

Activities to Improve Hand Skills

Some activities can be used to help fine motor development and promote and improve hand grasp skills for writing. Nothing is more motivating to a student than toys, games, and play. The activities chosen should be experienced as fun. The student should focus on the activities rather than "consciously working" to improve a skill.

MUSCLE TONE

Muscle tone and joint stability in the trunk, shoulders, wrists and hands are important for hand skill development.

1. Working in the vertical position helps strengthen the whole arm, which is an important foundation skill for writing.
 - a. Try drawing on a wall mounted chalkboard.
 - b. Use an easel for drawing.
 - c. Draw on the tub wall with soap foam or shaving cream.
 - d. Draw letters or numbers in the air with a flashlight. Some commercial toys can be used vertically. Examples include MAGNADOODLE, LITE BRIGHT, and BATTLESHIP.
2. Heavy work activities develop arm muscles. Try some of the following:
 - a. push-ups, pull-ups
 - b. Hand-stands / wheelbarrow
 - c. Crab walk
 - d. Swing on a trapeze (monkey bars, a climbing ladder e. Forearm weightbearing during TV watching and reading)

SMALL MUSCLES OF THE HAND

The hand muscles (intrinsic muscles) are vital for skilled movement, speed, and an efficient functional grasp. As the hand develops, the thumb side becomes more skilled in precision while the other side, the power side, becomes stronger. This is vital for developing a functional writing grasp and general hand dexterity. Try some of the following:

1. Snap fingers, spin a top.
2. Mold, roll or play with clay or silly putty.
3. Use a squirtgun or spray bottle.
4. Play games with cards, coins, chips or pegs to manipulate.
5. Work on stringing / lacing activities- lacing cards, lace projects
6. Use Tweezers. Good games include OPERATION, BED BUGS.
7. Use hole punch for art projects.
8. Rotate hand as in opening ajar lid or turning a
9. Practice dressing skills with buttons, zippers, and snaps
10. Using scissors and holding them correctly helps strengthen pencil grasp muscles.
11. Games such as Jacks Pick Up Sticks, and Marbles all help develop hand skills as well as eye-hand coordination

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