

June 8, 2020

Dear StrongStart Families,

At StrongStart, you've most likely heard us speak about fine motor development. So why do we keep focusing on this? Children need strong hands, fingers and wrists. Fine motor play develops proper pencil and scissor grip, managing clothing, buttons, snaps and shoe tying.

Strong hands also help with endurance and tidy handwriting.

Pushing children to write before they are ready may lead to immature and inefficient pencil grasps. Make sure to engage your child in age-appropriate activities to help develop their upper body, shoulder, arm and wrist muscles. Activities like jumping, crawling, shoveling, playing with play dough, scribbling and doing arts and crafts are all part of the foundations for a good pencil and scissor grasp. This Newsletter will focus on how to teach and support your child as they learn these life skills for preschool and kindergarden. Also, we've included some colourful sorting and shape activities, Enjoy!

Virtual hugs, and distant toe - taps,
Ms Laura, Ms Irina and Ms Marian

Typical pencil grip styles based on developmental age:

The 1yr to 18 months old: *Fisted Grip*

Toddlers will hold a crayon with fisted hands which is the hand is slightly flexed with the arm and hand moves as one unit.

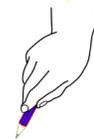
- This is a time to focus on manipulatives and toys that involve squeezing, pinching, putting small objects together and pulling them apart.
- Let toddler use large crayons and let them make marks and scribble.



The 2 to 3 -Year Old: *Palmar Grip*

As the child's hand muscles develop their hands get stronger and more coordinated along with their wrists straighten out. They will be holding a pencil or crayon with more fingers. The child will continue to use their whole arm to make marks.

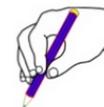
- This is a time to develop their thumb, index and middle finger to work together by introducing activities with clothespins, tweezers, tongs, eye-dropper, spray bottles and stamps.



The 3 to 4 -Year Old: *Static Tripod*

The child will hold a pencil with three fingers; index, thumb and middle fingers. The ring finger may also be used to support the pencil (quadruped grasp).

- Have child hold a small crumpled tissue or bead with baby and ring finger against palm while holding pencil to promote tripod position. They will draw using the wrist for movement, keeping the fingers stiff



The 4 to 6-Year Old: *Dynamic Tripod Grasp*

- As the child's finger mature, the fingers will begin to move independently and will draw and write with more precision.



Try these pencil-gripping tricks with your 4 or 5-year old

Pompom power

Give children a pompom or cotton ball to hold in their hand when they write. Demonstrate how to put pinky and ring man to “sleep” on the pompom before picking up the pencil.



Writing Bracelet

String a bead or jingle bell to a piece of yarn or string to make a bracelet. Make it loose enough so it can slide easily on and off a child's wrist. While writing the child wears the bracelet and holds the bead in her hand.

Silly Band

Have the child put a silly band or rubber band around their wrist and pick up the pencil. Explain that when you go in the car you have to wear a seatbelt. When you write you have to put a seat belt on the pencil (slide the band around the pencil). Mom and dad are in the front (pointer and thumb) and the kids are in the back (middle, ring, and pinky).



Activities to Promote Fine Motor Strength



Paper Crumpling : Have child crumple sheets of newspaper or scrap paper into small tight balls possible. Add a challenge of using one hand to crumple paper. Crumble small pieces of tissue paper and glue them onto a piece of paper to make a picture.

Tape Tearing :Tear off small pieces of tape and stick them onto a hard surface then have child pull off the pieces of tape.



Manipulating Playdough using only hands.

Have child create shapes by *pinching, rolling and squishing*. Add small objects, pipe cleaners, jewels, stones to enhance their creativity.

Clothes-peg or tong pick up: Find a variety of small soft objects (ie; pompoms) and have child squeeze clothes peg and pick up pompom and drop into a container. Count pompoms and name colours as child transfers.



Eye-Droppers

Have three containers with red, yellow, blue coloured water and a Styrofoam egg carton. Using an eye-dropper have child draw up water and mix with other colours in egg carton. Ask how the new colours were created.

Scissor Skills:

Scissor cutting skills are complicated and challenging for young children. It involves fine motor development, hand separation movement (thumb, index and middle fingers move separately from pinkie and ring finger) and two-handed coordination. The 3 to 4-year old have the skills to snip. *Scissor skills are typically not fully developed until six years of age.* Scissor cutting is complicated, and children need to be given *lots of opportunity* to practice this skill. Use a good pair of scissors. Left handed children should use left handed scissors.



Scissor safety

Scissors are only for cutting paper!

It is important to emphasize this rule. Explain there are different kinds of special scissors for cutting hair, cloth and finger nails.

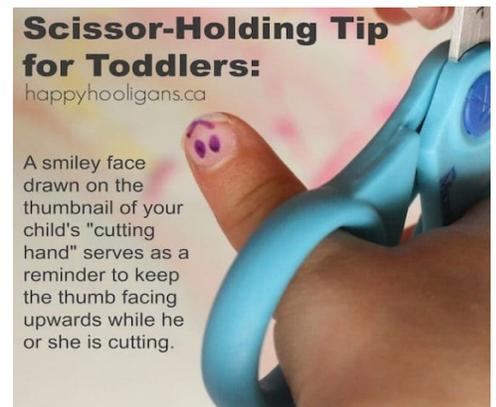
Walking with scissors

If they have to walk with scissors, demonstrate the proper way with blades closed, gripping end in the hand forming a fist leaving the handles exposed. The scissors should be held close to the side of the body.



How to hold a pair of scissors

The first step in holding a pair of scissors starts with the tripod grasp talked about in the pencil section. At first, children tend to hold their elbow out to the side and hold the scissors upside down when they are cutting. To help correct this, place a piece of paper between their arm and side to help stabilize arm and bring down their shoulder. Place a sticker on the child's thumb or draw a smiley face on the thumbnail and ask them to keep the sticker or smiley up!



Developmental Progression of Cutting Skills

- Rip- First they will rip paper
- Snip-A single snip into edge of paper. The closing action of scissors is easier than opening action
- Cut an imaginary line- Once the action of open and closed is learned, the child will cut in any direction
- Cutting a straight line-They will use their visual perception skills to cut a thick line
- Zig-Zag lines
- Curved lines

Scissor Skill Activities:

Scissor Busy Box

Create a container with regular paper, cardstock paper, string, paint sample cards, pictures from magazines or flyers along with a pair of scissors for your child to freely cut.



Cutting playdough

Use a pair of scissors just for playdough as playdough dulls scissors quickly: Make snakes and cut into small pieces



Paint sample card cuts- cut along white lines





Straws- once cut up, child can string on to yarn to create bracelets or necklaces



Styrofoam trays- try this for a different Cutting experience

Lines on Paper

Using a dark felt pen, draw short lines on paper and have child snip lines

Advance to long straight lines then curvy lines



Practice pencil holding skills by drawing “scribble monsters”: your child at any age can scribble! Use different colours then add faces legs and arms after. Observe how your child holds the pencil or pen.



Name Puzzle

Write the child’s name on a 10” paper strip with a marker. Cut between the letters in the name and put them in an envelope. Write the child’s name on the front of the envelope. Children take the individual letters from inside the envelope and put them together like a puzzle to spell the name.

Organizing and sorting

Ask children to collect different natural objects such as rocks, leaves, etc. (This will vary with the season and your habitat.) Put their objects together in a big pile. Ask the children to put the objects that are alike together. What was their sorting rule? Can they sort them another way?

Seriation (organizing by size)



Collect sticks of different lengths and have the children put them in order from smallest to largest.

*They could also “seriate” leaves, rocks, etc.

Patterns

Collect 5 or 6 leaves, rocks, sticks or other natural objects. Place a leaf, then a rock, a leaf, then a rock. “What will come next?” Let children make up their own patterns with objects in nature



Sorting by Color

Here are some ways to teach sorting by color in Preschool and Pre-K using simple, low cost materials with quick prep.

Paint Sample Cards



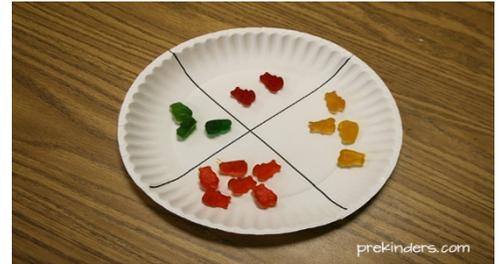
These paint sample cards are the kind you can pick up for free at the hardware store. I get different hues of each color for the children to sort.

Beads and Pipe Cleaners

Children sort pony beads by stringing them onto different pipe cleaners. I used a jewelry wire tool to curl the ends of the pipe cleaners so that they wouldn't poke or scratch anyone.



Gummies: These are gummy bears, but any kind of gummies could be used for this activity. I drew lines on a paper plate with a Sharpie to make sections for sorting.



Markers, Crayons, Colored Pencils



If you have markers, crayons, and colored pencils at home, children can sort into clear cups by color. Learn how to sort the different hues, for example light blue and dark blue go together, pink and red go together, gray and black go together. It is visually appealing and organized!

Colour-Match Car tracks

You will need paint, toy cars, a large rectangular sheet of paper and masking tape. The masking tape is to hold the paper in place, so it does not move while children are painting. Put a small blob of paint on each end of the landscape paper but mix it up so that the cars need to cross each other's paths to match the corresponding colour, drive the cars through the coloured wet paint towards the corresponding colour blob.



For example, the red car in the red paint, drives across the paper towards the red blob of paint on the other side. This is repeated for the other colours.

Learning Opportunities:

- Fine Motor Development
- Hand-Eye Coordination and Control
- Cause and Effect
- Colour recognition and matching
- Spatial awareness
- Language development: talking about the process and what is happening. New vocabulary

Shapes are all around us!

Shapes are in our kitchen, they are in our cars, and they are on street signs. Shapes literally make up the world we live in. Let's see if our preschoolers recognize shapes in everyday objects.

This hands-on learning approach helps with:

- Patterning
- problem-solving
- creative thinking
- questioning
- comparing
- storytelling
- explaining
- constructing

Here are even more ways to add shapes into play:

- draw shapes
- paint shapes
- cutting shapes from artwork
- playing with blocks
- locating shapes outside
- recognizing how many sides and corners



Geometry

Draw basic geometric shapes (square, triangle, rectangle, oval, rhombus, circle) on 6" cardboard squares. Let the children take the shapes and match them to something in nature with a similar shape.

Songs and Poems

Pencil Grip

(Tune: "Where is thumbkin")

Where is Pointer, where is pointer?

On the top, on the top

Ready to write, ready to write

Start at the top, start at the top

Where is Thumbkin (repeat)

On the side (repeat)

Ready to help (repeat)

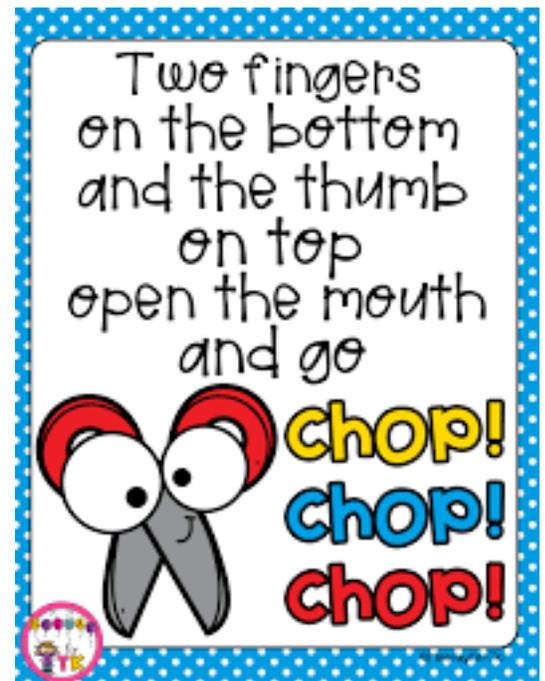
Your pencil glides (repeat)

Where is Tallman...

On the bottom....

Keeps the letters..

Where you want them



Shape Monster poem/game



Shape Monster, Shape Monster

Munch, munch, munch

How about a **RED TRIANGLE** for your lunch?

Shape Monster, Shape Monster

Munch, munch, munch

How about a **BLUE SQUARE** for your lunch?

Shape Monster, Shape Monster

Munch, munch, munch

How about a **YELLOW CIRCLE** for your lunch?

Shape Monster, Shape Monster

Munch, munch, munch

How about a **GREEN RECTANGLE** for your lunch?

Shape Monster, Shape Monster

Munch, munch, munch

How about a **ORANGE OVAL** for your lunch?

Shape Monster, Shape Monster

Munch, munch, munch

How about a **PURPLE DIAMOND** for your lunch?

Shape Monster, Shape Monster

Munch, munch, munch

Hope you enjoyed your shape lunch!

Rainbow Cake Recipe

2 Cups Flour
1 ½ Cups White Sugar
1 Tablespoon Baking Powder
¾ Cups Milk
1 teaspoon Vanilla

½ Cup Butter (room temperature)

3 eggs (room temperature)
Variety of Food Colouring (red, blue, yellow)

Buttercream Icing

½ Cup Butter (softened)
2 Tablespoons Vanilla
2 ½ Cups Icing Sugar
2 Tablespoons Milk

Directions

Preheat oven to 350F

Line 2 round cake tins with parchment paper. Set aside

Using a mixer beat vanilla, butter, sugar and eggs until combined, add milk and blend

Mix flour, sugar and baking powder into a bowl.

Add flour mixture to butter and milk mixture. Beat slowly until combined.

Beat for 4 minutes.

Divide cake batter into separate bowls, one for each colour.

Put drops of colour into bowl with batter and mix with spoon.

*If you want intense colour use more drops

Spoon coloured batter into cake pans until batter is evenly divide between cakes.

Bake cakes for 20 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean

Allow to rest for a few minutes, take out of pan and let cool completely on rack.

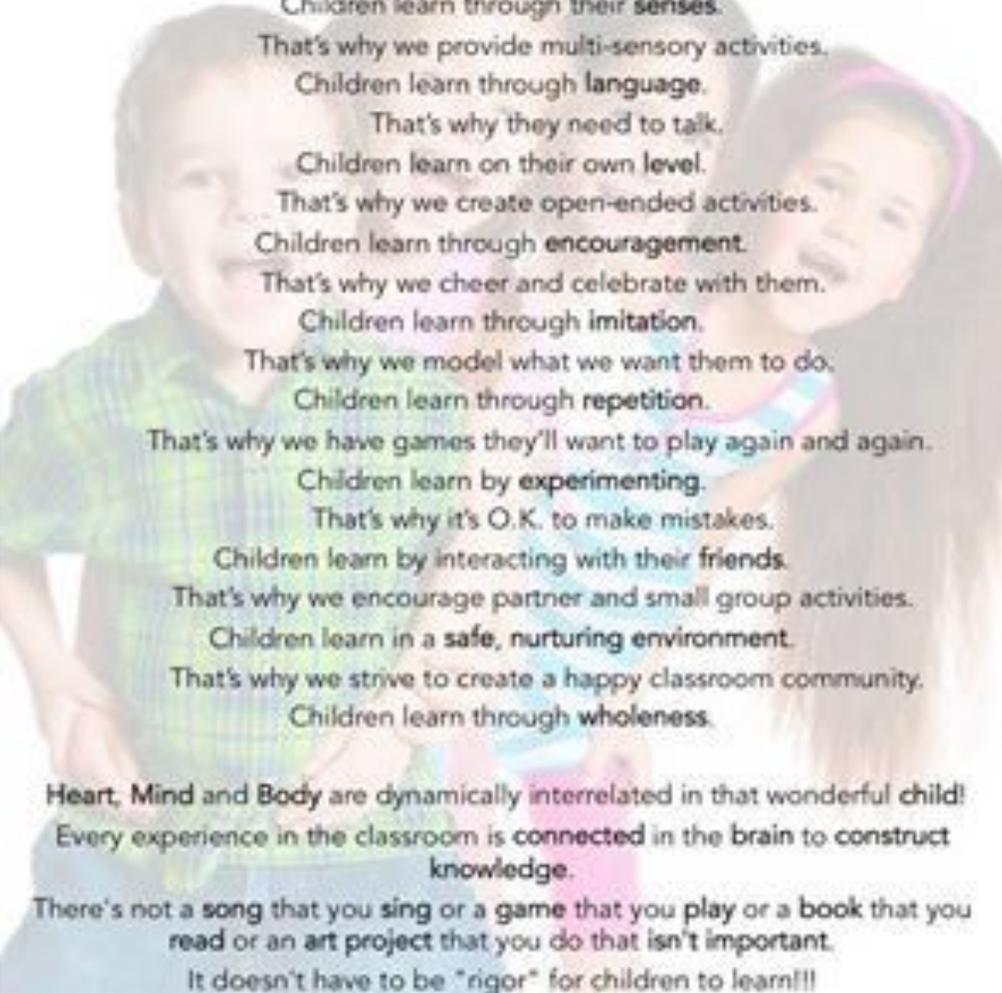
Icing

Beat butter and vanilla, add icing sugar and milk. Beat until smooth. Ice cooled cake. Colour if you wish



How Do Children Learn?

by Dr. Jean Feldman



Children learn through **play**.
That's why we offer learning centers.
Children learn by **doing**.
That's why we sing and move.
Children learn through their **senses**.
That's why we provide multi-sensory activities.
Children learn through **language**.
That's why they need to talk.
Children learn on their own **level**.
That's why we create open-ended activities.
Children learn through **encouragement**.
That's why we cheer and celebrate with them.
Children learn through **imitation**.
That's why we model what we want them to do.
Children learn through **repetition**.
That's why we have games they'll want to play again and again.
Children learn by **experimenting**.
That's why it's O.K. to make mistakes.
Children learn by interacting with their **friends**.
That's why we encourage partner and small group activities.
Children learn in a **safe, nurturing environment**.
That's why we strive to create a happy classroom community.
Children learn through **wholeness**.

Heart, Mind and Body are dynamically interrelated in that wonderful child!
Every experience in the classroom is **connected** in the brain to construct
knowledge.

There's not a **song** that you **sing** or a **game** that you **play** or a **book** that you
read or an **art project** that you **do** that isn't important.
It doesn't have to be "rigor" for children to learn!!!

