



PART 2
Children's Occupational Therapy
Early Years Resource Pack

Developing a pincer grip

A pincer grasp is when small items are held between the tip of the thumb and tip of the index finger.

- Encourage sensory play to develop the child's tactile sense, e.g. sand, water and lentil play, use different textured materials.
- Use songs that encourage pointing actions e.g. "head, shoulders, knees and toes", "two little dicky birds", "wind the bobbin".
- Look at picture books and encourage the child to point to pictures using the index finger e.g. "where is the dog?", "point to the dog".
- Use of toys that encourage the use of one finger e.g. push button toys, toys with telephone dials.
- When feeding with finger foods encourage the child pick food from the table/plate independently or offer it between your index finger and thumb. It is very difficult to take food precisely with a palmar grasp and therefore, by presenting the food in this way, it will encourage the use of a pincer grip instead.
- Begin to use toys requiring a pincer grip such as form board puzzles with handles (larger handles to start with), pop-up farm, and 'dial' toys requiring different grips. Pop-up men are also good for encouraging index finger

- pointing and a pincer grip.
- Poking or pinching play dough.
- Using short pieces of chalk or crayons.

Frequency of activities

Engage the child with activities from this programme for up to 15 minutes for 3 focused sessions a week. Simply adjusting your current activities and encouraging the child's participation in activities they would not usually not normally choose will support development.

Complete activities from this sheet for 3 months

Improving our service

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BUSY HANDS USING OUR HANDS

Early Years Activity Sheet

PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SERVICES

Developing Reaching Skills

When developing reaching skills it is important to ensure that the child is well supported in sitting or lying. The child will not be able to focus on reaching for toys if they are struggling to maintain their position.

Activities

- The child will initially be more successful at reaching for toys when he does not have to work at sitting e.g. lying on tummy or back underneath a baby gym
 - If the child struggles to bring their arms forward, try positioning a small rolled up towel under their shoulders to encourage their arms to come up and forwards.
 - Use a variety (those of most interest to the child e.g. shiny or musical toys). Shake them in front of the child so that the toy can be seen. Then actively guide the child's hand to the toy by moving his/her arm from just below the shoulder.
 - The child may then open his/her hand to take the toy. Place the child in a variety of different positions to improve the child's upper limb awareness e.g. on tummy, propped on a rolled up towel or supported over an inflatable roll.
- Use feely toys such as a deflated helium balloon, smooth, rough, furry textures etc as well as rattles for the child to look at or feel. This should encourage opening and closing of the hands, or raking at the texture.
 - Encourage the child to reach out and grasp the spoon or bottle when being fed.

Developing Grasping Skills

Grasping is picking up and holding an object.

Activities

- Find toys that are easy to grasp such as rattles with handles, large toy balls or blocks, rings etc
- Encourage banging games such as banging a tray or table top, banging two bricks, spoons or rattles together. Encourage banging a drum with beater or banging on toys to make a noise.

Developing Accurate Release

Accurate release is the child's ability to purposefully and accurately let go of an object. This skill is required in order for the child to develop basic fine motor and is a pre-requisite to self-help skills.

Whilst carrying out these activities remember to praise the child when they achieve the task. This will motivate them to repeat the activity.

Activities

- Encourage the child to give you a toy. Initially get them to put the toy in your hand, even if they are unable to release it (guide with your hand if necessary). Position yourself so that the child has to make a deliberate action to hand you the toy. Use the same instruction every time e.g. "give to me", as the repetition will assist the learning process.
- Play games which involve dropping objects into a container in order to produce a noise or reaction e.g. dropping a toy into a saucepan or bowl of water to make a loud noise or splash.
- Encourage the child to stack toys, e.g. one small stacking cup on top of the largest stacking cup, large building blocks etc.
- Rolling or throwing a small ball can also help develop the release concept.

Strategies

- Grade how much help give the child. Initially you may need to use a hand over hand approach but try to reduce how much physical and verbal help you give the child so they become more independent.
- Praise and positively reward the child when they have achieved a part or all of the activity successfully.
- You can try many of these activities in a number of positions e.g. sitting on the floor, in a “4 point kneel” position, high kneeling or sitting at a table or standing.
- If the child struggles with attention and perseverance, try doing the activities following sensory activities e.g. sand play, messy play, as sensory input can help prepare a child to attend. You can also try making the activity part of the sensory experience to aid motivation e.g. stacking cups in water, placing a person in a boat during water play etc.

Frequency of activities

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Improving our service

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BUSY HANDS EYE-HAND COORDINATION

Early Year Activity Sheet

PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICES

Introduction

Eye-hand coordination is the ability to coordinate the eyes with the finely graded actions of the shoulders, elbows, forearms, wrists and fingers. The eyes and the hands develop skills separately and together as the child participates in daily living and play activities.

The development of eye-hand co-ordination begins as babies first realise that their hands can be used to reach for and touch the object they are looking at. They start with swiping movements which gradually develop into reaching for and grasping an object in a controlled manner. Young children learn what position the body must be in, the direction in which to move, the distance between the hand and the object and the adaption the hand must make to accommodate the size and shape of the object.

Children require good eye control, postural control and body awareness to develop eye-hand coordination.

Difficulties with eye-hand coordination can affect the development of fine motor skills, prewriting skills and independence in activities of daily living.

Activities

Stacking cups & building bricks

Try hiding a toy of interest under one of the cups to encourage the child to engage in the activity. They can then place a cup on top of a toy on the stack to hide it from you.

Water/Sand Play (pouring games)

Encourage the child to pour water, sand or rice from one container to another. Make the containers smaller as the child becomes more proficient. Also encourage the child to pour their own drink from a small jug.

Posting Games

Encourage the child to post coins into a money box or letters into a post box. Change the direction of the box so the child can practice turning the coin the right way round to fit. Also try getting the child to drop dried peas or beans into a narrow necked bottle to make a shaker.

Threading games

Practice threading. Start by encouraging the child to place cotton reels on sticks then progress to threading a thick lace and lacing a card.

Hammering games

Play games that involve banging or hammering e.g. hammering pegs, playing a xylophone. Encourage the child to choose where they are aiming for and prompt focused visual attention on the activity.

Small world toys

Play with toys that encourage accurate placement of toys e.g. putting the man in the car or on the chair (happy land and fisher price play toys are good for this).

- Prepare the child's sensory system prior to fine motor activity by providing deep pressure and touch input e.g. push hands together, wiggle fingers, play with play dough or messy play activity
- If the child struggles to isolate their index finger and thumb give the child a small object e.g. a coin to hold in their palm with three fingers whilst completing the activities. This encourages isolated use of the index finger and thumb
- The child will need supervision during these activities so that you can encourage them to isolate their fingers instead of using a whole hand grasp

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BUSY HANDS PRECISE FINGER MOVEMENTS

Early Years Activity Sheet

**PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICES**

Introduction

The development of precise finger movements is required for the development of many of the fine motor activities completed by children every day in the home and nursery environment.

They are required for the development of pencil skills, scissor skills, playing with toys and independence skills such as doing up the zip on a coat and using a manipulating cutlery.

Fine motor skills can be developed by developing a child's sensory awareness and by practicing games involving finger isolation and manipulation.

Children with poor fine motor skills may have the following difficulties

- Needing to rely overly on visual information to manipulate small objects.
- Difficulty with or avoidance of fine motor activities such as drawing, threading, and games that involve fine motor manipulation.
- They will often seek adult support and rely on adults to complete tasks.

Activities

Isolating Finger Movements

- Finger painting
- Pinching and prodding play dough or plasticine
- Finger puppets
- Finger football
- Counting small objects on the table
- Tracing down a path with index finger on paper or chalk board
- Popping bubbles
- Pointing at pictures in a book
- Finger action songs e.g. Tommy thumb, round & round the garden

Encouraging use of a pincer grip

The pincer grasp is when small items are held between the tip of the thumb and tip of the index finger.

- Pop bubble wrap paper
- Place small pegs into a peg board
- Placing plastic coins in a money box
- Picking up chocolate buttons/raisins off the table
- Small handled inset puzzles
- Opening & closing clothes pegs
- Use tongs/tweezers to pick up small objects and place them in a container

- Commercial games such as flicking frogs, monkey tree, "kerplunk", pick-up sticks, tiddlywinks

Finger Dexterity

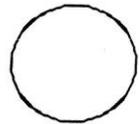
Finger dexterity involves being able to grasp objects in the hands and fingers for precision and accuracy. This is a skill children learn through play and it is through repetition and practice that their movements become:

- More refined (can pick up smaller objects)
- More accurate with manipulation and placement of objects
- Faster whilst maintaining accuracy

Activity suggestions

- 5 beads & lace – thread beads as quickly as possible (start with large beads and progress to smaller ones)
- 15 Lego pieces – fit them together as quickly as possible
- Ice cream container & 10 clothes pegs – place the pegs around the top of the box using finger & thumb to open and close them
- 5 coins & 5 empty match boxes – open each box place one coin inside then close the box

Example of mark making and drawing



Adult



child
samples



Frequency of activities

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BUSY HANDS

MAKING MEANINGFUL MARKS

Early Years Activity Sheet

PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICES

Introduction

The making of marks that imitate another person's marks, is important because it helps a child learn eye-hand coordination. A child also learns that making marks can be meaningful and a form of communication. Drawing aids the development of pre-writing skills such as pencil control, ability to copy designs and correct posture.

Activities

- Try drawing on sandpaper, patterned wallpaper, in sand or mud.
- Draw in lotions, pudding, whipped cream, icing sugar, chocolate spread and shaving foam.
- Experiment with different colours of chalk, markers, crayons, pens, pencils and paints.
- Draw in shallow trays of sand.
- Draw on cakes with coloured icing tubes or draw with cheese spread on bread or crackers.
- Make scribble drawings with the child. After allowing time for the child to make their own marks, demonstrate making marks such as | — O.
- Encourage activities such as fuzzy felt and making pictures out of shapes.
- Draw on Aluminium foil
- Try attaching bells to make a noise while drawing

- Try outdoor activities such as such as rubbing over different textures e.g. concrete, brick or bark.
- Use thick paintbrushes and buckets of water to paint on out door surfaces.

Strategies

- High frequency sounds are alerting and help a child to orientate to what you are doing. If the child is attending use directional words, e.g. down, across, round.
- Praise the child if they look at the mark, as you make it. Praise any attempt, they make, that is approaching your example. If the child continues to make marks that do not resemble your line, say, "you did a..." and draw alongside them, imitating their marks, before introducing fresh paper and trying again.
- Use thick pencils, felt markers and crayons this helps the fingers relax and helps with control
- Use verbal cues or voice intonation when drawing

- Encourage large movements when making marks, this encourages use of the muscles of the whole arm and shoulder against gravity and helps to reinforce the "mental picture" of the pattern.
- Vary positions for mark-making activities, e.g. lying on tummy on floor, high kneeling at easel or paper attached to a wall etc.
- Throughout the day, reinforce awareness of shapes and point out to the child when their mark making resembles a particular shape, object or letter.
- To encourage visual attention to mark-making attract their attention to your demonstration e.g. "look..... zzzzipp!".
- Ask the child open-ended questions to encourage them to describe their designs, e.g. "that's beautiful...tell me about your picture", or "what are you writing about?"
- Encourage the child to experience a wide range of different mark-makers and surfaces on which to make their patterns. Materials used to stimulate the senses, are excellent to reinforce learning and will help keep the child's interest.
- Take turns to complete pictures with the child e.g.; I'll draw the head then you draw the eyes.

Strategies

- If the child finds these activities challenging they are likely to need 1:1 support to help them practice and learn these skills. Choose the activity and work with the child for a short time encouraging them to achieve the task
- Grade how much help give the child. Initially you may need to use a hand over hand approach but try to reduce how much physical and verbal help you give the child so they become more independent. Praise and positively reward the child when they have achieved a part or all of the activity successfully.
- Vary positions for pre-writing activities, e.g. lying on tummy on floor, high kneeling at easel or low table, paper attached to a wall etc.
- If the child struggles with attention and perseverance, try doing the sensory activities before drawing with crayons or pens e.g. drawing in sand, play dough, as sensory input can help prepare a child to attend.
- Don't focus too quickly on forming letters, try to make drawing fun!
- Encourage activities where child's hand is not supported e.g. hand puppets and musical instruments

Frequency of activities

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BUSY HANDS PRE-WRITING SKILLS

Early Years Activity Sheet

PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICES

Introduction

Writing is a complex perceptual, motor and cognitive skill. Pre-writing skills are all the activities children take part in to prepare them for writing instruction. A good wrist position makes it easier to develop hand skills. The best position for most activities is straight or slightly back. In this position the fingers can move more freely and the muscles in the hand are able to develop. This allows the child to do more complex activities such as dressing, drawing and writing.

Activities

- Experiment with different colours of chalk, markers, crayons, pens, pencils and paints.
- Try drawing on sandpaper, patterned wallpaper, in sand or mud.
- Draw with whole hand as well as index finger in lotions, pudding, whipped cream, icing sugar, chocolate spread and shaving foam.
- Draw on cakes with coloured icing tubes or draw with cheese spread on bread or crackers.
- Make feely name or shape by writing/drawing shapes on card board and then gluing rice sand or sprinkles on the glue. When dry the child can trace over the shapes with their fingers
- Cornflower and food colouring.
- Make shapes with noodles or spaghetti.
- Draw large shapes in paint on an easel or paper pinned to the wall.
- Stencils.
- Use of mazes to encourage development of pencil control
- Start with getting the child to walk on large shapes/lines on the floor (masking tape or chalk) and drive toy cars through mazes, over crossing lines and diagonals. Then encourage drawing between a horizontal or vertical path. Gradually increase the complexity of the maze with curves, circles and dead ends. Gradually decrease the width of the maze to encourage increased control. These can be done with finger paints, crayons, pencils or paints on a table, at an easel or on paper on the floor or pinned to the wall
- Colour pictures of a child's favourite character for motivation. Encourage the child to grade from large to small movements with practice.
- Use streamers or ribbons to make shapes in the air
- Draw on the child's back and get them to guess the shape/letter
- Draw on a pavement with a wet brush or with chalks
- Draw with a wet brush on a chalk board
- Practice dot to dots. Encourage the child to stop on each dot. Use arrows to indicate the next dot to improve forward planning and directionality
- Make shapes and lines out of rolled up play dough. When working on pre-writing skills encourage the child to experience a wide range of different mark-makers and surfaces on which to make their patterns. Materials used to stimulate the senses, are excellent to reinforce learning and will help keep the child's interest.
- Encourage large movements when doing the activities as this encourages use of the muscles of the whole arm and shoulder against gravity and helps to reinforce the "mental picture" of the pattern. Gradually reduce the size to smaller, refined movements.
- Vegetable stamps

Using two hands where the hands are doing different actions.

- Threading – vary the size and shape of the beads and using threading cards.
- Stabilising Activities – rubbings, stencils, drawing.
- Clothes fastening.
- Using knife and fork.
- Pegging out toy clothes.
- Stirring mixture in a bowl.
- Peeling off stickers and sticking them on a sheet.

Main Points to remember

- Always encourage a 'thumbs up' position with both hands when cutting.
- Practice using tongs, pipettes and clothes pegs.
- Complete activities, which require the arms to be elevated from the body e.g. stirring, drawing at an easel.
- Complete a variety of activities, which require use of two hands together each hand doing different activities.
- Use a staged approach giving time for the child to perfect the skill before moving on increasing the level of skill required

Frequency of activities

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BUSY HANDS USING SCISSORS

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**PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICES**

Introduction

Using scissors successfully suggests the child has developed a wide range of skills. They may have the skill to use small scissors by 3-4 years. But the skills will not be fully developed until about 6 years

Handling of scissors

- Finger Position (Some children may require physical assistance to position their hands appropriately on the scissors).
- Hand position (Always encourage a 'thumbs up' position when cutting i.e. thumbs uppermost).
- Supporting hand position (Always encourage a 'thumbs up' position with the supporting hand).
- Type of Scissors (There are various types of scissors available and it will depend on the nature of the difficulty, as to which type is most appropriate, if any).
- Easi grip scissors are often helpful, initially. (See equipment list in the resource pack).

Snipping

- Try making "Hedgehogs". Practice snipping straws, which then can be pushed into play dough balls to make hedgehogs.
- Feeding the crocodiles. Use paper strips 1cm wide and snip pieces off the strip, then using clothes pegs as the 'crocodiles'

- Make a lion. Print a face on to the middle of a circle or square of paper or thin card. Encourage the child to snip all around the edge making a mane. The end result could then be put on a straw.

Making a series of cuts

- Paper Strips. Use varying widths of paper strips to cut across increasing the width as the child's skill improves.

Developing accuracy

- 'Road cutting'. Introduce thick coloured lines to cut along, initially, use lines at least 2cm thick across a strip of paper 6cm wide. The child should be able to cut across the width of an A4 piece of paper prior to attempting this.
- Encourage the child to cut on the 'road', the width of the 'road', can then be reduced 1/2cm at a time, as the child's accuracy improves.
- When the child is able to cut along straight road introduce gentle curves, then zigzags and then simple shapes such as circles and squares.
- Finally increase the complexity of the shape.

Stopping

- Using lines drawn on paper, where the line does not reach the other side but stops. Encourage child to cut along the line only stopping when the line stops.

- Making a lantern. Use a basic paper lantern template and encourage the child to cut up the lines in the middle, stopping at the end of the lines. Use this principle in other craft activities.

Appropriate Seating

Always ensure your child is sitting on an appropriate height chair where their feet can be comfortably flat on the floor with their knees and hips at 90 degrees.

Activities to develop fine motor skills required for scissor skills.

Using the dominant hand

- Using tongs to pick up objects and transfer theme e.g. kitchen tongs to pick up cotton balls.
- Games, which include tongs such as operation or wok 'n' roll.
- Use clothes pegs, which need to be squeezed to open.
- Use clothes pegs in games, timing in what time a child can put 10 pegs on the edge of a jar, or how long it takes the child to pick up 10 cotton wool balls, the child could then try to beat their score.
- Use food baser to blow along a Ping-Pong ball into a goal.

feed the crocodiles.

Additional information on Hand strength

Strong hands are required to complete everyday activity such as holding scissors and pencils correctly, buttoning, turning taps and opening lunch packages. Hand strength increases as children grow and are able to use their hands for more activities. A large increase in grip strength occurs between the ages of three and six years.

Activities

- Crawling, pulling with arms, swinging, climbing, helps strengthens arms.
- Try activities that offer reasonable resistance as mentioned before scrunching up newspaper into large balls and throw them in a box.
- Squeezing sponges to move water from one container to another.
- Scooping water , rice or sand into different containers
- Use cutters or garlic presses with play dough.

Strategies

- Don't be too quick to help with more difficult tasks such as opening crisp packages
- If the child's hands look very weak or awkward consult with an Occupational therapist as there be other factors may be involved.

Frequency of Activities

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BUSY HANDS PENCIL GRASP

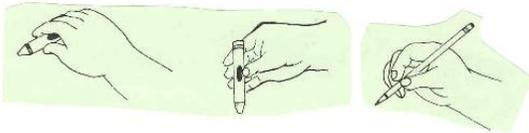
Early Years Activity Sheet

**PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
SERVICES**

Introduction

The initial stage of developing pencil grasp is a fistful grasp with thumb upwards. As the child develops and refines their finger movements, they may progress to holding the marker with thumb and fingers towards paper and finally to a tripod grasp.

Moving to a tripod grasp is the biggest switch developmentally in the progression of pencil grasp; it is common to see frequent switching back and forth between different grasps.



Activities

- Find small hidden objects in putty/play dough by digging fingers in and pulling out.
- Clothes pegs – use to pick up objects and transfer from one place to another.
- Wind up toys.
- Pop bubble wrap between index finger and thumb.
- Use eyedropper to drop water on targets or make a picture with dye.
- Small squirting water toys.
- Place small items in small pots for child to retrieve, e.g. raisins.

- Roll play dough into sausages and balls and pinch to make animals/models.
- Cut putty/play dough.
- Draw pictures with tube paints or coloured icing tubes
- Screw up pieces of tissue paper into small balls and flick – have a competition and see who can flick the furthest.
- Pick up small objects with tweezers using index finger and thumb.
- Spinning tops.
- Screw nuts and bolts – construction games.
- Encourage play with a moneybox – inserting coins into slots.
- Use spray bottle, i.e. to water plants, wash windows, and target at objects.
- Open and close zip loc bags using index finger and thumb.
- Poking ice lolly sticks or similar into play dough or putty.
- Pulling lids of pens using fingertips only.

Strategies

- Encouragement and experience of motivating pencil/crayon/chalk activities is essential to develop pencil grasp.
- Use chunky chalks/crayons/ markers/ triangular pencils to help cue a tripod grasp.

- Use short stubs of crayon/chalks/pencil. Plays tug-of-war with thin, straight items e.g. push a coffee-stirrer or lolly stick through the side of a cardboard box for child to pull through, rather than a long implement which the child may be tempted to hold in the palm of their hand.
- Wrap a piece of tape or an elastic band 2cm from the tip of the pencil to prompt and ensure correct positioning.
- Place small items in a narrow container for child to retrieve, such as pegs for pegboards, art materials for sticking.
- Place small snack items in narrow containers for child to retrieve, e.g. raisins in a small box. (Sun-maid produce snack-size boxes). Mini-cheddars or carrot cubes can be put in a washed spray-can lid.
- To simplify teaching tripod grasp; before giving a pencil encourage the child to place their arm on the table with little finger resting on table and thumb upwards. Place the pencil between the first finger and thumb prompting the child to pinch the pencil. Ensure the pencil is resting on the second finger.

Strategies

- Check the child-seat-desk proportions. The child's feet should rest comfortably on the floor and the child's elbows should rest comfortably on the table. A foot block or box under the child's feet is a good solution if the chair is too high.
- Place a beanbag or weighted lap cushion on the child's lap to add resistance and increase body awareness.
- The child does not always need to be seated for table top tasks. Try activities whilst lying on tummy, in high or half kneeling and standing at a table.
- Present pre-writing activities on a vertical surface using a chalk board, easel, white board or paper taped to the wall. This promotes shoulder, elbow and wrist strength as well as the correct grasp.

Frequency of activities

Complete at least a 10 – 15 minute session 3 times a week. Always monitor the motivation and interest levels of the child and adjust accordingly.

Complete activities from this sheet regularly for at least 3 months

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READY TO MOVE POSTURAL CONTROL

Early Years Activity Sheet

PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICES

Information

Postural control requires:

- Adequate muscle tone
- Postural stability (pelvis and shoulder)
- Equilibrium (balance) reactions
- Ability to assume and hold body positions against gravity

The joints of the body need to be stable before the hands and legs can be free to achieve specific skilled fine and gross motor tasks. To begin more complex table top tasks such as scissor skills, the child must be able to maintain a seated position with feet placed firmly on the floor or footrest to aid stability. The arms must be free to do the activity – not to hold up the trunk. The child must be comfortable and have no fear of tipping over. The child's attention will then be free to focus on the fine motor tasks (this includes speech production for children with speech disorders).

Children with poor postural control may present with:

- Clumsy or delayed gross motor skills
- Poor fine motor skills
- Difficulty maintaining an upright posture when seated on the floor or on a chair or when standing still.
- Poor attention and distractibility

Activities

High kneeling

Complete activities such as drawing and playing whilst maintaining high kneeling (at a low table or at an activity stuck to the wall). Move to half kneeling to increased the complexity of the task.

Knee walking

Play games where the child has to knee walk to get a toy from one side of the room and bring it back to complete the activity. Make this harder by getting the child to knee walk over obstacles like soft play equipment.

Play statue games

Get the child to maintain sitting, kneeling or standing whilst remaining very still (like sleeping lions). Then hold their hands and push whilst encouraging the child to remain in the same position.

Animal walks

Encourage the child to walk like different animals e.g. duck, bear, crab, frog, bunny hops etc. See who can do it best or maintain the position for longest.

Arms away games

Practice activities where the arms are:

- Above the head e.g. passing ball
- Away from the body e.g. carrying a tray

Curl ups

Ball position – the child lies on his back and pulls legs, arms and head forward to curl up into a ball and hold for as long as possible.

Pushing and pulling games

E.g. tug of war, row-row the boat.

Strategies that may help

- Talk about the “helper” hand and the “doer” hand.
- Consistently prompt a child to use two hands where required. This can be a verbal prompt or a physical one by placing the object in their hand to stabilise
- Dycem matting or clip boards can be used to stabilise objects where the child is unable to use the other hand to stabilise a task due to disability.

Frequency of activities

Complete at least a 10 – 15 minute session 3 times a week. Always monitor the motivation and interest levels of the child and adjust accordingly.

Complete activities from this sheet regularly for at least 3 months

Improving our service

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Contact details: see part 1 of pack

READY TO MOVE BILATERAL INTEGRATION

Early Years Activity Sheet

PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
SERVICES

Introduction

The ability to coordinate the right and the left sides of the body and to cross the midline of the body is an indication that both sides of the brain are working well together and sharing information. This bilateral coordination is an important foundation for the development of many gross and fine motor skills and is essential for the development of hand dominance for refined, skilled tool use.

Good co-ordination of the two body sides is important for pre-writing and scissor activities as well as the development of independence skills such as using cutlery and getting dressed.

Children with poor coordination of two sided of the body together may resent with the following difficulties;

- Avoidance of crossing the midline of the body
- Difficulties with coordinating one hand to move whilst the other stabilises e.g. one hand holding a pen whilst the other removes the lid
- Switching hands during fine motor activities
- Difficulties with gross motor activities involving two sides of the body including jumping and catching a ball.
- Delayed development of hand dominance

Activities

- Action songs and rhymes
These involve using two arms/legs together whilst doing the actions e.g. “wind the bobbin up”, “hokey kokey”, heads, shoulders, knees and toes”

- **Toys that involve pushing and pulling with both hands:**

Interlocking barrels/Russian dolls
Taking tops off markers
Rolling play dough with a rolling pin
Games involving pieces that push or click together – pop beads, Duplo, Megablocks
Velcro toy food
Bubbles – holding and putting wand in

- **Toys with moving parts**

Vehicle play – attaching trains, trailers
Wind-up toys e.g. Jack in the box
Kaleidoscope

- **Self help activities**

Most self help activities require the coordination of two hands e.g. holding the bowl whilst eating, pulling up/down trousers after toileting

- **Jumping Games**

Jumping on the spot, feet together
Jumping over a rope or in and out of hoops, feet together
Jumping off low objects, e.g. steps, or on a trampoline, feet together

- **Everyday activities**

Sweeping the floor or using a dustpan and brush
Opening jars
Pouring games
Spreading jam/butter on toast

- **Lacing Activities**

Simple lacing activities give children an opportunity to experiment with hand dominance.

- String beads with a large hole onto a straw or pipe cleaner
- String beads onto a stiff shoe lace (wrap selotape around the end to lengthen the stiff end)
- String small beads onto a shoe lace
- Lacing cards

- **Craft activities**

Removing stickers from the packet to stick onto a picture is often a very motivating bilateral activity
Ripping paper to make paper-mache or collages
Gluing and sticking

- **Catching Games**

Catching a balloon
Hitting a balloon with a rolling pin held with both hands
Catching beanbags and large balls

Strategies

- Try using a carpet square for the child to sit on, when they need to sit with the group.
- Use tape to define the different areas of the classroom or define where the child should stand in line.
- Use a timer (an egg timer is very visual) so the child can see how long they have to stay seated for an activity.
- Clear and consistent expectations may be helpful to reinforce with pictures.

Frequency of activities

Complete at least a 10 – 15 minute session 3 times a week. Always monitor the motivation and interest levels of the child and adjust accordingly.

Complete activities from this sheet regularly for at least 3 months

Improving our service

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Contact details: see part 1 of pack



READY TO MOVE: ME AND MY SPACE

Early Years Activity Sheet

PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICES

Introduction

Spatial awareness is the child's knowledge of their own position and relationship to objects around them. Good spatial awareness requires the child to have:

- Good body awareness
- Orientation to where they are within gravity
- Understanding of the spatial confines of the environment around them.

A child learns spatial skills through sensory and movement experiences within the environment.

Spatial skills are required for many fine and gross motor tasks e.g. ball skills, pre-writing skills, dressing skills. They are also required for developing communication skills e.g. understanding appropriate boundaries to personal space.

Children who have difficulty with knowing where their body is in space often have poor coordination and independence skills. They will often use other people and objects to help them define their space. They may also have difficulty judging the relationships between one object and another and struggle to develop basic concepts such as shape and size

Hand Activities

- Clapping games where the child has to copy you.
- Finger movement games such as "Two little dicky birds, "one finger one thumb", "Tommy thumb"
- Construction toys copying a model e.g. Lego, stickle bricks.
- Form boards, jigsaw puzzles, lotto games and "what's missing" cards
- Mazes – drawing inside large mazes with curves and circles.
- Pushing a toy car along a road mat or a train around a track

Whole Body Activities

- Jump over pretend puddles. Use pieces of paper on the floor as puddles (increase and decrease their size)
- Use pieces of paper as footprints. Get the child to follow the footprints around
- Make an obstacle course around the nursery room or garden using ropes, boxes, furniture, cushions etc. Include actions where the child has to go over, under, through and around obstacles backwards and forwards. Get the child to use the spatial language as they go round it.
- Have a treasure hunt asking the child to follow simple instructions.
- Make lines on the floor with chalk or tape. Get the child to walk along them forwards, backwards and sideways. Also follow the

- lines using animal walks such as like a bear, duck, crab etc.
- Adopt postures and get the child to copy you e.g. stand on one leg.
- Games that include reference to body parts and movement e.g. "Simon Says", Hokey Cokey.

Ball Games

- Hit a balloon in the air and try to stop it from hitting the floor.
- Rolling a ball through a goal
- Catching a balloon, beanbag, ball
- Hitting a ball along the ground with a bat around obstacles
- Hitting a large beach ball with both hands
- Low level basket ball hoops or targets

Strategies

- Select a new activity that you think the child can accomplish. Simplify the activity if necessary to ensure the child can achieve it. This might be by doing just one part of the whole activity.
- Grade the activity to the child's skill level so they are able to achieve it. This should reduce frustration and increase motivation.
- Demonstrate the activity and then ask the child to try.
- Help the child identify the steps needed to achieve the task by asking questions like "what do you need to do?", "what next". Don't tell the child what to do.
- Give the child frequent opportunity to practice the skill as it will take a child with motor planning difficulties longer to "polish" a new skill and encourage generalisation of the skill.
- Present instructions for new or unfamiliar activities in the child's best modality i.e. visual, auditory or multi-sensory to encourage learning.
- Watch out for self esteem levels and avoidance of specific activities.
- This child may have excellent language skills and may talk excessively about what they are going to do but avoid actually performing the tasks they find difficult.

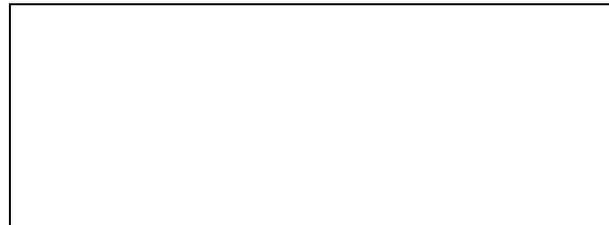
Frequency of activities

Complete a 10 – 15 minute session 3 times a week. It is suggested that you include some cutting at the appropriate stage for your child and then two other activities. Always monitor the motivation and interest levels of the child and adjust accordingly.

Complete activities from this sheet regularly for at least 3 months

If your child continues to have difficulty with initiating and planning and ultimately an ability to complete activities following implementation of these ideas for three months please refer to the Occupational Therapy service for an assessment of your child's needs and recommendations specific to your child.

Contact details: see part 1 of pack



READY TO MOVE: PLANNING AND ACHIEVING

Early Years Activity Sheet

**PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICES**

Introduction

Praxis is the ability to plan, sequence and carry out purposeful movements in order to achieve a desired task.

When a child learns a skill they may initially be slow to complete the task. They may need to take time to think and organise their body and they may not complete the task efficiently. Over time and with practice that person will learn the movement patterns required. They will then have mastered that motor skill and that skill then becomes automatic.

Some children have more difficulty with planning, sequencing and refining the movements required when learning a new skill. They may also have difficulty generalising a skill to another situation. Children with difficulties in motor planning may present with the following difficulties:

- Co-ordination difficulties e.g. delayed gross and fine motor skills
- Poor organisational skills e.g. disorganised for age, poor sequencing
- Perceptual problems e.g. difficulty learning shapes,
- Spatial difficulties e.g. difficulty judging distance
- Poor body awareness

- Copy simple block designs/ construction with Lego.
- Sorting games using different shapes and sized objects.
- Copy patterns when threading or using pegs.
- When learning shapes use a multi sensory approach. I.e. use lots of different mediums for drawing in and with e.g. shaving foam, sand, paint, crayons, and chalk. Use big movements initially, drawing on a large piece of paper on the floor or at a table or at an easel.
- Using play dough or therapeutic putty which provides more resistance and therefore more sensory feedback. Copy a shape or model made by teacher.

Whole Body Activities

- Completing obstacle courses where the child has to move through a range of positions e.g. climbing, tunnel and balance beam and where they have to change direction.
 - Animal walks e.g. walk like a crab, bear, duck etc
 - Copying static body positions and actions e.g. "Simon says" games
 - Heel to toe walking along a line
- Jumping – initially jumping from a step or on a trampoline to get the idea. Then sequence jumping e.g. star jump, knees up, jump with hands on head e

Hand Activities

- Cross marching – opposite leg with arm and star jumps
- Ball games (start with rolling and kicking and move onto throwing and catching)

Strategies for use around the child's environment

- Help the child by identifying and defining space e.g. Place tape around the sand corner, the carpet space, etc.
- Try using a carpet square for the child to sit on at carpet time.
- Use short instructions such as tidy up time, snack time, carpet time. Or other auditory cues such as bells or tambourine to gain attention.
- Encourage movement, where appropriate, when the child has pay attention or sit and listen e.g. encourage the child to turn the pages of the story or point to pictures
- This child will learn the routine and follow it so be aware that when the routine is different the child may require additional support

Strategies

- Encourage visual attention by prompting the child to look at the target or the ball before it is thrown.
- Use large balls such as blow-up beach balls, balloons, screwed up paper, beanbags and small balls. The bigger the ball and the slower it moves through the air, the easier it will be for the child when learning to catch.
- Consistently prompt a child to use two hands where required. This can be a verbal prompt or by standing behind the child and physically helping them with the movements requires
- Targets can include hoops, pieces of coloured paper on the floor, floor mats, carpet tiles etc.

Frequency of activities

Complete a 10 – 15 minute session 3 times a week. Always monitor the motivation and interest levels of the child and adjust accordingly.

Complete activities from this sheet regularly for at least 3 months

Improving our service

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Contact details: see part 1 of pack



READY TO MOVE BALL SKILLS

Early Years Activity Sheet

**PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICES**

Strategies

- If the child finds these activities challenging they are likely to need 1:1 support to help them practice and learn these skills. Practice any of these activities a couple of times each day. Choose the activity and work with the child for a short time encouraging them to achieve the task.
- Grade how much help give the child. Initially you may need to demonstrate the activity then physically guide the child through the task. As the child improves, try to reduce how much physical and verbal help you give the child so they become more independent. Praise and positively reward the child when they have achieved a part or all of the activity successfully.
- If the child avoids movement activities try doing activities that promote body awareness as these can prepare the child for the physical activity and help calm a nervous child. Activities for this may include activities that involve resistance or deep pressure e.g. helping to carry the equipment needed for the activity, tug of war, wheelbarrow walks and action songs.

Frequency of activities

Complete at least a 10 – 15 minute session 3 times a week. Always monitor the motivation and interest levels of the child and adjust accordingly.

Complete activities from this sheet regularly for at least 3 months

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READY TO MOVE DYNAMIC BALANCE

Early Years Activity Sheet

**PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICES**

Introduction

Good dynamic balance requires:

- Joint stability
- Postural control in the trunk and pelvis
- Static balance
- Body awareness
- Spatial awareness

Dynamic balance enables us to maintain our balance and move through space effectively whilst completing activities of choice.

A child with difficulties with dynamic balance may appear clumsy, always bumping into things or people or falling regularly. The child with these difficulties may lose his balance easily or appear to move excessively, using momentum to compensate for poor balance reactions.

A child with poor dynamic balance may also be overly frightened by movement. He may not be able to keep up with his peers in the playground and may have difficulty mastering environmental obstacles such as stairs or uneven terrain. He may become fearful, stubborn or so overly stimulated by movement that his behaviour becomes a problem.

Activities

• **Obstacle course**

Make an obstacle course around the room. Have things to crawl under (e.g. a duvet lying flat), through (e.g. a cardboard box with the ends open), around (e.g. a chair or stuffed toy), under (e.g. a table), over (e.g. a bed). Talk the child through the obstacle course and ask them to describe what they are doing.

• **Stepping stones**

Use paper plates on the floor or mats/large stones in the outdoor play area. Encourage the child to follow a footprint path. Start with the stepping stones close together and gradually spread them out to make the activity more challenging. Experiment with using objects of different heights to increase the challenge.

• **Utilise playground equipment:**

Slides - Encourage the child to go down the slide on their tummy, head first or feet first, as well as just sliding down in the normal way.

Swings - If the child is old enough let them go on their tummy on the swing. Whilst in this position get them to push balls to you or knock over skittles.

bars is highly beneficial if the facilities are available to do this.

Climbing apparatus – encourage climbing as it helps develop body awareness and balance.

• **Animal Walks**

Play games where the child has to mimic the way that animals walk, such as walking like a crab, a bear or a duck. You can make this into a group activity to music to make it more fun.

• **Jumping games**

Encourage bouncing and jumping on a trampoline. Encourage the child to practice jumping down from a step, into puddles and into squares that can be drawn on the paving stones with chalk. This can be progressed to jump-scotch and then hopscotch. Playing these games to music or making them team games can make them enjoyable for every child.

• **Play rolling games**

Roll the child up in a duvet, piece of fur or bubble wrap (with head and feet out). Then unroll them onto a soft surface by pulling the end. Practice rolling over piles of cushions. Roll over to knock a target down (e.g. skittles or empty cardboard boxes).



Strategies

- Place a beanbag or weighted lap cushion on the child's lap to add resistance and increase body awareness.
- The child does not always need to be seated for table top tasks. Try activities whilst lying on tummy, in high or half kneeling and standing at a table as these positions will help to improve body awareness.
- Prepare the child's sensory system prior to fine motor activity by providing a brief period of group aerobics e.g. jumping on the spot, circle arms, push hands together and wriggle fingers.
- Present prewriting activities on a vertical surface using a chalk board, easel, white board or paper taped to the wall. This promotes improved upper limb awareness.
- Trial adapted scissors and pen grips.
- Trial a move n sit cushion to increase awareness of posture whilst sitting. Try using a carpet square to define a space for remaining seated.
- Using a table with a cut out for additional side support.

Frequency of activities

Engage the child with activities from this programme for up to 15 minutes for 3 focused sessions a week. Simply adjusting your current activities and encouraging the child's participation in activities they would not usually choose will support development.

Complete activities from this sheet for 3 months

Improving our service

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Contact details: see part 1 of pack

USING MY SENSES BODY AWARENESS

Early Years Activity Sheet

PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SERVICES

Introduction

Awareness of the body comes from sensations from the muscles and joints. The term proprioception is often used to refer to this sensory system. This system gives us the ability to know where each part of our body is and how it is moving through space without looking. Integration of this information enables children to execute gross and fine motor activities that require subtle changes in posture, force, strength and dexterity. Body awareness can be developed when muscles and joints are working against gravity or resistance or “heavy work”.

Children with poor body awareness may have the following difficulties:

- Needing to rely on visual information to move through space and therefore may not be able to move properly if they cannot see where their arms and legs are.
- Poor awareness of their position in space, in relation to objects and people so may be clumsy and always bumping into things.
- May break toys or press too hard or softly with pencils because they are unable to gauge how much pressure to use.
- Delayed fine motor skills due to a lack of sensory awareness of the tools in their hands.

Activities

- **Play dough**

Playing with firm play dough, clay or plasticine. Squeeze, pull, stretch, roll and cut it. Pinch the dough with individual fingers and thumb.

- **Obstacle course**

Set up an obstacle course that involves climbing over, under, through and round, etc. Use cushions, cardboard boxes, duvets, air beds, skittles, etc. Encourage the child to describe what they are doing using spatial language e.g. through, over etc.

- **Pushing and pulling games**

Encourage the child to try and propel their body across a smooth floor on their tummy using their arms and hands only. Play push and pull games such as pulling a wagon filled with toys, “tug-of-war”, playfully try to push a wall down or parents over. Row-row the boat.

- **Outdoor play**

Play on swings, ropes, monkey bars and bouncing on a hopper ball.

- **Arms away games**

Practice activities where the arms are: above the head – e.g. passing a ball away from the body – e.g. carrying a tray.

- **Sensory play**

Digging in sand that is wet or small gravel, carrying buckets of sand/gravel/water.

- **Wheelbarrow walks**

Do wheelbarrow walks around the room and around obstacles. You may have to hold the child’s thighs or hips initially but gradually reduce your support until you are holding only your child’s ankles. See how long your child can maintain this position and how far they can go.

- **Curl ups**

Ball position – the child lies on his back and pulls legs, arms, and head forward to curl up into a ball and hold for as long as possible.

- **Balloon tennis**

Play balloon tennis with a rolled up piece paper.

- **Everyday activities**

At home have the child assist with carrying shopping, pulling and pushing the vacuum cleaner, carrying toy box.

In nursery, a child can be a “teacher’s helper” by putting books away, carrying boxes/bags of toys or other equipment, or moving chairs for activities.

Strategies

- Give clear boundaries and encourage the child to tell you what they are doing.
- Before they use a piece of equipment ask them to tell you what they are going to do. These children may often need close supervision as they may not be safety aware.
- Use activities that have movement but give addition sensory information about where the body is in space e.g. deep pressure through their feet and legs whilst jumping on a trampoline.
- Movement activities may enhance the child's ability to focus and learn so try to allow child to have plenty of movement activities prior to a focused or fine motor activity.
- Don't expect the child to maintain focus and maintain attention for long periods, allow the child to get up and move around.

Frequency of activities

Engage the child with activities from this programme for up to 15 minutes for 3 focused sessions a week. Simply adjusting your current activities and encouraging the child's participation in activities they would not usually not normally choose will support development.

Complete activities from this sheet for 3 months

Improving our service

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USING MY SENSES Movement

Early Years Activity Sheet

**PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICES**

Introduction

One of our sensory systems called the vestibular system provides information regarding movement, gravity and head positions. It tells us if we moving, how fast and in what direction.

Some children have a more sensitive vestibular system than others and this can cause insecurity in changing position and when moving. This causes feelings of dizziness and nausea with lots of movement. These children may hide and avoid climbing and other gross motor activities. They may enjoy and be more advanced doing fine motor activities.

Other children struggle to process the information from the vestibular system about movement and balance. They can be constantly on the move and may not be aware of safety: rarely experiencing fear or anxiety when climbing or moving around the environment. They appear to be constantly on the move; seeking movement. These children will seek out gross motor activities climbing and may appear impulsive. They may present as fidgety and restless.

Similar activities will have different effect on the children depending on their needs.

Activities for the child who is over responsive to movement (avoiding movement)

Activities should be graded from those which are less challenging to those that are challenging.

It is important to be sensitive to the movement needs of the child. The child should always be able to put a foot or hand on the ground if the movement is being controlled by some one else. When considering activities introduce slowly and at the child's pace. Do not force the child to do anything they don't want to do, work within their tolerance.

- Obstacle courses (indoor and outdoor)
- Play ground equipment including swings and slides
- Rough and tumble play
- Slow rocking movement
- Action songs
- Soft play areas
- Wobble board
- Therapy ball - child lies over ball and pushes /pulls against adult's hands.
- Rock child back and forward on a therapy ball whilst they are lying over the ball.
- Controlled movement on see-saws or equipment with wheels

Strategies

- Use a calm encouraging voice whilst introducing a new activity.
- Encourage the child to watch other children doing the activity first and then watch the adult doing it. Talk them through the activity.

- Change work positions during play e.g. sitting to lying on tummy, side lying.
- Get used to movement up/down, side to side then gradually increase speed and size of movement.
- Children who avoid movement may struggle with unexpected changes in activities and may become very rigid in the way they play or interact; as they may not be able to process unexpected sensory experiences. They often will want to take a lead in play to ensure they can manage the situation.

Activities for the child who is seeking movement and is keen to be "on the go" all the time.

- While swinging: child can play target games, adults working with the child can introduce challenges to the activity.
- Using a hammock the child swings self touching the ground.
- Ensure a highly active child has support to develop experiment in play rather than randomly using equipment.
- Encourage activities that require balance.
- Encourage rolling, somersaults.
- Use trampoline, exercises jump, knee sit and turning.
- Snake: child jumps over wiggling rope.



Environmental Considerations/Strategies:

- Reduce the level of noise in and around the classroom e.g. place materials/toys that make loud, unpredictable noise away from the child's work/play area.
- Allow the child to have control of the sound source when loud toys/instruments are used e.g. allow the child to blow the whistle or press the play button on the stereo.
- Limit, forewarn or prepare the child for loud noises where possible e.g. fire alarm test
- Allow the child to wear unplugged headphones or "ear defenders" to limit classroom noise.
- Have access to a "den" or "quiet" area. If the child appears overwhelmed allow the child to sit in a quiet corner to calm down and reorganise. Try furnishing this with a pop-up tent and beanbag so the child can feel secure and contained.
- Use a soft voice and slow down your movements and speech if the child has become stressed.
- Play soft music with a slow rhythm during noisy class based activities to help the child remain focused and calm.

Frequency of activities

Complete at least a 10 – 15 minute session 3 times a week. Always monitor the motivation and interest levels of the child and adjust accordingly.

Complete activities from this sheet regularly for at least 3 months

Improving our service

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USING MY SENSES MANAGING NOISE

Early Years Activity Sheet

**PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICES**

Introduction

Many children present with sensory processing difficulties. These children can present as being either under or over responsive to touch, noise, taste, smell and/or movement.

This leaflet relates to children who are over responsive or have negative responses to noise or sounds that most children do not notice or cope with easily.

The child who is sensitive to noise may:

- Hold their hands over their ears to protect from sounds i.e. bell, telephone
- Complain about the noise level in the room
- Be easily distracted by irrelevant noises in the environment i.e. water in the pipes, fan etc
- Easily frustrated during listening activities
- Need instructions/directions to be repeated. The child may not be able to block out background noise, giving the impression that they are not paying attention
- Appear irritable, moody, overactive, lash out or they may withdraw from the noise and become tearful and will want to avoid areas where noise occurs.

Children who are sensitive to noise will find the noise unpleasant, may complain of painful ears and may use avoidance behaviours.

Activities to Improve Auditory Discrimination

Activities designed to improve auditory discrimination (sound recognition) can help in reducing auditory defensiveness as they can help a child recognise what a sound is, what it means and where it is coming from therefore, reducing the child's anxiety and stress.

- Get the child to close their eyes. Play a musical instrument and have the child identify what it is and where it is coming from (remember to prepare the child for when the noise is going to start)
- Teach the child that there are differences between sounds in the environment and the sounds people make. Have the child listen to sounds and identify which group they come from e.g. environment (car, lawn mower) or people (clapping, laughing)
- Use rhythm through nursery rhymes or singing. Clap out the beats in the child's name or the names of objects in the room
- Have the child clap or say when they hear a target sound during a series of isolated sounds e.g. "Listen for the zzz sound". Say the sounds "rrr, p, sss, k, zzz, fff"

Activities to encourage tolerance to noise:

- Deep pressure activities e.g. play with clay, climbing and push pull activities can be helpful to calm a child who is stressed by noise. Try doing these activities prior to or following activities that you know will stress the child.
- When nursery is noisy, encourage outdoor play and movement opportunities as this may help the child calm and organise.
- Test out different ways of calming the child e.g. play soft music that is soothing and rhythmical; reduce the amount of visual stimuli, slow rocking movements.
- Allow child to explore noise, music and sounds in controlled environments.
- Take a 5 minute whisper break. Instruct everybody in the class to talk in a whisper for 5 minutes.

When using these suggestions monitor your child for any negative responses for example some children may be more sensitive to movement than others so will need to gradually experience movement activities to gain the touch information.

Frequency of activities

Incorporation of activities in the daily setting routine is recommended.

Complete activities from this sheet regularly for at least 3 months

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USING MY SENSES: USING TOUCH

Early Years Activity Sheet

**PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICES**

INTRODUCTION

The ability to tolerate a range of textures and explore these through play contributes to the development of fine motor skills. As the child learns to use touch they make sense of what and how they are handling tools and materials. This enables development of coordination needed for a variety of every day skills.

ACTIVITIES

- Hide small toys i.e. plastic animals, shiny marbles, coins in play dough . Child finds items by squeezing and pulling apart.
- In a deep bucket of rice / small pasta shapes/ sand hide a selection of objects to be found. Older children may guess what it is without looking.
- Finger puppets and singing rhymes for movement of each finger individually.
- Finger painting – making marks in different directions.
- Tray lined with foil and a sprinkle of sand / thin layer of shaving foam make marks using finger / rollers / toy cars
- Soft play gives lots of sensory information about how and where the body is moving which is needed for coordination and development of posture

- Jumping gives feedback about body position
- Moving to music
- Obstacle courses which involve moving through tunnels, under blankets



STRATEGIES

- Expose to a wide range of textures
- Include sensory information in usual daily play activities i.e. add lentils / glitter / rice to play dough
- Draw in different textures with different tools i.e. a lolly stick in flattened play dough, textured wall paper taped to the floor, a squiggle wiggler

Before completing activities with precision i.e. marking on paper make the same marks using big movements in the air this gives more feedback to:

- enable coordination of the smaller movements
- Helping to carry boxes or push them aside at tidy-up time.

Children who need more touch information sometimes seek it through moving / fidgeting / fiddling. These activities are for use at circle time to gain children's attention:

- Sitting on hands: Children sit on hands and count to 5 slowly.
- Push-ups: Children put their hands on the floor beside them and push down, lifting bottoms off floor if they can. Count slowly to 5.
- Tug of war: Children clasp their own hands in front of them, and pull hard, as if to pull them apart, while not letting go.
- Hands on head: Children link fingers in front of them and sit up straight. They put hands on heads and push down, 5 pushes.

Main points to remember

- Provide exposure of different textures to the child.
- Provide repeated opportunities to explore new textures.
- Encourage your child to touch it and play but at their own pace.
- Maintain a calm positive atmosphere.
- Encourage the child to be part of a group to encourage playing in different textures



Frequency of activities

Incorporation of activities in the daily setting routine is recommended.

To reduce sensitivities to touch and increase exploration in usual child play activities use these activities at the start of play sessions and immediately before an activity involving textures.

Complete activities from this sheet regularly for at least 3 months

Improving our service

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USING MY SENSES AVOIDING TOUCH

Early Years Activity Sheet

**PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICES**

INTRODUCTION

People have different thresholds for their ability to copy with different textures.

Some people are more sensitive to certain textures than others. If a child finds textures very challenging they may avoid using those materials.

ACTIVITIES

- Hand massage – deep pressure can be organising and calming for the human body.
- Hide motivating toys in sensory play materials
- Koosh balls to explore
- Squeezy balls before a tactile activity
- High fives throughout the day.
- Clapping
- Pushing palms together
- Use fun toys in sensory play i.e. plastic dinosaurs or cars in paint to make prints
- When sitting on the floor / chair child places palms flat under thighs and tries to push themselves up from floor / chair

STRATEGIES

- Using a graded approach

Textures are graded from those which are less challenging to those that are very challenging.

Dry/hard textures e.g. rice, pasta, sand.

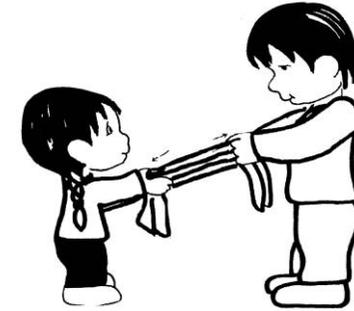
Soft textures e.g. playdough

Wet textures e.g. wet sand, paint

Slimy/lumpy textures e.g. jelly, cornflower and water mix, tapioca, shaving foam.

- Establish the level you child can tolerate and extend the number of textures in that range your child is exposed to. Gradually move up to the next level.
- If your child requests to wash their hands and finish the activity encourage '1 more turn then finished'. The number of turns can be extended. Reassure the child it's o.k. to be messy
- Give some deep pressure through their hands on the way to the sink and during hand washing and drying
- Continue to provide experience of textures for the child by watching and gradually touching
- Be careful not to show any negative reaction from yourself in front of the child.
- Provide beanbag cushions or soft seating to provide security and read a book together.

- Supervised tug of war



Considerations in the nursery or classroom

The child:

- May have difficulty standing in line
- May lash out or react over the top if lightly brushed or knocked by others as they would perceive it as unpleasant / irritating
- May express anxiety if sitting in the middle of the carpet surrounded by others
- Attention and focus on activities may be reduced
- May find it difficult if positioned next to the most enthusiastic explorer of the texture.



If there are any concerns regarding your child's ability to swallow or manage liquids please contact their doctor.

Frequency of activities

Incorporation of activities in the daily setting routine is recommended. Children who are having difficulties will need specific encouragement to access the appropriate activities to develop skills through guided group / 1-1 activities.

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LOOKING AFTER MYSELF

DRINKING

Early Years Activity Sheet

PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

Drinking from an open cup is encouraged from as early as 6 months old. It is a stage of development usually achieved by 18 months – 2 years. Children may find it difficult for a variety of reasons: limited experience, reduced fine motor control, difficulty changing from a bottle.

ACTIVITIES

To encourage holding a cup :

- Building towers
- Nesting and stacking nesting cups
- Pulling apart Russian dolls
- Completing activities with the arms unsupported i.e. painting at an easel, rolling play dough between palms
- water play including pouring from bottles and cups
- scooping and pouring beans, rice

To encourage oral motor activities :

- Play 'vacuum cleaner' where you have to suck through a straw to pick up a piece of paper and move it
- Use ice pops which need sucking
- blowing a ping pong ball into a goal with a straw
- blowing paint across a page to make a picture
 - blowing bubbles through a straw

STRATEGIES

To encourage attention:

- Minimise distractions around your child.
- Ensure the child has sufficient time to attempt to drink successfully.
- Include drinking as part of your child's normal daily routine.

To encourage drinking from an open cup:

- Encourage use of two hands to hold the cup.
- Put a small amount of liquid in the cup initially and gradually increase
- Try some thicker drinks initially i.e. smoothies
- With supervision give your child a chance to try drinking independently before helping child.
- Allow frequent opportunities to practice the skill.
- The child may pour liquid down themselves this is an important part of learning to grade the tip, a doidy cup may help
- Use a variety of cups i.e. egg cup, teaset cup, small child's cup
- A reward system can be used to encourage your child to attempt drinking from the cup.

To learning to drink from a straw:

- Reduce the length of the straw
- Use a firmer straw
- Try a straw with a wider diameter
- Put the straw in some drink then put your finger over the other end of it. Put the straw in the child's mouth and then let some of the drink go into their mouth to help the child get the idea.
- Demonstrate using a straw and make you cheeks suck in to show.
- When using a carton gently squeeze the carton to help the drink go up the straw initially.
- Repeated opportunities to practice the technique required is necessary.

Seating

Always ensure the child is seated on a chair where they can put their feet flat on the floor and their hips and knees are at 90 degrees when drinking or that they are in a stable sitting position on the floor.

To develop use of knife and fork together:

ACTIVITIES

- Practice outside of meal times with bananas or other soft foods.
- Activities which require one hand to stabilise such as rubbings, stencils

STRATEGIES

- Use a coloured dot on the back of the knife and the fork to prompt the position of the index finger on the cutlery.
- Use of specialist cutlery such as caring cutlery can help with initial learning of hand position on cutlery

Frequency of activities

Incorporation of activities in the daily setting routine is recommended. Children who are having difficulties will need specific encouragement to access the appropriate activities to develop skills through guided group / 1-1 activities.

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LOOKING AFTER MYSELF: FEEDING

Early Years Activity Sheet

**PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICES**

INTRODUCTION

Feeding yourself is an important life skill that develops from an early age. A range of skills are required to achieve self-feeding: eye – hand coordination, use of 2 hands together, fine motor skills and oro motor skills

To develop use of two hands together :

ACTIVITIES

- **Threading cotton reels, large beads**
- Draw with stencils
- Draw around templates, hands
- Playing with play dough – rolling, cutting with cutters
- Painting using rollers, stamps, sponges
- Using pegs and pegboard
- Cooking – mixing cake mix, spooning into cake tins, rolling cookie dough

To develop finger feeding:

ACTIVITIES

- Offer hand sized safe snacks
- Play activities which need small items to be picked up and placed i.e. raisins into a pot from a bag
- Lick foods off fingers to develop the hand to mouth coordination without needing to hold something

To develop use of a spoon:

ACTIVITIES

- Practicing scooping beans, rice, lentils
- Play with spoons in sand and messy play
- During water play include pouring to develop control

STRATEGIES

- Always give the child a spoon if they are showing interest in it.
- Child holds the spoon and the adult provided the minimal guidance required to reach the mouth
- Gradually reduce the assistance required.
- Use thicker foods initially to ensure some success.
- Introduce a fork when proficient at using spoon
- Lipped bowls can help when learning to scoop

To develop use of a fork:

ACTIVITIES

- Practice using pieces of pieces of play dough to stab
- Make cookies and decorate with a fork

STRATEGIES

- Cut up food in to small bite size pieces and demonstrate using a fork to stab pieces and eat.
- Use soft food initially
- Your child may initially require hand over hand.
- When your child got the idea of using a fork to stab the food encourage a good grasp of the fork with the index finger pad on the back of the fork.

To develop use of knife:

ACTIVITIES

- Practice using toy knives to cut play dough
- Use a toy saw
- Toy fruit which is joined in the middle with Velcro.

STRATEGIES

- Use a coloured dot on the back of the knife to prompt positioning of the index finger.
- Try caring cutlery

Frequency of activities

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LOOKING AFTER MYSELF SELF CARE DRESSING SKILLS

Early Years Activity Sheet

**PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICES**

Introduction

Independence in dressing allows a child to have better control over what they can do and helps build their confidence and self esteem. Remember undressing is easier than dressing. Children have to be able to have certain skills to enable them to participate in learning to dress and undress.

Remember while dressing and undressing for us may be a task to be completed as quickly as possible, for babies and toddlers it is time when they have your full attention. If you can make it an enjoyable time for both of you it will be time well spent.

Learning to dress and undress is a complex task and happens over a long time while children are learning lots of other new things as well. Fastenings, tight fitting and bulky clothes will require more skill.

ACTIVITIES

- Dressing up; putting adult hats and gloves or mittens on for fun with your child on both you and your child.
- Use action songs: peep-a-boo with arms and legs.
- Dress and undressing teddies and dolls.
- Use of educational dolls or cushions with fastening.

STRATEGIES

- Talking to your toddler or baby while dressing and under dressing.
- Encourage the child to assist you by giving you the part of the body to be dressed or undressed.
- Use all your senses to encourage development of their skills. Touch and feel arms and legs before they are dressed or undressed.
- Talk about the clothes and how the child is helping you to do it i.e. putting your arm in, give lots of praise.
- Use the same routine each time when dressing and undressing.
- Prepare for the dressing or undressing so the child and you can concentrate on the activity once you start.

Back – chaining is a technique adult often use without realising. Most of the dressing task is completed by the adult and the last bit is done by the child; for example doing up the zip on a coat, the adult does the difficult part and the child

- Pulls the zip up to complete the task, followed by lots of praise from the adult.
- Provide clothes with wide necks and that are loose fitting.
- Practise when you are not in a hurry.

Zips

- Use larger Zip where available
- Practice on dolls or teddy bear clothes.
- Practice on other people.
- Create a pouch sealed with a zip to practice on. Hide a motivating toy in the pouch.

Technique

- Start with pull up the zip the adult helping to hold the base.
- will holding the base to then pull up the zip

Poppers

- Some poppers require less strength to push together than others.
- Practice on doll and teddy bear clothing.
- Create a pouch sealed by poppers. Put a toy in that is motivating for the child e.g. vibrating or light up ball or an activity the child likes.

Frequency of activities

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LOOKING AFTER MYSELF GETTING DRESSED FASTENINGS

Early Years Activity Sheet

PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

Learning to complete fastenings needs a range of skills including visual attention, hand dexterity and ability to coordinate the hands together.

ACTIVITIES

To encourage the development of hand skills:

- Threading
- Use of scissors
- Stabilisation activities such as rubbings, stencils
- Squeezing bubble wrap
- Drawing with both hands together.
- Using knife and fork or fork and spoon.
- Play with pegs
- Playdough or therapeutic putty – pinching, squeezing, rolling. Encourage both hands to be involved.
- Using playing cards and turning them over.
- Picking up object and moving them into the palm – see how many pegs they can pick up before dropping one.
- Using clothes pegs which need to be squeezed together to open. Play games including picking up objects with the pegs.
- Opening and closing of zips.
- Encourage dressing up play with larger size clothes.

STRATEGIES

Backward Chaining

This technique can be useful when learning a range of fastenings. An adult completes all but the last part of the task leaving this part for the child to complete e.g. the adult completes all buttons apart from the last one then half posts the button through encouraging the child to pull it through the rest of the way.

- Gradually reduce the help until the child is doing all of one button then the adult does all the buttons except the last two and so on.

Buttons

- Practice using larger buttons at first and gradually reduce the size as the child's skill increases.
- Practice completing buttons on doll and teddy clothing.
- Buttons are easier to grasp if they are flat (instead of concave), large, textured, or sewn slightly above the surface of the garment. Be sure buttonholes are large enough for buttoning ease.

- Create a pouch sealed with buttons and hide a toy or activities by which the child is motivated.

Technique

- The child will learn front buttons first, and then smaller front and side buttons, and finally back buttons.
- The child will pull the buttonhole edge of shirt over the button that is halfway through.
- The child will pinch button and pull the buttonhole edge of shirt over the button that is just started in the hole. The child will pinch button and start it through hole to button.



Frequency of activities

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LEARNING TO FOCUS: ATTENTION

Early Years Activity Sheet

**PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICE**

Introduction

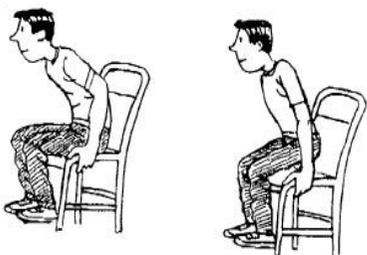
The ability to maintain attention on one activity is crucial for skill development and learning. Some children find maintaining attention difficult and will flit between activities, this affects their ability to finish a task successfully.

Carpet time and group activities can be disrupted when children find it difficult to stay with the group and the child misses out on valuable learning opportunities. There are many reasons why a child's attention is short. This leaflet is intended to give some ideas for incorporation into your daily routine which can be of benefit to all children to help them maintain attention.

ACTIVITIES

These activities are appropriate to carry out before and during activities to help maintain concentration

- **Chair push ups**, push self out of chair on straight arms repeat 3-5 times.



- **Palm presses**, place palms together in 'prayer position' and press firmly together from shoulders.
- **Tug of war**: Children clasp their own hands in front of them, and pull hard, them apart, trying not letting go

- **Reward Chart** Have a visual break down of the activity, on your child's table, which is ticked / given a smiley face, when he completes the parts.
- **Seating Trial** a 'move 'n' sit' cushion (please see resources section at the end of the pack)
- **Hands on head**: Children link fingers in front of them and sit up straight. They then put hands on heads and push down, 5 pushes.
- **Cross Marching** Whole class / individual slow cross march touch opposite hand to knee.
- Give **self a hug**, crossing arms across chest and squeezing shoulders inwards.

The above are activities are all resistive/weight-bearing activities. These activities have a calming and organising effect on the body, your child may benefit from these types of activities before and during seated activities. Some may be incorporated as whole class activities at the start of carpet time and during seated tasks.

STRATEGIES

- **Discover Motivators** – Experiment with a range of toys, find up to five toys which consistently hold the child's attention. These toys can then be rewards when the child has completed an activity requested by an adult or one they find more difficult.
- **Now & Next** – either use the actual objects or pictures of the activities to show the child visually what they are expected to do now and what is coming next. The 2nd activity should be something they are motivated by.
- **Egg timers** are more visual to enable the to see when the activity has finished.
- A clear routine will help the child understand what is expected and what is coming next
- Picture prompts of good looking, listening and sitting . These can be used as a reminder at the beginning of activities.

Sensory based strategies

- Encourage 'heavy' activities before needing to pay attention i.e. carry toy boxes to put away/take out, push the big toys in the garden.
- Incorporate warm ups at circle time before starting an activity; press palms down onto table/floor/chair in order to take weight through arms. Count to 5 or 10.
- Provide activities that require push/pull/squeeze, e.g. pushing friend along in a big cardboard box/on trike, pulling apart clay/playdough/theraputty to find motivating objects.

Frequency of activities

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LEARNING TO FOCUS: SHARING ATTENTION

Early Years Activity Sheet

PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICE

Introduction

The ability to focus on a particular activity while being able to ignore what's going on around us is essential when learning new skills.

ACTIVITIES

- Play copying turn taking games – adult does a mark, child copies. Child does mark – adult copies.
- Use motivating noises – “zzzip” when making a horizontal, “weeee” for circles. Progress to directional words when attention achieved e.g. ‘down’ for vertical.
- Use a variety of chalks / crayons / markers / stampers
- Draw on different surfaces to sustain interest e.g. sugar paper, foil. Textured wall paper,
- Use pre-writing patterns and shapes, — | ○ to make pictures i.e. face, house, favourite animals.
- Have a tray lined with foil use different textures – sand, shaving foam, rice to draw in.

STRATEGIES

- Trays – a box or drawstring bags with a selection of different tabletop activities, e.g. straws and scissors to snip, mark making materials, puzzles. The child chooses a bag. The number of bags to be increased to extend attention.
- A table and chair of correct height, allowing feet to rest flat to floor.
- A 1kg weighted lap cushion may help to sustain sitting. As it provides additional.

- sensory information that children seek which interferes with attention. Information can be obtained from: www.browfarmwheatproducts.co.uk, or go to www.ebay.co.uk and type in weighted lap pad.
- Provide a quiet corner with clear boundaries to the physical space and few distractions, e.g. an area screened by bookcases.
- Present an appropriate motivating activity, e.g. bubbles or a novel toy to encourage initial interest in the activity.
- Provide short instructions e.g. “Sit down”, and a physical prompt to sit if necessary. Reward sitting with the novel toy.
- Provide descriptive praise e.g. “Good sitting”.
- As soon as attention begins to waver, introduce a new activity. A favourite activity may be introduced between other tasks to regain interest and attention.
- Use a kitchen timer or sand timer to show the end of the activity. Make it part of the game to stay at the table / activity until the sand has gone / timer buzzes



- Give simple instructions of one or two key words, e.g. “Look.....snip!” when using scissors in demonstration.
- Give descriptive praise e.g. “good drawing”. Use pictures of good sitting, looking and listening to back-up verbal praise. Use your tone of voice to sustain interest, observe and comment on child’s effort with simple phrases and few words.
- Allow an activity to continue if child is concentrating. Look for opportunities to extend the activity wherever possible. As soon as attention begins to waver, introduce a new activity. A favourite activity may be introduced between other tasks to regain interest and attention.
- Use a kitchen timer or sand timer to show the end of the activity. Make it part of the game to stay at the table / activity until the sand has gone / timer buzzes.

Equipment

	PRICE	DESCRIPTION	ILLUSTRATION	SUPPLIER
Lap Pad Set	£89.95 + VAT (Delivery price £4.95)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-invasive method of providing proprioceptive feedback and stability for seated users. 		ROMPA Goyt Side Road Chesterfield Derbyshire S40 2PH 0)1246 211777 www.rompa.com
Massage Tube	£12.45 + VAT (Delivery price £4.95)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexible massager which makes vibration fun to explore. - Lightweight and fully portable, the massager may also give soothing and penetrating relief to aching muscles. - A special Velcro fastener is included for hands-free massaging. 		ROMPA Goyt Side Road Chesterfield Derbyshire S40 2PH 0)1246 211777 www.rompa.com
Bendy Men Set	Price: £3.50 £4.45 Delivery Prices may vary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Three bendy men can be used to demonstrate new moves to children, and can be used to keep those fingers moving when trying to concentrate 		Special Direct www.specialdirect.com 0800 318 686