



Understanding Fine Motor Skills:

A Parent's Guide



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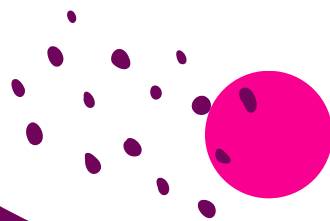
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What are Fine Motor Skills?

Fine motor skills refer to your child's skills to use fingers, hands and wrists. These skills are essential for various everyday tasks, such as writing, using scissors, drawing, buttoning a shirt, using utensils, and tying shoelaces.





Fine Motor Skills Can Be Categorized Into Several Types:

- **Grasping:** Holding objects with fingers and thumb.
- **Manipulating:** Using fingers to manipulate objects, like stacking blocks.
- **Cutting:** Using scissors to cut paper or craft materials.
- **Drawing and Writing:** Holding a writing instrument and creating shapes or letters.
- **Self-Care:** Buttoning clothes, tying shoelaces, and zipping up zippers.
- **Feeding:** Using utensils to eat and drinking from a cup.
- **Hand-Eye Coordination:** Activities that require precise hand movements, like threading beads.



What Are The Developmental Milestones Of Fine Motor Skills?

Developmental milestones for fine motor skills are specific skills or abilities that children typically acquire at certain ages. These milestones indicate the progression of a child's ability to use their hands and fingers for various tasks that require coordination and precision. You can use this checklist to track progress and identify areas where your child is excelling or may need additional support.

Keep in mind that these milestones can vary from child to child, and it's essential to consult with a healthcare professional if you have concerns about your child's development.

Here are some general developmental milestones for fine motor skills across different age groups:



Infant (0-12 months):



Grasping:

- By 3 months, can grasp objects placed in their hand.
- By 6 months, can hold objects with a palmar grasp (entire hand).

Reaching:

- By 3-4 months, starts to reach for objects with increasing accuracy.
- By 6-7 months, can reach for objects intentionally and may transfer objects between hands.

Hand-Eye Coordination:

- By 4-6 months, begins to bring hands together in the midline (clapping).
- By 9-12 months, can pick up small objects using thumb and forefinger (pincer grasp).

Toddler (1-2 years):



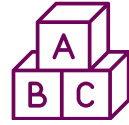
Stacking and Building:

- By 12-15 months, begins to stack two or three blocks.
- By 18-24 months, can build taller towers with more blocks.

Drawing and Scribbling:

- By 12-18 months, starts making marks with crayons or markers.
- By 24 months, can make simple lines or circles on paper.

Pre-schooler (3-5 years):



Precision and Control:

- By 3-4 years, can draw basic shapes and simple pictures with more control.
- By 4-5 years, can draw recognisable people and objects with more detail.

Cutting with Scissors:

- By 3-4 years, can use child-safe scissors to cut along straight lines.
- By 4-5 years, can cut along curved lines and make simple shapes.

School-Age Child



(6-12 years):

Handwriting:

- By 5-6 years, can form letters and numbers.
- By 7-8 years, can write legibly and with proper spacing between letters.

Fine Manipulation:

- Can handle smaller objects with precision, like beads or buttons.
- Can complete more complex art and craft projects.

Adolescence (13+ years):



Refinement:

- Fine motor skills continue to improve, allowing for more intricate tasks like playing musical instruments, typing, and detailed artwork.

If your child's fine motor skill development consistently affects their daily life, consulting a specialist who understands these skills can greatly help them thrive.



Who Diagnoses Fine Motor Delay?

Paediatricians and Occupational Therapists work with children who have fine motor delays.

How Is Fine Motor Delay Diagnosed?

The process of diagnosing a fine motor delay typically involves a combination of observations, standardised assessments, parent or caregiver input, and sometimes additional medical tests or evaluations.



If You Suspect Your Child Has Fine Motor Difficulties:

If you have concerns about your child's fine motor development, here are steps you can take:

- 1. Observe and document:** Begin by closely observing your child's fine motor activities and behaviours. Note any specific difficulties or delays you observe. Document these observations with dates and examples to provide a clear picture of your concerns.
- 2. Talk to Your GP or Paediatrician:** Start by discussing your concerns with your child's GP or Paediatrician. Share your observations and any documentation you have prepared. They can provide guidance and referrals to specialists if needed.
- 3. Consult an Occupational Therapist:** Occupational therapists are like coaches for your child's hands and fingers. They figure out what challenges of fine motor skills your child is facing and develop fun activities to improve them.
- 4. Educate Yourself:** Explore educational resources and activities that can be done at home to support your child's fine motor development.



What Is Next To Support A Child Diagnosed With Fine Motor Delay:

1. Consultation with Specialists: Work closely with healthcare professionals, including occupational therapists and paediatricians who can provide tailored guidance and support services.

2. Understanding fine motor delay: Educate yourself and your family about fine motor delay to better understand your child's challenges and strengths.

3. Individualised Treatment Plan: Collaborate with professionals to create a customised treatment plan based on your child's specific needs and challenges regarding fine motor skills.

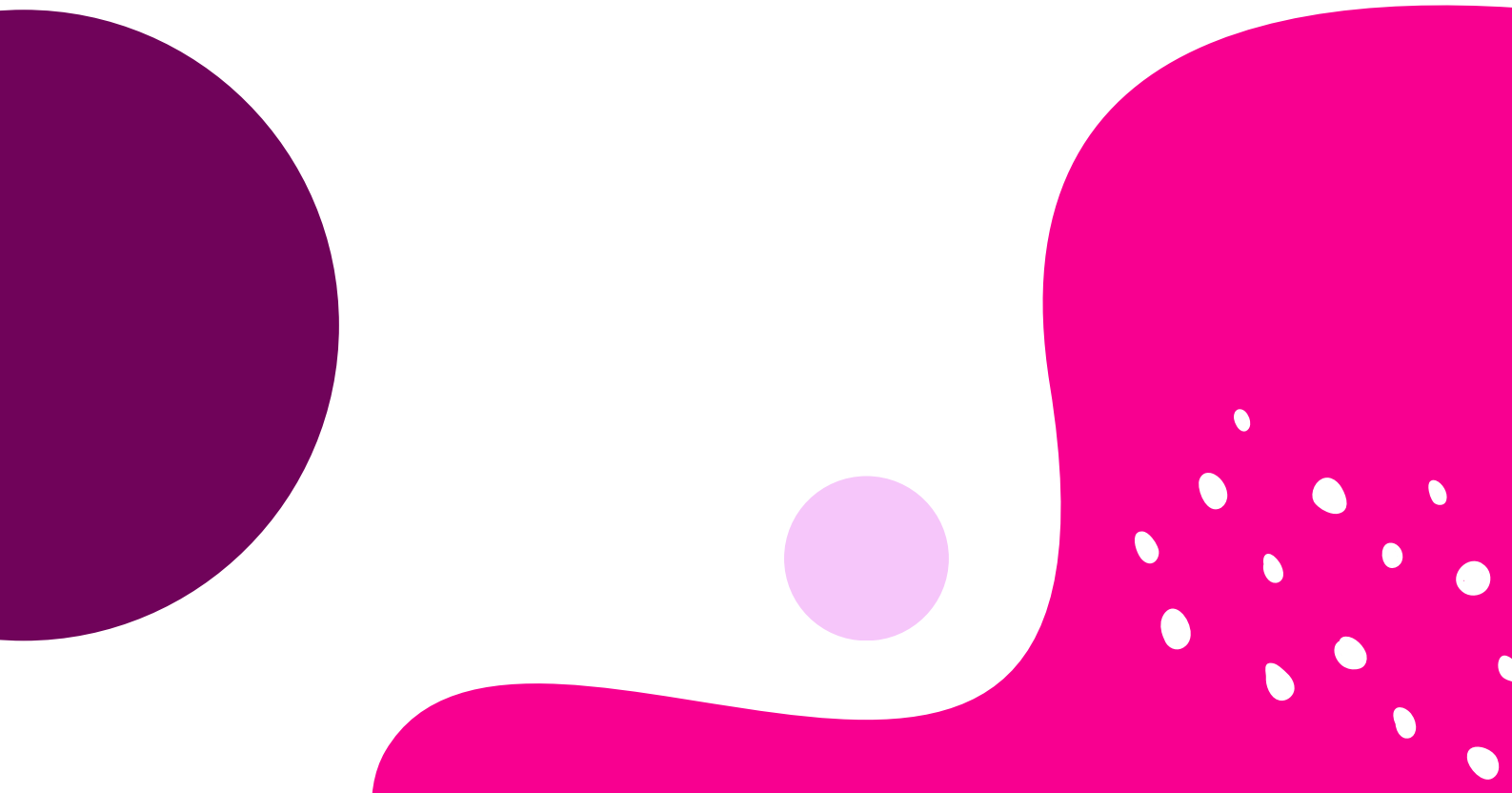
Please note that if you have had a consultation with one of Inspire Allied Health and Education Groups Occupational Therapists, we will automatically provide recommendations to support your child's difficulties with fine motor skills.



Ideas For Improving Your Child's Fine Motor Skill Development:

Fine motor skills encompass various components.

Supporting children with fine motor skills difficulties is not a one-size-fits-all approach. It often requires a trained professional to implement a range of strategies tailored to your child's needs. Following are some support strategies aiming at developing different areas of fine motor skills that we use and recommend at Inspire Allied Health and Education Group.



1. Hand-eye coordination: This is the ability to use visual information to guide hand movements accurately. It involves the eyes and hands working together smoothly. Activities like catching a ball, threading a needle, or colouring within the lines require good hand-eye coordination.

2. Grasping: Grasping refers to how a child holds objects with their hands. There are various types of grasps, including:

- **Palmar Grasp:** Using the entire palm to hold objects (seen in infants).
- **Pincer Grasp:** Using the thumb and forefinger to pick up small objects (develops around 9-12 months).
- **Tripod Grasp:** Holding a pencil or utensil with the thumb, index, and middle fingers (develops for writing around 3-4 years).



3. Finger Dexterity: Finger dexterity involves precisely moving individual fingers. It's crucial for tasks like buttoning buttons, tying shoelaces, and playing musical instruments. Activities that promote finger dexterity include playing with small building blocks, picking up small objects with tweezers, or completing puzzles.

4. Hand Strength: Adequate hand strength is essential for activities that require gripping, squeezing, or manipulating objects. Children develop hand strength through activities like squeezing playdough, using hand grips, or playing with toys that require force, such as pop-up toys.

5. Bilateral Coordination: This is the ability to use both hands together in a coordinated manner. It's important for tasks like cutting with scissors, tying shoelaces, and playing musical instruments. Activities that promote bilateral coordination include clapping, playing with tools, and building with both hands.



6. Handwriting: As children progress, they develop the fine motor skills necessary for handwriting. This includes letter formation, proper spacing between letters and words, and legibility. Encourage your child to practice writing and drawing to improve handwriting skills.

7. Fine Motor Planning: This involves planning and executing a series of fine motor movements in a coordinated way. It's essential for tasks like dressing (e.g., buttoning a shirt), using utensils to eat, and completing complex craft projects. Practising step-by-step activities and following instructions can help improve fine motor planning.

8. Visual-motor integration: This skill involves the coordination between visual perception and motor skills. It allows children to copy shapes, patterns, and written letters accurately. Activities like tracing, copying simple drawings, and connect-the-dots puzzles can enhance visual-motor integration.

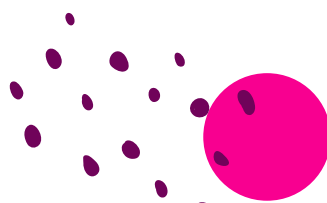
Age (in years)	What Your Child is Doing at This Age	Yes	No
0-6 months	Holding onto objects placed in their hand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Beginning to move their hands together in front of them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reaching for and grasping objects using both hands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6-12 months	Reaching and grasping to put objects in their mouth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Transferring objects from one hand to the other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Poking objects with index finger	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Picking up small objects with thumb and index finger	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-2 years	Placing objects into a container	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Letting go of an object (i.e. throwing a ball) and picking it up again)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Turning pages of a book	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Building block towers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>



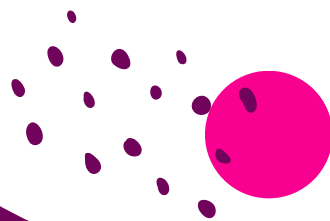
	Eating independently with minimal assistance		
	Bringing a spoon to their mouth		
	Holding and drinking from a cup independently		
	Making small marks on a paper, scribbling		
2-3 years	Building a tower with 3-5 small blocks		
	Imitating drawing a vertical line		
	Cutting paper with child-safe scissors		
	Eating without assistance		
3-4 years	Building a block tower with 9 small blocks		
	Copying a circle		
	Cutting roughly around a picture		
	Dressing independently, excluding shoelace		



4-5 years	Cutting along a line		
	Holding a pencil with a tripod grasp		
	Holding and drinking from a cup independently		
	Copying letters and numbers		
5-6 years	Cutting out simple shapes		
	Drawing basic pictures		
	Writing letters independently		
6-7 years	Cutting neatly around shapes		
	Tying shoelaces		
	Good pencil control		



Whether you are just starting to notice that your child struggles with fine motor skills, have recently received a diagnosis related to fine motor difficulties, or have been supporting your child's development for a while, feel free to get in touch with us at Inspire Allied Health and Education Group. We can help you arrange a consultation with our expert Occupational Therapists, who specialise in supporting the development of fine motor skills, providing tailored support and guidance for your child's unique needs.





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