



VRANCH HOUSE
IDEAS TO HELP DEVELOP BETTER
MANUAL DEXTERITY

DEVELOPING THUMB/FINGER OPPOSITION TO IMPROVE PENCIL GRASP

THREADING PASTA: Using a piece of string or shoelace and see how many pieces of penne pasta or macaroni you can thread in a minute. Pick up the pasta between the thumb and index or middle finger. Do you thread with the same hand each time or change hands midway through the activity?

POSTING PEAS THROUGH A NARROW NECKED BOTTLE: Hold the bottle firmly on the table with the 'non writing' hand and pick up peas one at a time to post through the top of the bottle. Pick up the peas between the thumb and index finger, then the thumb and middle finger. When you are good at this, try the thumb and ring finger and the thumb and little finger.

CLIPPING PEGS AROUND A BOX: Cut off the bottom of a cereal packet to make a boat by making one end pointed. See how many clothes pegs you can clip onto the box in one minute. Start by using your thumb and index finger, and gradually as you get stronger use each finger on each hand in turn. Practise taking off the pegs using thumb and maybe 2 or 3 fingers. How many pegs can you take off in one turn? You may need to weight the inside of the boat with something to stop it falling over when all the pegs are on one side.

POSTING COINS THROUGH A SLOT IN A BOX LID OR MONEY BOX: Post the coins individually through the slot making sure that you pick up the coins with your thumb and one finger.

PICKING UP PEBBLES: See how many pebbles you can pick up in your hand. Let them go, one at a time, into a container.

SCRUNCHING PAPER TO MAKE BALLS: Place your 'hand writing' hand flat and stretched out on a piece of paper (old computer paper is ideal) and put the other hand behind your back. Scrunch up the paper into a ball by turning it in your hand to make it round. Use both hands to get it into a tight ball. DO some target practice at the end!

FLICKING PAPER BALLS: Keeping your wrist flat on the table, line the balls up in front of you and flick with each finger in turn trying to shoot a target (eg. into an ice cream tub, washing up bowl or at a mark on a wall). It is important that you do not turn your wrist, as the flicking will be off target.

When you get good at this try using both hands at once, and then flick with each finger in quick succession.

FLICKING RICE: Wet your hand and pick up rice grains by putting your flat hand onto the tray or plate containing the rice. Turn your hand over with the palm uppermost. Using each finger and thumb in turn, try to flick off the rice until none remains on your palm. Take care not to block up the drains if you do this over the sink! Better to do it outside!

PUTTING PEGS IN PEGBOARDS: Pick up pegs one at a time and place in rows in a pegboard. Try making rows horizontally and then vertically. Which row is easiest? Time yourself – how many can you do in one minute?

SQUEEZING SPONGES: Fill an ice cream tub with water and see how quickly you can empty it by putting a sponge into the water, letting it fill with water and then squeezing it out using either hand or both hands.

BUILDING A TOWER: How many bricks can you pick up with your thumb and index or middle fingers to build a tower?

BUILDING WITH MULTILINK OR LEGO: Build a tower in one minute? Are you faster with your right hand or your left hand?

SHUFFLING CARDS: Can you shuffle cards for a game of Snap, Happy Families, Pairs, Rummy or your favourite card game. Can you hold all the cards in one hand?

TRACING: Trace around large shapes, or follow some dotted patterns

CUTTING ACTIVITIES: use scissors to strengthen up your hands

TWEEZERS & DRIED PEAS: Use a tweezers to pick up dried peas from one container and place in another.



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FINE MOTOR SKILLS

The following activities aim to improve the ability to use the hands and fingers to perform small but precise movements.

1. Playdough, plasticine, pastry. This can be cut, rolled into balls or sausages with the fingers, cut up with pastry cutters into different shapes including letter shapes.
2. Papier mache modelling.
3. Printing using potatoes or printing sticks, and thickened paint. (Paint can be thickened with cornflour). Draw a large outline on a page and ask the child to make some prints within the shape.
4. Finger painting, using thickened paint.
5. Buttons: make a button board, dress a doll or cuddly toy
6. Puppets can be made very simply out of a sock. These are much easier to manipulate than a bought hand-puppet.
7. Draw little faces on your fingertips and tell a story using the characters.
8. Paper folding games using coloured stiff card.
9. Gardening, nurturing seeds and seedlings from tiny seeds to a small plant.
10. Lacing & sewing cards – make your own using old greetings cards and a hole punch.
11. Cutting and sticking to make collages or a scrapbook, paper chains, junk modelling
12. Fuzzyfelts, jigsaws, games with counters e.g. Connect 4, Ludo
13. Constructional Toys: Duplo Lego, Geomags, Jenga
14. Peg board activities include copying peg board designs.
15. Making necklaces out of painted macaroni with a wool thread on a large blunt needle.
16. Make little woolly pom-poms by winding wool around cardboard rings.
17. Fishing game using a magnet on a string to pick up metal 'fishes'.
18. Writing fluency including colouring, dot to dots, tracing activities using chunky crayons