



Month 4: Developing Hands and Fingers School Age Activities

Name in Lights

You will need: construction paper, marker and pencil, carpet square or carpeted area on the floor, 1 pushpin with plastic handle (or you can use a sharp golf pencil to help promote a tripod grasp).

Before your child starts this activity you will need to cut a rectangular shape from construction paper and print your child's first name in pencil. Then use the marker to place small dots every $\frac{1}{4}$ inch along the letters of her name. Place the construction paper with her pre-printed name and ask her to use the pushpin to poke holes where you drew the dots. Make sure she holds the pushpin using her thumb and index and middle fingers. If you work on the floor the child can work on her tummy, propped up on her elbows, or work in sitting. Encourage her to use one hand to hold the construction paper still and the other hand to control the pushpin. Direct her to poke the dots in a consecutive order, starting at the letter on the left and proceeding to the right, as in reading or writing. When the child has completed her name, she can hold up her pushpin paper in a doorway or window to see her name in lights!

Stained Glue Window

You will need: lid to a small margarine container, food colouring, school glue in a small squeeze bottle, ribbon, and small decorative pieces such as beads, string, tinsel and aluminum foil.

Add the food colouring to the glue, stirring or shaking until the colour is consistent throughout. Ask the child to pick up the decorative items (beads, etc.) and arrange them in the margarine lid. Demonstrate squeezing the glue bottle. Allow the child to squeeze the glue out of the bottle using both hands, completely filling the lid. Let the lid dry for 24 hours. After it dries, you can peel the glue disk out of the lid and punch a hole through the glue layer using a pen or pencil. This is your stained glue window. The child can then string a ribbon through the hole and tie it off with your help. Hand the decorated disk in a window.

Big-Button Button-Up

Give the child a shirt or jacket with at least 3 buttons $\frac{3}{4}$ " to $1\frac{1}{4}$ " in diameter. Or you can create a homemade buttoning board by sewing buttons and button-holes on a piece of fabric, and if you're a really good sewer create pockets with buttons and hide treasures for your child to find. Demonstrate how to push the buttons through the buttonholes. Then it's your child's turn. Encourage your child to continue practicing until he or she

becomes proficient with buttoning and unbuttoning. If you see your child struggling with buttons here are a few suggestions:

- Provide repeated demonstrations and models of the actions required for buttons.
- Place buttons part way through the holes, then have the child pull them the rest of the way through.
- You can also increase the size of the buttonholes to more than twice the size of the buttons. Have your child practice pulling the buttons through those holes. When he/she is proficient with these buttonholes, try the original activity again.

To give your child more of a challenge:

- Vary the size and type of buttons used.
- Have your child put on a jacket, vest or shirt, then practice buttoning and unbuttoning the garment while wearing it.
- Provide clothes with large buttons for the children to use when playing dress-up or house.

Hole Punch Art

To make some hole punch art you will need some construction paper and a hand held hole punch. First demonstrate how to punch holes, with emphasis on placing the paper in the hole punch and pushing the handles together. It's now the child's turn. Encourage the child to continue punching holes to create creative masterpieces by punching random holes or to punch out designs in the paper. There are also hand held punches in different shapes so they would be fun for your child too. To punch out the different shapes then to glue them onto another paper to create more art.

For more of a challenge:

- Punch out a simple design and encourage your child to imitate the design.
- With a large picture of a simple object as a template (a ball, flower, etc.) have the child punch over-lapping holes around the silhouette of the object to "cut" it out.

Little Hand Mixers

Children love to help in the kitchen, and here's a way they can and strengthen their hands at the same time!

You will need: muffin mix and ingredients, large resealable plastic bag and a muffin pan. Lay out all the ingredients onto the table. Follow the directions on the package putting all the ingredients into the plastic bag. Seal the bag really well once all the ingredients are in. Push, poke and mix the ingredients, around in the bag. Empty the mixture into a muffin pan and bake.

Rub A Dub

Fill the tub/water table with warm water. Put doll clothes and washcloths in a bucket and clothespins in a small container. Hang a clothesline close by with a beach towel underneath to catch the dripping water. Have the children wash the items, getting them very wet. Tell them to squeeze and wring out the items until most of the water is removed. Allow the children to rewash and wring out as often as they would like. Then the children can clip the items to the clothesline to finish drying.

****Using a clothes line to hand art work to dry is also a great way to get the children to use the clothes pins to strengthen their hands!****

Rubber Fingers

Play Rubber Fingers in pairs. Have the children sit facing each other. One child has a container of rubber bands; the other child holds up one hand in front of her with her fingers spread apart. The child with the rubber bands stretches them on her partner's hand from each of her fingers to her thumb. After the rubber bands are on, encourage both children to say and do the motions to "Open Them, Shut Them". After saying the rhyme, take off the rubber bands, one at a time, always lifting of the top one next. Make sure each child gets a turn.

Turkey Baster Blasters

This is a fun water activity where you will need turkey basters, a small plastic swimming pool (or water table), and small margarine tubs. Fill the swimming pool with water. Float the margarine tubs in the pool. Give each child a turkey baster (found at the dollar store) and have them lie down next to the pool. Each child fills his baster with water from the pool and then squirts it into one of the floating containers. Continue until the containers are full and have sunk. Dump the water back into the swimming pool and play again.

Cotton Ball Road Rally

Things you will need to play: masking tape, scooter boards, several containers, cotton balls or ping pong balls, plastic squeeze containers or turkey basters.

Tape a straight line on the floor to make a road. Put the balls in a container. Set the containers, squeeze bottles, and scooter boards near the tape. Let each child get on a scooter board and take a cotton ball and a squeeze bottle. Have him put his ball on the road and drive it along by blowing it with the squeeze bottle. The children can do this activity in a variety of positions: sitting on the scooter board, lying on the scooter board or lying on the floor.

Variations: Zig-Zag Drive: As the children become proficient at this activity, change the line to an 'S' curve or zig-zag line, add tunnels, etc.

Polka Dot Flowers

You will need: plastic eyedroppers, coloured food dye, small containers of water, coffee filters.

Have the child help you squeeze 1-3 drops of dye into the water. Use darker colours of food dye to provide a strong contrast. Encourage the child to practice squeezing water in and out of the eyedropper. Have her use the pads of her fingers/thumb when she pinches the eyedropper. Once the child understands how to control the eyedropper, begin to dye the coffee filters with different colours to make tie-dyed flowers.

Cotton Ball Pick-Up

Cotton Ball Pick-Up is a fun game of matching while working on hand strength. To play you will need coloured cotton balls, coloured markers, coloured stickers, or construction paper to match each cotton ball, spring loaded clothespins and empty margarine containers. Colour cod the margarine tubs with the markers, stickers or construction

paper. Have the children help you scatter cotton balls on the floor, table or in your water table. Have the margarine tubs near by. Give each child a clothespin. Using the clothespin, each child should pick up a cotton ball and bring it to the matching margarine container. Another way to play is to give each child a container and he has to hunt for all the cotton balls that match his container.

****NOTE:** Encourage the children to use only their thumb and first two fingers to open and close the clothespins.

Variation: Instead of matching colours, match letters, numbers, shapes, etc.

Alien Clothespins

Alien clothespins is a similar game to cotton ball pick up. You will need coffee cans (or containers), coloured construction paper, scooter boards, and matching coloured clothespins. Cut out spaceships from different coloured construction paper and glue one to each coffee can. Draw an alien face on each clothespin. Have the aliens, space ships, and scooters available. In an open area, have the children scatter the Alien clothespins on the floor and set the space ships away from them. Have the children ride their scooter boards, pick up the Aliens, and return them one at a time to their matching colour space ship. Clip each alien to the top rim of the space ship can.

****NOTE:** Encourage the children to use their thumbs and first two fingers to open the clothespins. Do this activity in a variety of positions, such as lying, or sitting on the scooter board.

Variations: Have children catch shapes, letters, numbers, etc. and clip them to the space ships.

Fluttering Butterflies

To create a fluttering butterfly you will need: 3 clothespins, a circle (5-7" in diameter) cut out of white paper, markers, pipe cleaners or 2 matching thin strips of construction paper, glue.

Have the child colour the circle in any desired pattern, then accordion fold it 3 times, attempting to make 4 fairly equal segments. It is not important that the child's folds be straight or equally spaced, only that he or she makes creases in the paper. Pinch together the 2 center segments on the middle fold, to make the butterfly's body. Hold them together while the child attaches clothespins sticking down from the body to represent legs. (One clothespin in the front and one in the back will be sufficient to allow the butterfly to stand, or the child can attach 3 to represent the 6 legs an insect has.) The child can glue on pipe-cleaner antennae (or use paper strips) and draw eyes on the butterfly, if desired.

Make sure if your child is struggling with the folds you model or provide some physical assistance if required.

Card Shuffle & Play

Give the child a deck of cards. Have the student hold half the deck in each hand. Next, the student shuffles the deck of cards, using thumbs on the end fanning the cards from both hands together. Then student deals out cards (holding deck with one hand and moving the card through the other hand) to play a game.

Increase or decrease the level of difficulty by changing the amount of shoulder stability the student is using. Less stability is needed if arms are leaning on table or legs. More stability is required when holding arms in space.

Clay (or Play Dough) and Toothpicks (or pieces of straws)

You can use clay or play dough to complete this activity. Have child soften clay by squeezing it and rolling it between their hands and then form tiny balls. To create tiny balls roll clay between thumb and 1st and 2nd fingers, keeping the last two fingers curled into palm. Join toothpicks using the balls of clay. Form letters, numbers, and shapes. The clay will form the corner joints of the structures.

If the child has difficulty keeping their last two fingers curled into palm, have them hold a small pom against their palm with the last two fingers.

Domino Highway

To play Domino Highway you will need: dominos or pattern blocks, clock or timer, and paper with lines for domino placement.

Using only your index finger and thumb, see how many dominos you can line up in 5 minutes without tipping any over.

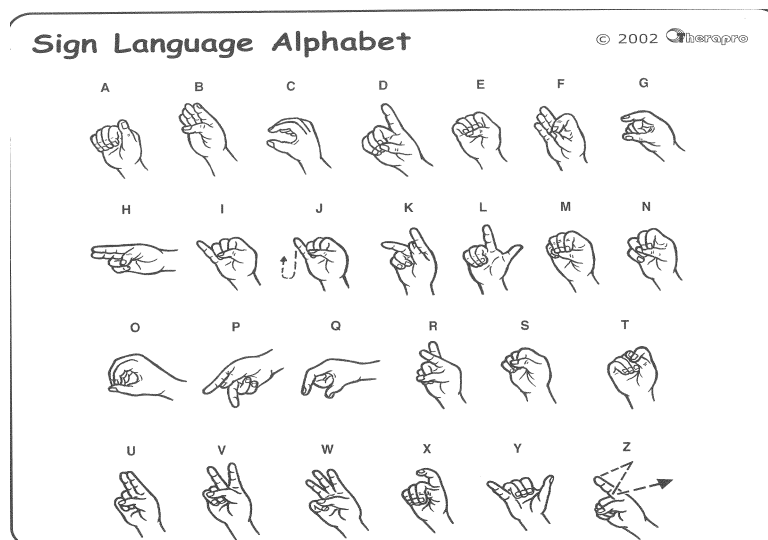
Increase or decrease difficulty by shortening or omitting the time limit. Have paper with lines on it to show where to set up the dominos.

Finger Statues

All you need is your fingers to play. Start with all players putting their hands behind their backs. Adult or leader shapes fingers into a pose (for example, close hands into a fist and straighten up only the thumbs and index fingers of both hands, or use sign language alphabet). The leader shows this pose to the other players. The other players put their hands into the pose they are being shown and the bring hand to front.

Variations:

1. Choose finger poses that are easier to imitate.
2. Bring one hand out in front to copy the pose while the other stays behind the back and tries to copy it.
3. Have the student imitate the pose with both hands in front of the body.



Finger Soccer

To start create a soccer field on a 11" X 17" piece of construction paper. Your soccer ball will be a cotton ball. The object of the game is to shoot the cotton ball off the paper at the opponent's end. The two players lay on the floor propped on their elbows, with the paper field between them. One player shoots the cotton ball by flicking it with his index finger keeping other fingers tucked into palm. The second student tries to catch the cotton ball when it crosses the middle line. If not, the first student gets to flick the cotton ball again. Then switch and have second student flick the cotton ball while the first student catches.

Marble Tug of War

To work on hand strength partner up the children and provide each pair with a marble or small ball. The two players lie on the floor on their stomachs, facing each other. Hold one marble between the two of you, holding it between your index finger and thumb. Keep your elbow on the floor, and try to keep our wrist from moving. Count to three and try to pull the marble away from the other person, using just those two fingers. Make sure you change partners after a few plays.

References:

Invest in Kids Foundation. (2001). What a child will be depends on you and me: A resource kit for a child's first five years. Toronto (ON): Invest in Kids Foundation.

SPARC: Sports and Recreation New Zealand (2008). Developing hands and fingers. Active Movement.

Marsh, N. Start to Finish: Developmentally Sequenced Fine Motor Activities for Preschool Children. Austin (TX): Pro-ed.

Pieraccini, V & Vance, D (2001). Handprints: Home Programs for Hand Skills. Austin (TX):Pro-ed.

Cleveland, A., Caton, B. & Adler, L (1994). Activities Unlimited. Elgin (Ill): Building Blocks Publication.

Bridgeman, M (2002). The Fine Motor Olympics Activities. Framingham (MA): Therapro Inc.