

# Encouraging early writing skills

A child's thumb, index finger and middle fingers all make up the ideal grasp for pencil grip. This is often referred to as the "Tripod Grip." In order for children to be able to grasp and control a pencil, they need to first have good core stability, shoulder and arm strength. This leads to the development of strength needed for mark making in the hand and fingers.

## What are gross motor skills?

Gross motor skills involve whole body movements. For some children, it is important that they get additional opportunities to develop their gross motor skills, leading to the development of the coordination of their muscles. These skills are important as they support, balance, coordination, reaction time, physical strength and core stability.



Below are some examples of activities to promote the development of gross motor skills:

- On a large sheet of paper make large circles in an anticlockwise direction, starting at the top, make them smaller and smaller. Tell the child to press harder and softer, draw faster and slower, and press harder and lighter.
- Draw in the air using a scarf.
- Watering plants.
- Scooping, pouring, emptying malleable materials such as sand, water, lentils, rice, pasta etc.
- Rolling over a peanut ball or yoga ball tummy down with arms out in front.
- Wheelbarrow walking (walk forward on straight arms whilst support given at the legs).
- Obstacle courses.





## What are fine motor skills?

Fine motor skills are the ability to make small muscular movements in both our hands and wrists. These skills are important as they help us with everyday key tasks such as tying shoelaces, buttoning up coats, picking up small objects, writing etc. Lots of access to gross motor skill activities will provide the foundations for fine motor skill development. It's important to give young children lots of opportunity to access both gross and fine motor skill play.

Below are some examples of activities to promote the development of fine motor skills:

- 'Pick up' games using kitchen tongs, plastic tweezers or clothes pegs. Pick up cotton balls, marshmallows, aluminium foil balls, seeds and buttons etc.
- Squirting water from a water bottle or spray bottle.
- Threading beads.
- Popping bubble wrap.
- Playing with play doh – have a dough disco to music and try
- Rolling, making little balls, squashing, pinching and pulling it apart.
- Tearing and scrunching paper for craft activities.
- Putting coins into a money box.
- Board games e.g. Operation, Frustration and Hungry Hippos.
- Make shapes in the air, sand or shaving foam with index finger.
- Draw on foil using a toothpick.

