys in the bathtub.
- Pick them up one by one and drop them in the water to show baby how it splashes.
- If you choose to put bubble bath in the tub, only use a tiny amount. You can show your baby how to poke the bubbles with your finger and how to scoop them up in your hands.

How it helps:

- Helps your baby practice learning how to splash with their hands and with objects.
- Helps your baby to learn how to poke and scoop with their fingers and hands.

Crumbling paper

This activity is designed for babies 8-12 months of age

What you need:

- Old magazines or wrapping paper
- Waxed paper, bubble wrap or heavy paper bags (optional)

What you do:

- Place your baby on a rug or in their high chair.
- Give some old magazines or wrapping paper to your baby. (You can also try a variety of textures for different noises and feel. Try waxed paper, thick plastic wrapping, bubble wrap or heavy paper bags.)
- Let them try to rip the paper or crumble it.
- If they start to lose interest or try to eat the paper, put the magazines and wrapping paper away. You can try this activity again in a few weeks and see if your baby likes the activity then.



How it helps:

- Helps your baby use their fingers and hands to crumble the paper.
- Helps your baby learn how to grasp and hold onto an object.
- Helps your baby learn how to use their wrists to turn it in different ways while exploring the paper.

Fine motor

12-24 months

Making soup

This activity is designed for children 12-16 months of age

What you need:

- A plastic or wooden spoon
- Plastic bowl or cup
- A pot
- Small wooden or larger plastic blocks to make the “soup”

What you do:

- Show your child how to put the blocks in the pot.
- Use the spoon to mix up the soup.
- Stir the soup with the spoon while holding the pot still.
- The soup can be “fed” to a caregiver or a doll or stuffed animal.



How it helps:

- Provides an opportunity for your child to use both hands together, one to mix and one to hold.
- Improves their skills with using a spoon.
- Encourages your child to grasp and release, improving coordination
- Develops pretend play skills in your child.

Straw play

This activity is designed for children 16-20 months of age

What you need:

- Plastic straws cut into thirds
- Clean, empty cup, bottle, container

What you do:

- Place your child in their high chair or facing you on the floor.
- Show your child how to put the straws in the hole of the cup or juice bottle.
- You may need to take your child's hand to help guide them putting the straws into the holes until they understand how to do it on their own.
- As they get better, use a soda bottle or a parmesan cheese container with small holes.
- Please be sure to keep a close eye on your child that they do not put the straws in their mouth.



How it helps:

- Helps your child learn eye-hand coordination and hand control.
- Encourages dumping and pouring to get the straws out of the container.
- Develops grasp to pick up straws.

Fine motor

12-24 months

Stringing fun

This activity is designed for children 20-24 months of age

What you need:

- Large uncooked tube pasta noodles
- Shoelace, straw, pipe cleaner or yarn
- Give them a shoelace, straw, pipecleaner or yarn



What you do:

- Sit with your child at a table.
- Show your child how to hold the shoelace with one hand and put the noodles on the shoelace with the other hand, and then pull the noodles down to the knotted end of the shoelace.
- As your child gets older, you can try using smaller noodles too. You can make necklaces or bracelets with the noodles.

Note: If using a shoelace or yarn be sure to tie a large knot on one end and tape the other end so that the pasta fits easier.

How it helps:

- Helps your child work on learning how to use their hand and eyes at the same time to string the noodles.
- Helps your child learn how to put a small object in a large hole.

What's inside

This activity is designed for children 24-30 months of age

What you need:

- Assorted plastic containers with a large screw-on lid (peanut butter jars, plastic containers with pop off lids, such as Cool Whip containers)
- Small items such as: plastic balls, cereal, cotton balls



What you do:

- Show your child how to put the small items in the container.
- Show your child how you screw the lid on.
- Show your child how to tip the container upside down and how the objects don't come out.
- Show your child how to open the container and to dump the stuff out and put it back in.
- Listen to the noises that different objects make when you shake them.

How it helps:

- Encourages your child to learn how to use their hand to put objects into one container.
- Helps your child use the muscles in their hand to open and close the containers.

Extension to activity:

- Experiment with different sounds an object makes in different types of containers.

Fine motor

24-36 months

Photo album

This activity is designed for children 24-30 months of age

What you need:

- Scissors
- Different colors of construction paper
- A glue stick
- Crayons or markers
- Stickers (optional)
- Stapler
- Magazines or newspaper store ads



What you do:

- Staple a few pieces of construction paper together so that it looks like a book. Your child can choose the colors of paper that they want their photo album book to have.
- Cut pictures out of magazines that your child likes.
- Help your child use the glue stick to put the pictures on the pages of the book.
- Your child can decorate the pages with stickers, crayons or markers.

How it helps:

- Helps strengthen the muscles in your child's hand when gluing.
- Develops grasping skills by picking up stickers and using crayons.

Extension to activity:

- Ask your child about the pictures on each page. (Such as, "Which food do you like the best on this page?"). Write down what your child says about the pictures.

Tong fun

This activity is designed for children 30-36 months of age

What you need:

- Small kitchen tongs (children's chop sticks also work)
- Cotton balls
- Plastic bowl
- Muffin tins, ice cube trays or egg cartons (optional)



What you do:

- Show your child how to use the tongs to pick up a cotton ball and put it in the bowl.
- Help your child try to pick up the cotton balls with the tongs and put them in the bowl.

How it helps:

- Your child will strengthen their hand muscles when squeezing and releasing the tongs together, developing skills that are later used for cutting with scissors.
- Your child will learn how to control their hand while moving the cotton balls to the bowl.

Extension to activity:

- Try other heavier items such as plastic golf balls or ping pong balls once your child is able to do the cotton balls.
- Try placing cotton balls into muffin tins, ice cube trays or egg cartons to work on better hand control.

Fine motor

36-48 months

Little artist

This activity is designed for children 36-42 months of age

What you need:

- Colored outdoor chalk
- Small paintbrush
- Cup of water
- Squirt bottle filled with water

What you do:

- Show your child how to draw on the sidewalk or driveway with the chalk. Make shapes, swirls, pictures, or your child's name.
- Talk about the different colors of chalk that they are using.
- Use a squirt bottle or paintbrush with water to "erase" their chalk art work on the sidewalk or driveway when finished.
- If your child doesn't want to use the chalk, they can take a small paintbrush and dip it in the water to paint on the sidewalk or driveway.



How it helps:

- Your child will learn to explore materials and tools with their hands.
- Your child will strengthen their skills when using hand control to use the paint brush or spray the water out of the water bottle.

Extension to activity:

- You can start by using a paintbrush that preschoolers use with washable tempera paint. Then to make this activity a little more difficult, use a watercolor paint brush that is smaller.

List helper

This activity is designed for children 36-42 months of age

What you need:

- Small pad of paper
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Grocery store ads

What you do:

- Before going grocery shopping, ask your child to help you make a list of items that you need from the grocery store. Help them find some coupons or pictures of ads in the paper for these items.
- Cut out the pictures to bring them with you to the store for your child to hold.
- Let them use the pencil to write their own version of words for the items that you tell them that you need.
- Have your child bring the list to the store and ask your child to tell you the items that they wrote down that you need.

How it helps:

- Your child will strengthen their hand and finger muscles as they use a pencil.

Extension to activity:

- Let your child tear the pictures out of the magazine themselves. This will help them develop more fine-tuned muscle development.



Fine motor

36-48 months

Picture collage

This activity is designed for children 42-48 months of age

What you need:

- Glue stick
- Child safety scissors
- Paper
- Newspaper grocery ads or a magazine



What you do:

- Give your child the newspaper grocery ads or a magazine.
- Have your child cut out (doesn't have to be perfectly cut!) pictures of food that they like or ask them to cut out some coupons. You may want to outline where to cut with broad, dark, lines to help your child know where to cut.
- Show your child how to glue the pictures on a piece of paper that will become their collage.

How it helps:

- Your child will strengthen their hand muscles when opening and closing the scissors for cutting.
- Your child will increase their hand control when using the glue stick to glue the pictures on the paper.
- Your child will develop more control as they try to cut on a line.

Extension to activity:

- You can have your child cut out pictures of food and help your child group the pictures by color or by type of food (Example: vegetables together, all brown foods together, etc.). This helps your child learn how to group similar objects together.

Pudding writing

This activity is designed for children 48-54 months of age

What you need:

- Pudding
- Cookie sheet or their high chair tray

What you do:

- Put a few drops of pudding on the cookie sheet.
- Your child can use their finger to draw letters or shapes in the pudding. They will enjoy licking their fingers when done!
- You can also do this activity in the bathtub using shaving cream on the wall of the tub.
- As they get better, encourage them to use their other fingers and thumb to strengthen them.



How it helps:

- This will help your child practice drawing shapes and letters.
- This will encourage your child to use control with one finger when doing an activity.

Extension to activity:

- Show your child how to write their name in the pudding while saying each letter. Encourage your child to write their name in the pudding.

Fine motor

48-60 months

You've got mail

This activity is designed for children 48-54 months of age

What you need:

- Junk mail
- Paper
- Pencil



What you do:

- Let your child open the junk mail. They can use their fingers to open the mail (They may even try to tell you what the mail says).
- Help your child write letters to family members or a friend and show them how to put them in the mail.

How it helps:

- Helps your child practice drawing letters and using a pencil.
- Helps your child control their fine motor skills when putting the letters in mail slot.

Extension to activity:

- See if your child has a letter that they would like to mail to a friend or family member. Take them to the post office and show them how you put the stamp on and mail the letter.

That's a wrap

This activity is designed for children 54-60 months of age

What you need:

- A small sturdy box
- Wrapping paper (either store bought or some that your child has made with paper, markers and stickers)
- Scissors
- Tape

What you do:

- Give your child a small sturdy box.
- Cut a piece of wrapping paper for your child.
- Let them decorate the paper using stickers, markers or stamps.
- Let your child wrap the box with the wrapping paper. Your child can practice wrapping presents and can later wrap a real gift for a friend.



How it helps:

- Helps develop control of small muscles as they decorate the wrapping paper.
- Helps strengthen your child's muscles in their hands and fingers when they hold the paper down, and put the tape on it.
- Helps your child's creativity when decorating the wrapping paper.

Extension to activity:

- Encourage your child to cut the wrapping paper themselves. You can also give them a long piece of ribbon for them to practice tying.