

## **Small Muscle Skills** (Fine Motor)



**Children are at their best when they feel connected to someone who cares about them.**





# Paper Play

## How it helps

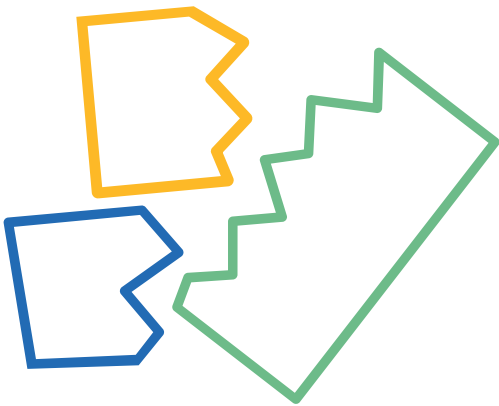
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Hand-eye coordination; building stronger wrists, hands, and fingers; social skills such as cooperation and cleaning up

## What you need

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Any scrap paper at home (newspapers, store flyers, or construction, tissue, or wrapping paper); a large bowl or basket to put the paper in when finished





# Paper Play

## What to do

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- Place paper on the table or floor in front of you.
- Together with your child, rip, tear, or scrunch the paper. Start by ripping the paper into large pieces then tear those pieces into smaller bits.
- Use the scrap paper bits to create interesting designs or an art project.
- Encourage your child to clean up when finished.

## Tips

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- Don't worry if your child has difficulty and cannot rip the paper right away. It takes practice.
- Practice with different thicknesses of paper.



# Clothes Pin Pickup

## How it helps

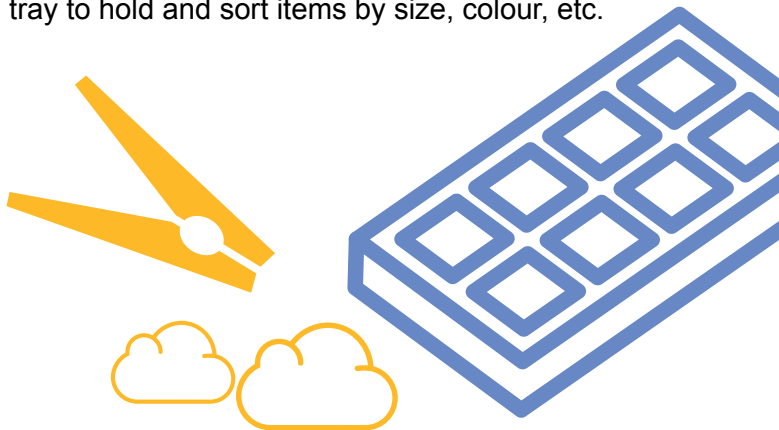
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Hand-eye coordination; focus; early math skills such as counting and adding and subtracting

## What you need

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1 or 2 clothes pins; cotton balls and/or various sizes of pompoms; small bowls, a muffin tin, and/or ice cube tray to hold and sort items by size, colour, etc.





# Clothes Pin Pickup

## What to do

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- Ask your child to pick up a cotton ball using a clothes pin, then place it in your hand, a bowl, or ice cube tray.
- Take turns playing.

## Make it harder

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- Use pompoms, ribbon, or yarn. Have your child pick up and separate them into different containers based on size or colour. Ask him to say the colour or size.
- Count the items together. Use the clothes pins to add or take away items and recount.
- Try holding and using the clothes pin in the other hand!

## Tips

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- If a clothes pin is too difficult to use at first, let your child use his fingers.
- If your child is bored or gets frustrated, let him play freely with the materials.



# Lace It Up!

## How it helps

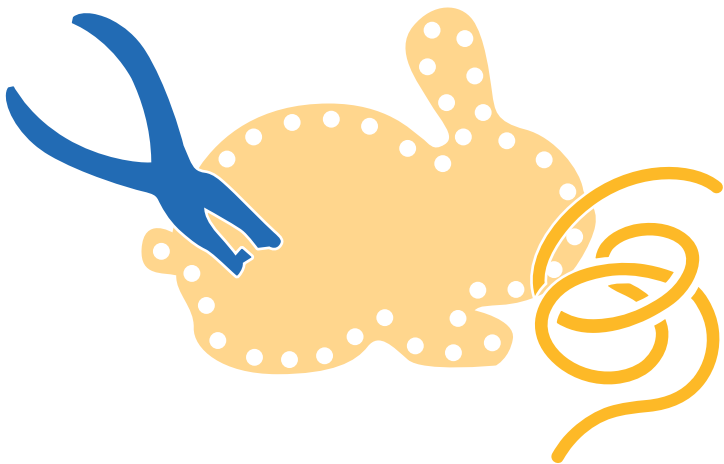
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Hand-eye coordination and focus

## What you need

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Shoelace and/or ribbon; hole punch; thick paper (old playing cards, construction paper, cereal box), foam sheets, and/or a pre-made lacing template





# Lace It Up!

## What to do

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- Have your child thread a shoelace or ribbon through holes punched into a card as if sewing.
- Make a few lacing templates using different shapes, colours, and lacing materials. Use letters, animals, or cars and trucks as shapes. Find ideas and templates online.

## Tips

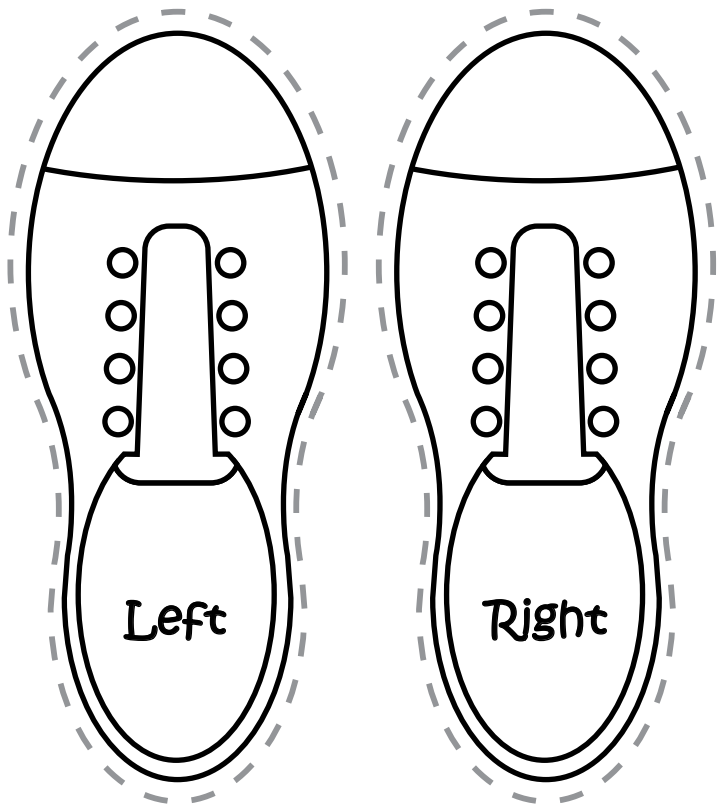
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- Show your child how to use the hole punch and ask her to help punch the holes.





# Lace It Up!



**Talk, read and  
make memories together.**





# Thread It Through!

## How it helps

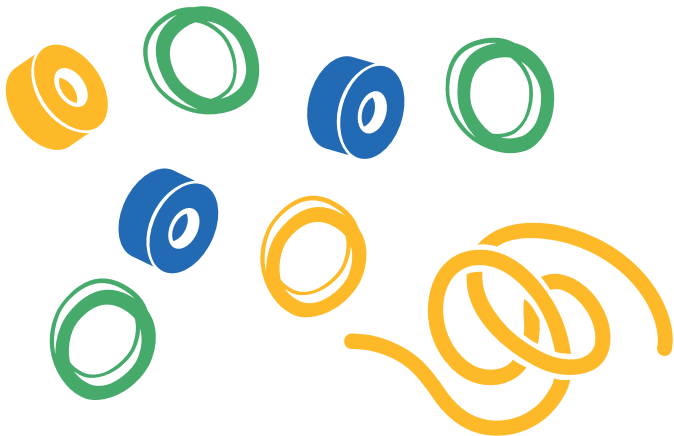
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Hand-eye coordination; early math skills such as counting

## What you need

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Yarn; string; plastic string; pipe cleaners; cut straws; Cheerios; Fruit Loops; penne pasta; extra large beads





# Thread It Through!

## What to do

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- Tie a knot in or tape the end of the yarn or string so items stay on.
- Use yarn, string, or pipe cleaners as thread and ask your child to put them through the holes in the cereal, pasta, straws, or big beads. Make patterns and count the items.

## Tips

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- Use beads with letters or numbers to help with reading and math skills.
- Start with larger items to thread, such as the pipe cleaners or stiff plastic thread.
- Help out by holding the yarn or string.
- Make a bracelet or necklace by tying off the pipe cleaner. Make a chain of Cheerios to hang outside for the birds.

# Make It With Marshmallows!



## How it helps

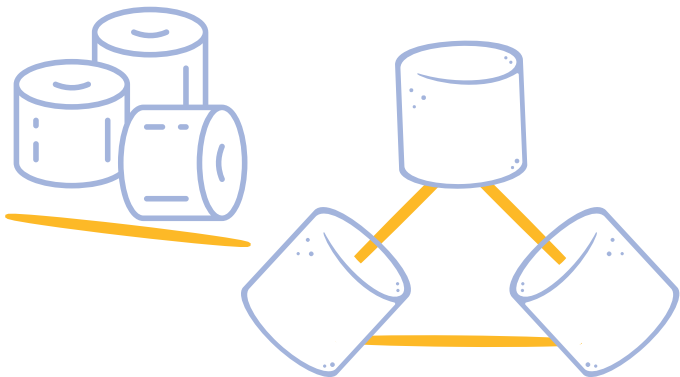
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Hand-eye coordination; early math skills such as counting and adding and subtracting; understanding shapes and how they fit together

## What you need

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Toothpicks or uncooked spaghetti (full or broken in half); different sizes of marshmallows; a bowl





# Make It With Marshmallows!

## What to do

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- Stick the toothpicks and/or pasta into the marshmallows and join them together to make shapes such as triangles, squares, and rectangles.
- Build a tower by putting various shapes together.

## Tips

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- Ask your child to try using all small marshmallows, all big marshmallows, or a mix of marshmallows and ask her if there is a difference.
- Make a few different three-dimensional shapes in advance as examples for your child. Talk about them.
- If your child doesn't want to make triangles or a tower, let her create something herself.



# Playdough Playtime

## How it helps

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Hand-eye coordination; imagination and creativity

## What you need

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Playdough and/or clay; cookie cutter shapes; child-safe scissors





# Playdough Playtime

## What to do

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- Roll, pinch, flatten, and cut the dough. Use cookie cutters or store-bought Playdough tools. Roll long snakes and snip with scissors.

## Tips

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- You can make homemade playdough using a simple recipe found online. Invite your child to help.
- Show your child different ways to use other objects: drive small cars on a flat road of Playdough and study the marks the wheels leave; make a tree trunk and use real leaves to make a tree.





# Playdough Letters

## How it helps

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Hand-eye coordination; recognizing letters; early printing skills

## What you need

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Playdough; playdough mat or placemat





# Playdough Letters

## What to do

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- Show your child a letter, then make that letter with the playdough. Ask your child to make that letter. Repeat using different letters, numbers, and shapes.

## Tip

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- Ask your child to choose the letter or to make a letter and ask you to guess what it is.



# Make a Playdough Scene

## How it helps

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Hand-eye coordination; imagination and creativity

## What you need

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Playdough; plastic knives; Playdough mat or placemat; shells; other small props





# Make a Playdough Scene

## What to do

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- Create a scene using Playdough and shells to create a beach or add construction signs and trucks to make a construction site.
- Use the plastic knives to shape the Playdough.

## Tip

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- Let your child set the scene based on his interests and experiences.



# Make a Family Memory Book

## How it helps

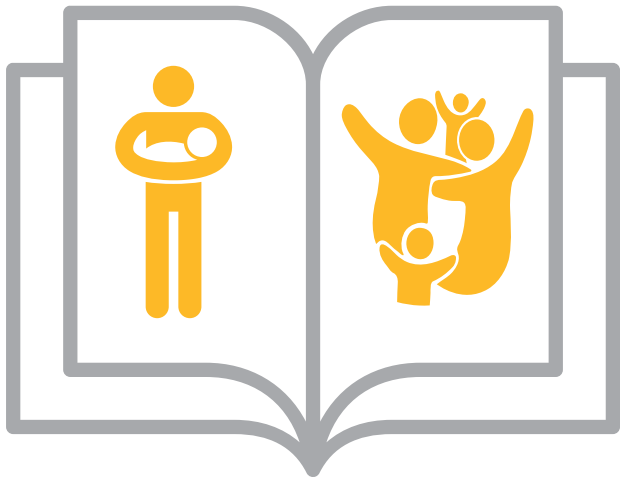
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Reading, storytelling, and memory skills; helping your child feel happy to belong to her family and community

## What you need

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Child-safe scissors; printed photos; regular paper or construction paper; pen/pencil; glue





# Make a Family Memory Book

## What to do

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- With your child, pick out photos of different family members, special events, or vacations. If the photos need trimming, ask your child to help cut them out.
- Use glue to stick the photo on paper. Together write out who is in the photo, what's happening, and why this is a special photo.

## Tip

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- Share stories of what or who is in the pictures, what the people were doing, and other things you remember. Was this a special family occasion? This is an opportunity to celebrate your child and family and share traditions and values. Children also love hearing about what you were like as a child.



# Picture Grocery List

## How it helps

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Hand-eye coordination; cutting skills; recognition skills and memory; building independence and self-esteem

## What you need

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Grocery store advertisements/flyers; child-safe scissors; glue; paper and/or paper plates





# Picture Grocery List

## What to do

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- Cut out pictures of food and other items you want to buy at the store. Glue the pictures to paper to create a shopping list.
- Have your child cross off the items as you find them in the store. Name and count items.

## Tips

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- Have your child make a plan for dinner by cutting out pictures of food and gluing them to a paper plate.
- Get a second copy of a flyer from a neighbor or the store and make matching cards to play a simple memory game. (Place the cards out face down and turn them over one by one to try to make matches.)





# The Touching Tray

## How it helps

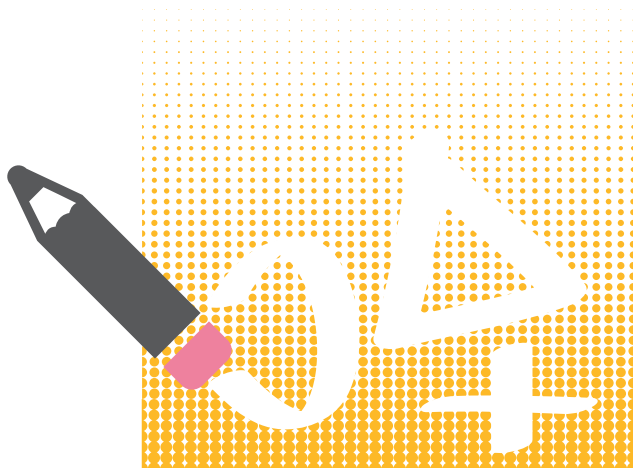
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Hand-eye coordination; recognizing letters; early printing skills

## What you need

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A tray or cookie sheet; salt and/or sand; food colouring; Q-tips; popsicle sticks; paint brush; pencil





# The Touching Tray

## What to do

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- Cover the tray or cookie sheet with a thin layer of salt or sand. Have your child draw shapes and letters in the salt or sand with his finger, stick, eraser end of a pencil, etc.
- Start over by shaking the tray lightly and making a fresh blank canvas.

## Tips

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- Use the food colouring to change the colour of the salt or sand.
- Make a maze and find your way out.
- Make designs with lines then move on to shapes and letters. Letters like H and L are easier than B or R. It may help if you tell your child that a b, for example, is a line and a half-circle.



# Scissors Practice

## How it helps

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Hand-eye coordination; early printing skills; stronger grip

## What you need

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Child-safe scissors; various types of paper; pencil





# Scissors Practice

## What to do

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- Get your child to cut out shapes from different types of paper – newsprint, construction paper, cardboard, etc. Draw straight lines, zig zag lines, and curvy lines on the paper and ask your child to cut along the line.

## Tips

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- Your child might get frustrated opening and closing the scissors. Make sure you have good quality, child-sized scissors. And left-handed scissors for left-handed children.
- Start scissors practice by cutting Playdough, then try paper with no set lines. Encourage your child to cut thin strips around the edges.
- Put your hand gently over hers to help her open the scissors as she cuts or hold the paper for her.



# Squishy Bag Letters

## How it helps

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Hand-eye coordination; recognizing letters; early printing skills

## What you need

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Clear hair styling gel; zippered plastic sandwich bag; flash cards with a letter written on each one





# Squishy Bag Letters

## What to do

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- Fill the plastic sandwich bag with clear hair gel.
- Place the bag on top of one flash card. Have your child say the letter and trace the letter with his finger.

## Tips

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- Talk about what the gel bag feels like – squishy, soft, gooey.
- Ask your child to trace other shapes or make his own creation.



# Pipe Cleaner Letters

## How it helps

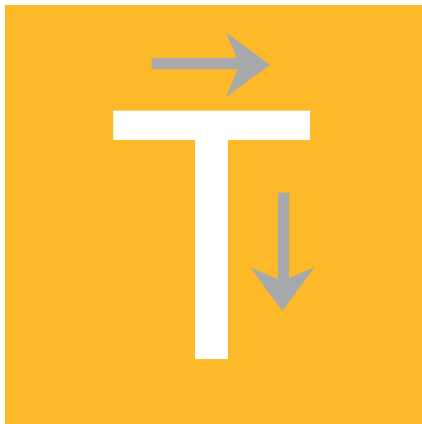
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Hand-eye coordination; recognizing letters; early printing skills

## What you need

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Pipe cleaners; flash cards with a letter written on each one (letters with direction arrows to show your child how to trace them)





# Pipe Cleaner Letters

## What to do

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- Place the letter on a table. Use pipe cleaners to make the shape of the letter, following the arrows.

## Tips

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- Start with letters that are easy to make, such as capital I or O; later move to letters with more difficult shapes, such as S and G.

