

LIZELLE KEYSER
Paediatric Occupational Therapist

Dear Parents,

The activities in this handout are focusing on strengthening the hands to refine movement, for cutting and pre-writing skills. These activities have been developed for you to do at home with your child, with resources which you most likely might have within your home. You can choose from the activities, which best suit your child. The week schedule has an overview of all the activities.

Fine motor skills:

The pincer grasp is the fine grip between the tips of the thumb and index finger, where the thumb and index finger together form a circular shape. Practice lots of activities that increase the accuracy or strengthen pinch. Any activity that involves pinching with fingers against resistance will increase strength with regular practice.



Posting buttons:

Materials needed: Scissors, buttons, yogurt or recycling containers

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Cut a small rectangular hole in the top of the container with the scissors.
- If you want to colour or number match, you need a few containers.
- For colour matching, you can draw a circle of the colour you want on a paper and glue it on the container.
- For number matching, you can draw the number on paper and glue it on the container. The child then needs to add that amount of buttons into the container.



Play:

- The child posts the buttons through the hole, one at a time.

Sorting buttons:

Materials needed: Zip-lock food storage bag, hair gel/hand wash gel, food colouring, Sellotape, buttons, permanent marker.

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Draw two large circles with two different colours, one at the top left corner and the other on the right bottom corner, with a marker on the food storage bag. Make sure the circles clearly indicate two different colours e.g. blue and red.
- Fill the bag with some hair gel or hand wash gel. It should be just enough to have a squishy feeling when laid down, but not too much.
- Place the pompoms or buttons you want to use in a bag with the gel.
- Softly squeeze all the air out of the bag and close it.
- Sellotape the opening, to prevent leakage.



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Play:

- The child needs to move the pompoms or buttons with their finger to the correct coloured circle.

Sorting pompoms:

Materials needed: Tongs, paper cups/containers, pompoms

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Paste the colours on the front of the cups with Sellotape.

Play:

- The child uses the tongs to pick up and place the pompoms in the matching coloured cup.



Twisty:

Materials needed: two pipe cleaners

Steps to play:

- Fold the pipe cleaner in half.
- Twist it round and round.
- Then untwist it.



Threading beads:

Materials needed: Pipe cleaners, foam/box/styrofoam, beads

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Press the pipe cleaners into styrofoam or foam to 'stand up'

Play:

- Thread the beads in the correct coloured pipe cleaner.



Two handed activities:

Screw on the lids:

Materials needed: empty bottles and containers with lids

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- You can either just place all the bottles and containers in a large bowl, with the lids beside them, or
- Cut them in half and glue them on cardboard.



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- If they find it difficult, you might consider giving one at a time.

Play:

- The child must screw on (and off) all the lids on the containers.

Draw the shape:

Materials needed: Paper, pencil, various kitchen utensils

Steps to play:

- Place the kitchen utensils and cookie cutters on a page.
- Hold it with one hand steady and draw with your other hand around it, to draw its shape.
- Colour in and decorate the drawings.

Peg Numbers:

Materials needed: Template shapes paper (or normal paper), scissors, markers and 5 clothing pegs

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Template: Print and cut out shapes template. They will be more durable if you stick it on firmer cardboard or laminate them.
- If you do not have a printer, then draw different shapes with faces. ON each shape draw a circle with numbers one to five.
- Write numbers one to five on clothing pegs.



Play:

- The child needs to place the same number of pegs as the number on the circle.

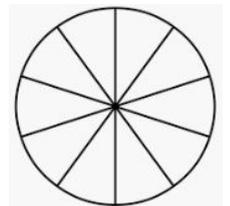
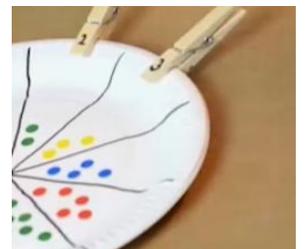
Peg numbers:

Materials needed: Paper plate, marker, stickers or coloured markers and 10 clothing pegs.

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Divide the paper plate into 10 sections, like a pizza.
- Place a different coloured dot and amount in each segment, starting from 1 to 10. You can use stickers or markers to draw the dots.
- Write 1 to 10 on the pegs.



Play:

- The child needs to place the pegs on the correct amount of dots.

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Spoon it out:

Materials needed: Bowl, dessert spoon and lids or pastas

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Place the milk lids or pastas into a bowl with water.

Play:

- Scoop out the lids from the water with the spoon.



Threading necklace:

Materials needed: Shoe lace or string, toilet roll tubes or paper tubes

Steps to play:

Preparation:

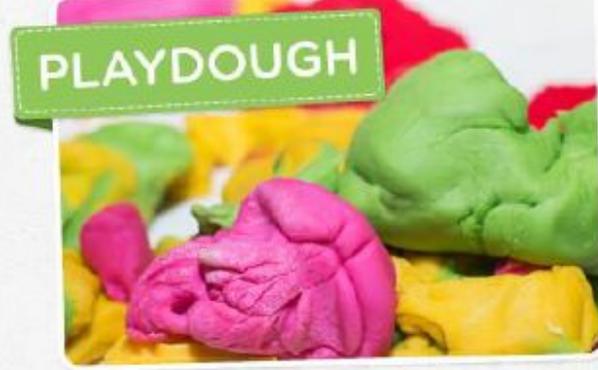
- Cut the toilet roll tubes in half.
- You can also make colourful tubes by using coloured cardboard cut into a rectangle and taping/glueing the short edges together.
- Tie a toilet roll tube at one end of the shoelace.

Play:

- The child thread the tubes onto the string to make a necklace or long snake.



Strengthening with play dough:



PLAYDOUGH

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 2 cups of plain flour
- 2 cups of warm water
- 1 cup of salt
- 2 tbsp of vegetable oil
- 1 tbsp of tartar (optional)
- Food colouring
- Mixing bowl
- Saucepan

HOW TO MAKE IT

Mix all the ingredients together and stir over a low heat. The dough will begin to thicken and resemble mashed potato. When the dough pulls away from the sides and clumps in the centre, remove the pan from the heat and allow the dough to cool. If the dough is still sticky, you simply need to cook it longer. Keep stirring and cooking until the dough is dry.

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Pinch the snake:

Materials needed: Play dough

Steps to play:

- The child rolls the play dough into a sausage. Make sure they keep their fingers straight. Rolling enables you to use your whole arms, bending and straightening the elbow.
- Once you have rolled out the dough, using your thumb and index finger, pinch the dough as hard as you can.
- Pinch all along the snake.
- Alternative: Roll the snake into a ball, to make a snail.



Press in holes:

Materials needed: Play dough

Steps to play:

- Using both hands, press down onto the play dough, keeping arms straight. It is a good idea to stand up or kneel at a table, this encourages further pressure.
- Once the dough has been rolled out you can use different fingers to make prints in the dough. Keep your fingers straight as if you were pointing.
- Alternative: Use Legos to press into the dough, to make play dough prints and form letters.



Roll large balls:

Materials needed: Play dough

Steps to play:

- Roll large balls between the palms of your hands.
- Stick cut up straws, pipe cleaners or lollipop sticks to make some monsters.



Roll small balls:

Materials needed: Play dough

Steps to play:



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- Use the tips of your fingers to roll small balls.
- Draw or print out a basic picture. Let them decorate it by rolling small balls of playdough and pressing it on the picture e.g. sprinkles on an ice cream or apples in a tree.

Find the toy:

Materials needed: Large piece of play dough, small stones. (Some children are safe with the use of beads (which works very well), others need larger objects such as small plastic insects or animals; or even pasta pieces.)



Steps to play:

Presentation:

- Hide the stones inside of the playdough.

Play:

- The child must find all the stones in the playdough.



Pencil control:

- Markers is easier to use than pencils, as they give immediate feedback, without much pressure used.
- If a student finds it difficult to hold a pencil in a stable grasp, it might be worth trailing a few pencil grips, to encourage and prompt a more stable pencil grasp. Pencil grips such as:
<https://www.tinknstink.co.uk/3-step-training-pencil-grips.html>
- Using a poster of how to hold your pencil as a reminder:
<https://www.sparklebox.co.uk/5941-5950/sb5947.html>

Developing good pencil control is an important prerequisite for drawing and writing.

Drawing on your back:

Materials needed: Paper, markers/crayons, tape, coffee table or dining room chair

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Tape a paper to the bottom of a low coffee table or dining room chair. The height needs to be as such, for the child to lay on their back under that chair and draw on the paper. This again encourages hand motions, rather than full arm motion when drawing.

Play:

- The child can draw a picture in this position. Draw a scribble monster. Do this by scribbling a large shaped body. Then add the details e.g. hair, face and legs.



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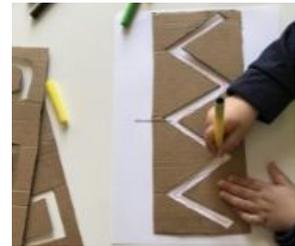
Follow the road:

Materials needed: Paper, markers/crayons, cardboard and scissors

Steps to play:

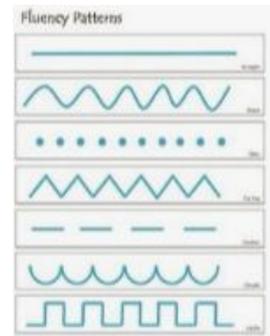
Preparation:

- Cut the cardboard into large rectangles to make stencils.
- Draw a large pattern on the cardboard. One pattern per cardboard.
- Cut out the pattern with scissors or box cutters. The cutting should be large enough to leave about a 1cm gap, for the child to draw the pattern inside.
- Remember to not cut the end of the cardboard, for the pattern to become undone.



Play:

- The child must place the stencil on the paper and draw the pattern, by following the gap of the stencil.
- Remember to start on the left hand side and draw towards the right.
- Remind the child to hold onto the stencil, to keep in still. If this is too difficult, fasten the stencil to the paper with some Blu tack or tape.



Stickers on a pattern:

Materials needed: Stickers (round works well), marker and paper

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Draw a shape with the marker on paper.
- Place it on a wall with tape or Blu tack. It needs to be placed on the shoulder height of the child.



Play:

- The child needs to start at the one end of the shape and place the stickers next to each other along.

Draw circles:

Materials needed: Sheet of paper or large newspaper markers/crayons, different round containers of various sizes.

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Place the newspaper or large on the table. You might need to fasten it on the table with tape.
- Place different round containers on or near the paper e.g. bowls, cans, tubes



Play:

- Draw around the containers with the markers/crayons, to draw various circles.

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- How many different shaped circles can you make?

Draw a path:

Materials needed: Crayons/markers, paper and wooden blocks/lollipop sticks/large stickers

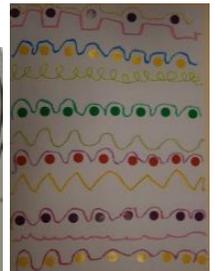
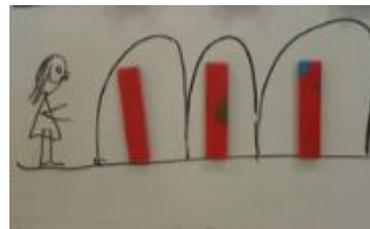
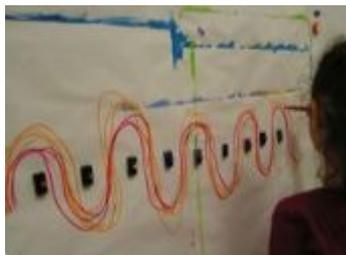
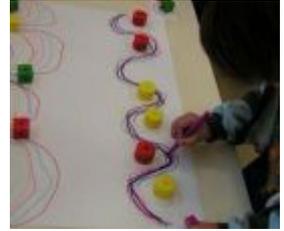
Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Place the blocks in a row, at least 5 cm apart.
- Draw the pattern you want to practice, between the blocks, as in the picture.

Play:

- The child draw the pattern between the blocks/stickers
- Some ideas:

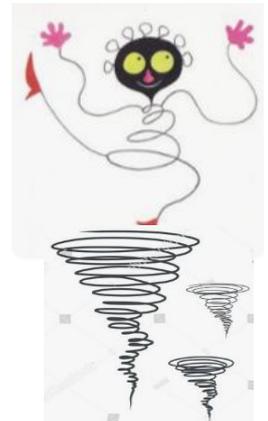
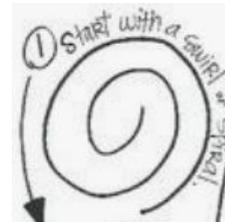


Draw a tornado:

Materials needed: Paper, crayons/markers

Steps to play:

- Practice to draw curly patterns, as if you draw a tornado or the shell of a snail.
- The parent can add in the detail to change the picture into a dance or snail, if your child is unable to.



Colour in the circles:

Materials needed: Pencils/markers/crayons, paper

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Draw small circles on a page. The size of the circles will depend on the ability of your child.

Play:

- Provide the child with small crayons or pencils to colour in the circles. Try to stay in the lines.
- Alternative:
 - Draw larger circles, if your child finds the small circles harder to colour in.
 - Use a few colours. Colour in the circles with the same colours.



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Fruit paths:

Materials needed: Paper, stickers and markers

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Place the coloured stickers across the page as in the picture. If you do not have stickers, you can also draw a simple picture or shape instead.

Play:

- Demonstrate what you expect to your child with a pencil.
- The child needs to draw the pattern from one end to the other, without touching the stickers.



Draw the square:

Materials needed: Paper, pencils/markers

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Draw a square.

Play:

- The child needs to draw a square around your square 5 times, bigger and bigger.



Match the peg:

Materials needed: Pegs, paper, crayons/pencil/marker

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Place pegs around the edge of a page.
- If you want to add a matching element to the game, you can draw either with colours, numbers or letters on the pegs.
- Make sure that you place the matching pegs on opposite sides of the page.

Play:

- The child draws from one peg to the matching peg on the other side.



Pre-writing skills:

We teach letter formation in letter groups. The letters in a letter group are formed the same way. We will start by focusing on the 'Curly Caterpillar' letter group - c a d g q o e s f. Thus, we will start to focus on doing curly and circular patterns, before looking at the letters.

I've attached the **lowercase formation chart** and **number stories** handouts, which tells you how each letter and number should be formed. You will notice that by starting with the 'magic' c letter, you can write numerous other letters such as o, a, d, g by starting with c.

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Writing in paint:

Materials needed: Paint, food storage bag, sellotape, earbud

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Put some paint (or shaving foam/hand wash gel) in a food storage zip-lock bag.
- Make sure all the air is out of the bag, before you zip it up.
- Secure the opening with Sellotape.
- Secure the bag to the table with a piece of Sellotape at the top and bottom.

Play:

- The child writes with the cotton earbud or their finger on the bag.
- First start off with drawing circles, horizon lines from the left to right and vertical lines from the top to bottom. You can demonstrate on a paper next to them.
- Make sure it is fun, by drawing pictures e.g. drawing circles to draw a caterpillar and lines to cage a lion.
- Then practice the 'magic' c letter. Make sure you demonstrate it in the correct formation. See the handout for directions. Can they draw other letters by using the 'magic' c such as the letters a, d, g, q, o.



Drawing with sand:

Materials needed: Tray, play sand (or flour or salt)

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Place the sand spread out in a tray. You can also use any other substance e.g. flour or salt.

Play:

- The child draws with their index finger in the sand.
- Do the same activity as above (writing in paint).



Writing in playdough:

Materials needed: Playdough, stick, rolling pin or tin/glass

Steps to play:

Play:

- Help your child to roll the playdough out flat by using a rolling pin or even a long glass or tin (if safe to use).
- Draw the circles, lines and letters you've practiced above on the play dough with a stick.
- It might be necessary for you to demonstrate how to write it on paper or on another piece of playdough. The child can copy you.
- It will benefit the child to verbally tell them how to form the letter or shape e.g. start at the top, go around and stop.



Writing with playdough:

Materials needed: Playdough, paper and marker

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Write the letters you want to practice in large bubble writing e.g. c, a, d, g, q, o

Play:

- The child rolls snakes from the playdough.
- The child places the snakes on the letter you've written e.g. if you wrote a 'c', they start putting the snake from the top to the bottom of the 'c', to fill the bubble.



Write with sweets:

Materials needed: Sweets, paper and marker (you can also use pasta, beans or beads instead of sweets)

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Write the letters you want to practice in large bubble writing e.g. c, a, d, g, q, o

Play:

- Start at the top and follow the bubble to place the sweets all along the bubble to write the letter. Tell them the directions of writing while they do it e.g. start at top, go down and around, then stop.



Scissor skills:

Snipping is one of the first steps in learning to cut with a scissor. When holding a scissor, make sure your child holds it in a thumbs up position. It sometimes helps to draw a small smiley face on their thumb to remind them that the thumb needs to be at the top.



You might want to consider Mini Easy-Grip scissors, if your child finds standard scissors difficult to use.

<https://www.tinknstink.co.uk/mini-easi-grip-scissor.html>



Cut the short pattern:

Materials needed: Scissor and worksheets

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- With printer - Print out **cutting shapes printable** handout. Ideally on coloured cardboard, but white paper would also work fine.
- Without printer - Cut strips of paper about 5 cm wide. Draw the patterns on the strips of paper as in the picture.



Play:

- Cut the strips of paper on the lines.

Cut across stickers:

Materials needed: Paper, marker, stickers and scissors

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Draw a thick black line across the page.
- Place stickers along the line.
- If available, firmer cardboard (e.g. cereal box) is easier to cut than paper.



Play:

- Cut across the page, but stay on the line. Try to snip through the stickers.

Cut across railway:

Materials needed: Paper, marker and scissors

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Draw a railway track across the page.
- If available, firmer cardboard (even from a thin box) is easier to cut than paper.



Play:

- Drive your train across the track, by cutting across the track. Make sure you stay in the middle of the track.

Cut across a line:

Materials needed: Highlighter, black marker, stickers, paper and scissor

Steps to play:

Preparation:

- Place a sticker on either side of the page (or cardboard)
- Draw a thick straight line with the highlighter across the page.
- Draw a thinner black line in the middle of the highlighter line, across the page.

Play:

- Cut from the one sticker to the other sticker across the page, by cutting on the black line. Make sure you stay within the highlighted area.



Cut across a motor track:

Materials needed: Highlighter, black marker, stickers, paper and scissors



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Steps to play:

- The same activity as above, but draw dotted lines, instead of a straight black line.
- Tell your child a story about the stickers, to make it more motivating e.g. the bunny needs to eat the carrot or the train needs to go to the station.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further advice or have questions.

Kind regards,

Lizelle Keyser

Independent Occupational Therapist