



## Spring into Action!

### Ways to help your child's fine-motor skills grow this spring

Contributing Therapists: Laureen Franklin, M.S., OTR/L Emily Tolstad, M.A., CCC-SLP

During spring, we see an abundance of growth around us. Why not take advantage of this time of year to promote growth of your child's fine motor skills too! Occupational therapist, Laureen Franklin, has suggested fun ways to practice fine-motor skills during the spring time. She has also provided valuable information about when to expect your child to master each fine motor milestone.

**Fine motor skills** involve the use of small muscles. These muscles must be developed and strengthened to ensure success in writing and many daily activities. The following activities are designed to assist in the development of fine motor skills. Please use the following ideas to help your kids with handwriting, fine motor skill development, and sensory processing. These activities can be done at home with items you have in your home and can be completed as fun activities for parents and children to do together.

### Springtime Fine Motor Practice

- Make, bake, and decorate flower sugar cookies.
- Use eye droppers to combine yellow and blue water to make green water and other colors.
- Go on an egg hunt (use large salad tongs to search for plastic colored eggs).
- Have kids try to peel a hardboiled egg as fast as they can without breaking the egg.
- Jump like a bunny around the house or outside (allows for sensory input to the muscles and joints)
- Use "egg-shaped" chalk. (This facilitates a more appropriate grasp than large sidewalk chalk).
- Complete gardening activities in the dirt.
- Conduct relay races using tweezers, eyedroppers or tongs to pick up objects or liquids.
- Water household plants with a spray bottle, or draw with chalk outside and use squirt bottles to clean up when finished. (Kids love this activity-squirt bottle play encourages hand strengthening and efficient pre-scissor skills).
- Plant small seeds in soil, shoveling soil into pots, picking vegetables or fruit, pulling weeds
- Go on a nature walk to collect small items like twigs, pebbles, or leaves. Collect them in a basket, then draw or paint them.
- Catch insects
- Write the names of flowers or vegetables on a Popsicle stick, then pushing them in the soil next to the corresponding plant.



**Website:**  
[www.kidstherapyassociates.com](http://www.kidstherapyassociates.com)

**Address:**  
11838 Bernardo Plaza Court, Suite 110,  
San Diego, CA 92128

**Telephone**  
858-673-KIDS (5437)

## Fine Motor Milestones

Most of us use fine motor skills throughout our days without thinking about them. For many of us, these skills developed sequentially and with little perceived effort so it may be difficult to remember how we developed these skills and in what order they developed. In fact we usually don't think much about them until daily tasks become difficult for us: i.e. we develop carpal tunnel and typing becomes painful, or we sprain or break a hand and have to try to clean the house or get dressed with a brace or cast on.

For children who have fine motor skill delay, trying to complete daily expectations (like getting dressed, writing their name, brushing teeth, etc.) can be very frustrating. Parents sometimes see their struggle but aren't sure if it is typical for the learning curve at that age or if there is need for outside help to develop the motor skills for success. The chart below offers ages where the skills are typically mastered. It is important to note that there is a range of development for children. Two typically developing children may develop skills several months apart without concern, and often girls display fine motor skill mastery slightly faster than boys. So if your child varies slightly from these norms, there is likely little cause for concern. If however, your child's development is behind by multiple months or you have questions about their development please contact us:

Age Mastered	Skill
0-3 months	Arm movement is mostly random but begins to bring hands to mouth and to watch hand movement
3-6 months	Movements become more symmetrical, reaches for objects with both hands using palms and fingers (but not always thumbs) to grasp them Brings hands to the middle (midline) of the body
6-9 months	Uses fingers to rake small food items to pick them up Transfers objects between hands
9-12 months	Isolates index fingers (points without other fingers) Uses thumb and index to pick up small food items (pincer grasp) Releases items intentionally into containers or hands
1 year -18 months	Turns hard pages in a book (multiple at a time is ok) Holds crayons with a fist grasp to scribble Begins to stack blocks and place a few large pieces into a puzzle board
18 months – 2 years	Begins to hold a small cup in one hand Imitates vertical lines and begins to snip with safety scissors with some help
2-3 years	Crosses the midline (middle of their body) with preferred hand Strings large beads and stacks 8-9 blocks Uses a fork and spoon to self-feed Dresses and undresses with assistance; Buttons and unbuttons large buttons
3-4 years	Draws recognizable shapes using a 3-4 finger grasp and cuts simple lines and curves Washes and Dries their hands Grasps feeding utensils with thumb and index finger instead of whole fist.
4-5 years	Draws a person and recognizable shapes Cuts simple shapes Pours water without spilling and spreads with a safety knife Able to dress self and zips front zippers Applies toothpaste and brushes teeth
5-6 years	Main motions for writing or coloring come from fingers and wrist instead of shoulder, elbow, or forearm Writes first name Hand dominance should be established Non-dominant hand stabilizes efficiently for cutting, drawing, and daily living tasks

Check out the sites to find kid-friendly activities for fine motor development.

They all have photos to help illustrate each activity so they are easy to recreate at home:

<http://handsonaswegrow.com/30-kids-activities-materials-for-promoting-fine-motor-skills/>

<http://www.prekinders.com/fine-motor-skills/>

<http://www.loveplayandlearn.com/2012/09/the-ultimate-list-of-fine-motor-skills-activities-for-children.html>



**Be sure to check out the attached recipe for DIY sidewalk chalk, from [www.eduation.com!](http://www.eduation.com!)**



Take the opportunity to boost your child's **speech and language skills** while making this recipe by:

- Describing how the ingredients look and feel during each step.
- Practicing prepositions and verbs.
- Recalling the steps you took after the project is completed.
- Taking turns stirring or adding.

# Homemade Sidewalk Chalk



Any excuse is a good excuse to get outside. And homemade chalk ranks right up there! Not only will making your own sidewalk chalk bring hours of hopscotch and drawing entertainment, but all that sidewalk fun builds the hand muscles, which helps young kids as they learn to write.

## Materials

Toilet paper or paper towel tubes  
Scissors  
Duct tape  
Wax paper  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup warm water  
Small bucket or disposable container  
1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups plaster of Paris  
2-3 tablespoons powdered tempura paint



## Directions

If you are using paper towel tubes, cut each tube in half. Cover one end of each paper tube with duct tape. Cut as many pieces of wax paper as you have tubes. Each piece should be as long as the tube and about 4 inches wide. Roll up each piece of wax paper and slip it into the tube.

Pour the water into the bucket. Sprinkle the plaster of Paris over the water and stir the mixture thoroughly with a spoon. Mix in the tempura paint. (If you would like pastel colors, you can mix brighter colors of tempura powder with some white.)

Place each tube tape side down, on a level surface. Pour the wet plaster mixture into the tubes. Lightly tap the sides of each tube to release air bubbles, then set the plaster-filled tube aside to harden for a few days. Once it is dry, peel off the tubes and wax paper. Your chalk is ready for action!

Adapted with permission from "The Arts and Crafts Busy Book" by Trish Kuffner (Meadowbrook Press), a collection of 365 arts and crafts activities for young children.

© Copyright 2006-2008 Education.com All Rights Reserved.

<http://www.education.com/>