

fine motor skills



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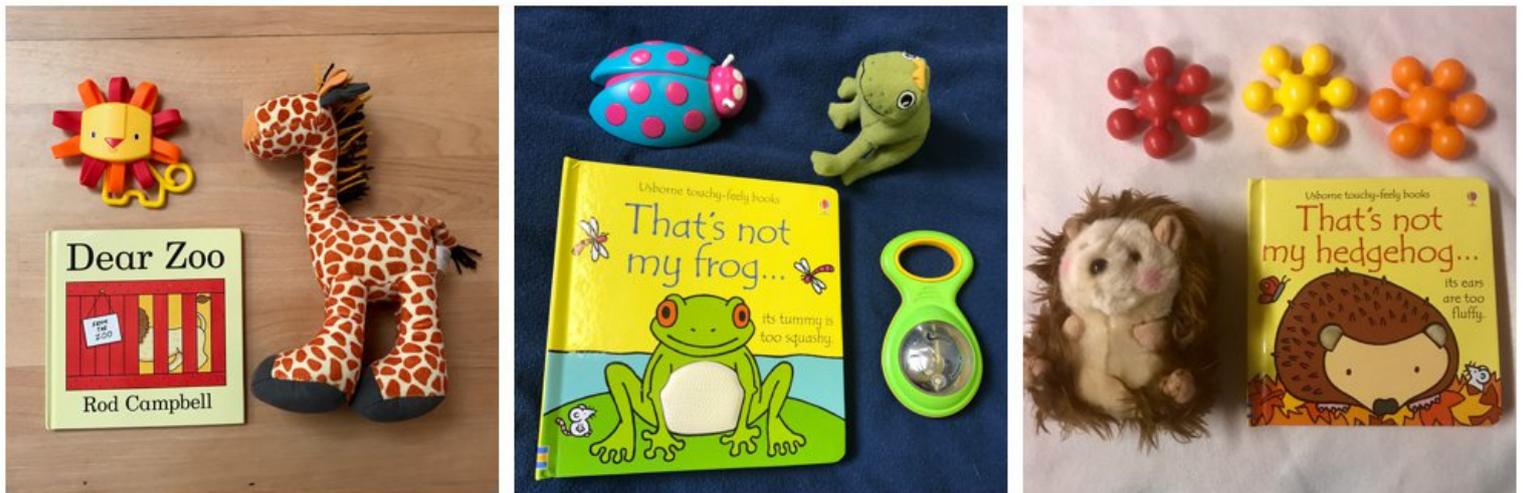
Welcome to our first printable in our fine motor skills and activity printable series. In this printable we talk about the motor skills and in our next printables we have lots of activities for you that use these skills!

A motor skill is an activity that your baby does that involves their muscles, we have gross motor skills that refer to the big muscles in the body and fine motor skills that refer to the small muscles in the body. Fine motor skills are essential for performing everyday skills. They involve the small muscles in the body and include wrists, hands, fingers and toes and they include grasping and manipulating any object. We develop all of our motor skills through lots of practice so do come back and repeat activities with your little one often!

Safety first - These activities are suggestions of how to engage your child in play. They need to be carried out with adult supervision and you taking full responsibility for your baby during play. Please ensure that your little one is supervised with the toy at all times. Keep your little one in arms reach and eye sight when they are playing.

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the starting point



Every little one is unique and amazing and their starting point for how they are developing their motor skills will be different. We are going to give you lots of ideas over the coming series of activities that you can do with your little one to help their motor skills and it would be great if you can start with tasks that your little one manages well before moving skills up. They can never practice a skill too much, repetition is amazing and we really do want our little ones to have well developed skills before we increase the challenge of any activities we give them.

Giving them time, space and opportunity to practice is amazing when it comes to any skills our little ones are developing.

Lots of these activities are perfect to do when your little one is calm and alert, when they are very active they often want to work on their gross motor skills and find smaller movements more tricky. Playing when they are in their high chair can work well too.

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- **play with one larger toy** - e.g. a ball or larger soft toy so we are working on our co-ordination and our motor skills, using both hands helps use both sides of our body and brain together

- **play with smaller hand held toy** - start offering your little one a smaller toy and initially both hands will be involved in manipulating the toy, as our hands get stronger and our movements get more refined we'll be able to move onto holding it in one hand, encourage your little one to move the toy between their hands.

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- **introduce a second toy** - it could be two of the the same toy initially and build up to holding two different shaped toys that are different textures too!
- **clapping things together** - taking too toys and encourage your little one to clap them together. This is an amazing activity for bilateral co-ordination and bringing things to the midline in the body. We need to learn that we are able to bring things to the middle before we are ever able to cross things over
- **a sensory basket** - pop together a sensory basket with 4-5 smaller toys, try to choose toys that are different shapes e.g. ball, block, links, star links, etc so your little one can practice moving between different things quickly. This is a great activity to practice often, the more you do it the quicker your little one's motor skills will be able to respond to moving between objects
- **holding smaller items between finger and thumb** - this is a tricky one as it involves developing that pincer grip. Choose smaller items in play (obviously keeping a very close eye on your little one!) or small chopped food items when weaning to help them practice their hand to mouth co-ordination too!

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- **building towers and stacking objects** - this is an amazing thing to do often with your little one and is often one of the skills assessed in developmental checks. Stacking involves hand-eye co-ordination, bilateral co-ordination, tracking, depth perception, spatial awareness as well as gross motor skills and fine motor skills so you can see why it is often used in assessments. All of these skills come from practice, smaller objects are harder to stack so starting with bigger objects, tupperware, stacking cups or boxes can work well before moving onto smaller blocks

- **pointing, poking and squeezing** - pointing at something or poking play dough helps with individual finger strength and finger isolation, we need to be able to isolate and control individual fingers to help with tasks. Encourage your little one to point at things in books, poke playdough and squeeze it to strengthen their fingers and hands. Use your links or star links to make impressions in dough which is a great way to build strength and learn about force.

- **turning pages in a book** - this is an amazing task for our little ones co-ordination as we start to move items across the midline of our body.

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- **turning handles & screwing lids off containers** - turning handles uses finger strength as well as strength and co-ordination in our wrists and hands as well as lots of motor planning and visual skills. It can be really tricky to learn as it brings together lots of sensory and motor skills together. Using smaller containers with loose lids is a great place to start and popping a little bath toy and shaker in the container is often enough motivation to help them concentrate on practicing their skills!

- **mark making and using crayons** - we have a whole printable coming soon on mark making, it is a great way to teach force, cause and effect co-ordination, visual skills, depth perception and use those amazing fine motor skills and gross motor skills. Your little one will initially start using their palm and fingers to control the crayon before moving onto using their fingers as their strength increases and they are able to co-ordinate their fingers more. If you are using crayons make sure they are age appropriate, chunky and non-toxic just in case they head towards mouths!

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- **threading items** - threading bigger items to begin with before moving down to smaller items, we have threading activity suggestions for you coming soon

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- **washing hands** - very often with little ones we wipe them down or wash their hands for them but starting to help them wash their hands while they are in the bath is a great way to start and really help them co-ordinate both hands together. It is a great skill for preschool too!
- **using spoons and cutlery** - really helps with co-ordination and strength as we learn how to manipulate smaller objects. There is lots of baby safe cutlery and play dough tools that can help, cutting dough is an amazing activity to practice.
- **dressing skills and zipping and unzipping things** - a test of co-ordination for our older ones! Using a zip and initially just pulling the tab on the slider to move up and down the zip is a real test of skills as we need our visual skills and motor skills working together. It will be once they are older and have further developed their skills that they can start practicing putting the zip into the stopper. Buttons are great for motor skills practice too. There are lots of children's toys that incorporate buttons and zips to help our older children practice.
- **scissor skills** - we have an additional printable for you all about preschool scissor skills which will be available very soon!

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We use our fine motor skills in play, self care and all activities of daily living so it is important that we practice our skills so we are able to engage within our environment.

Please do be child led when playing, give lots of opportunities to repeat tasks because your child's ability to concentrate on a task can depend on lots of things. Start with easier skills and build up to trickier ones and please take your time, these skills aren't developing in isolation, your little one is learning so many other things at the same time.

Our activity printables that are part of this series will give you lots of activities that you can do with your little one at home!

Have lots of fun playing with your little one and do let us know if we can help in any way.