

# Hand Strengthening activities for kids

## Weight bearing activities

- Crawling
- Donkey kicks
- Wheelbarrow walks
- Yoga poses
- Play in all fours

## Squeezing Activities

- Play dough, putty, clay
- Sponges
- Spray bottles, water guns, squeeze bottles
- Squeeze Balls or Stretchy Balls
- Clips and clothespins
- Hole Punches
- Scissors
- Glue
- Turkey Basters
- Sensory Balloons – Fill balloons with dry rice, beans, flour, or play dough
- Crumpling Paper
- Bath Toys
- Bubble Wrap
- Tongs and Tweezers

## Pushing & pulling activities

- Lego or Duplo bricks
- Velcro
- Pop Beads
- Mr. Potato Head
- Rubber Bands
- Pegs and Foam Pegboards
- Tape
- Pop Toobs
- Resistance bands
- Squigz
- Climbing
- Tearing paper
- Cooking

## Early Scissor Skills

# Teaching Kids How to Use Scissors

-Place stickers on each thumb and then tell the child to practice "thumbs up cutting" (thumb pointing up on the stabilizing hand and on the hand holding the scissors).

-Snip fringe on paper to make grass or a lion's mane or set out long strips of paper (about 1" wide) and have kids snip off small pieces to make confetti.

## Moving Scissors Forward on Paper

-Place a sticker in the middle of a piece of paper and have the child cut across until he reaches it.

-Encourage kids to move their stabilizing hand along the page as they cut (tell them their hand should move next to their scissors).

## Developing Accuracy and Control

-Draw a line on the paper first and then place stickers along the line for kids to cut in half. This gives exposure to the concept of cutting on a line, but provides mini targets along the way

-Make the cutting lines as thick as they need to be for the child to be successful and gradually make them thinner as the child develops better accuracy.

## Learning to Cut Out Shapes

-Draw a dotted line from the edge of the paper to show your child where to cut into the paper to reach the shape.

-Draw an arrow on the paper indicating which direction the child should go when cutting around the shape.

# In-Hand Manipulation Skills

In-Hand Manipulation skills allow kids to explore and use small objects by moving them around within their hands.

Kids typically develop these skills between the ages of 2 and 4, with finger to palm translation developing first, followed by palm to finger translation, rotation, and shift.

At these young ages, children are able to perform the skills with a single object. By ages 6 to 7, they are able to manipulate and stabilize multiple small objects within the hand and can use these in-hand manipulation skills more purposefully and functionally.

## Rotation

Think of someone twirling a baton in their hand, but now picture it on a smaller scale...twirling a baton with your fingers! This is rotation. Rotation moves an object in a circular motion. A great example is when a child rotates his pencil using the fingers of only one hand to use the eraser.

## Shift

While rotation creates a circular pattern, shift moves an object in a linear pattern within the hand. I always picture an inchworm when I think of shift. When kids adjust how high or low their grasp is on a pencil, they shift it in their hand – inching their fingers up or down the pencil (without assistance from the other hand).

## Translation

Translation can be broken into two separate skills: finger to palm translation and palm to finger translation. Kids use finger to palm translation when they pick up small objects like pebbles, marbles, or Cheerios one at a time, moving them with the fingers of only one hand into their palm. They use palm to finger translation when they move those small objects from their palm back to their fingertips one at a time to place them on the floor or table.