



Month 5: Coordination Skills Pre-School Activities

Containers

In preparation for lunches for school, start having your child practice opening all of those little containers on their own. Have picnics (at home or at the park) where you can help your kids master their juice boxes, small Tupperware containers, thermoses, Ziploc baggies, etc.) These activities not only boost their self esteem because they can do it all by themselves, but it also helps to improve their coordination skills in a functional fun way!

Paint Your World with Water

In order to paint your world you will need paintbrushes of various sizes, a bucket with water and a tree or wall surface. Help the child fill a bucket with a small amount of water, and have him carry it to the surface to be painted by placing both hands around the handle. Demonstrate painting on the tree or wall surface with the paintbrush in one hand while holding onto the bucket with the other hand. To fully cover the bark surface, have the child dab the water between the crevices.

To make this activity harder: Have your child paint lines, shapes, letters and numbers. Give the child two paintbrushes – one for each hand. First, have him use both hands to paint in the same direction, either up or down. Then try more difficult moves such as having one paintbrush go up and one go down, or paint circles in opposite directions.

Tear-it-up Designs

In order to create a tear-it-up design you will need construction paper and glue. Demonstrate how to rip paper. Show your child how one hand moves away from you and one hand moves toward you when ripping. Have your child place his hands at the top of a medium sized piece of paper. Place your hands over his hands and demonstrate how to rip paper. Make sure your child is using the pads of the fingers and thumbs rather than a whole hand grasp when ripping. Continue ripping smaller and smaller pieces of paper. Glue the ripped pieces of paper onto a paper to create a design. Or have the child fill in a template to create a flower, pumpkin, letter, shape or number. You can use a variety of types of paper like tissue paper, newspaper or magazines. Thin paper is harder to control, and thick paper provides more resistance to the fingers and thumb. Challenge your child to tear out simple shapes such as circles or squares.

Edible Jewellery

To make a piece of edible jewellery you will need circular cereal such as Cheerios or Fruit Loops, some tape and yarn. Before you start make sure you make a knot at one end

of the yarn so the “jewels” don’t fall off. And you’ll want to create a “needle” on the other end by tightly wrapping tape around it. Demonstrate stringing the snack onto the yarn, using one hand to hold the yarn while the other hand places the snack. Encourage your child to use his thumb and index and middle fingers to hold the snack as he strings it onto the yarn. If your child demonstrates difficulty picking up the cereal with the pads of his index finger and thumb place the cereal in the cups of an egg carton to encourage the pincer grasp. Also encourage your child to use the pads of his index finger and thumb to hold the yarn. When the string is full, tie the ends together to make the bracelet or necklace.

To make this activity harder:

- Use a variety of different challenges to string such as: noodles, cut-up straws, and buttons.

Getting Down to Nuts & Bolts

Collect a variety of nuts and matching bolts in various sizes. You can use real nuts and bolts or to make it easier at first you can use the plastic nuts and bolts such as those made by Fisher Price, but remember if you start with the plastic ones once the child becomes proficient with the toys, progress to regular nuts and bolts. Demonstrate how to screw the nuts onto the bolts. Then separate the nuts into one pile and the bolts into another. Then have the child match up and screw together the nuts and bolts. To increase the challenge when you separate the nuts and bolts place them into containers with screw tops so the child has to unscrew the container to retrieve the pieces. You can also use nut and bolt boards.

Potato Porcupine

In order to make a potato porcupine you will need a potato and some toothpicks. To start demonstrate to your child your to make the quills of the pretend porcupine by sticking the toothpicks into the potato. Encourage your child to hold the potato still on the table surface with one hand and push a quill into the porcupine with the other hand, using the pads of the index finger and thumb. Don’t forget to get creative by adding eyes, nose and a mouth with other foods or items.

To make this activity easier: Make the potato softer, peel it or put it in the microwave for a few minutes.

To make this activity harder: Use a variety of vegetables or fruit for different amounts of resistance. Squash, cucumber, pear or kiwi will work.

Help your child tuck his pinky and ring finger into his palm for stability. Place a piece of potato in the child’s hand and ask him to hold onto it with those fingers.

If you don’t want to use food, styrofoam balls and shapes work really well too.

Putting Money In the Bank

Materials:

- 15-20 poker chips
- A plastic self-sealing sandwich bag
- A container with plastic lid such as a coffee can (the bank)

Cut a slit in the plastic lid that is slightly longer than the diameter of the poker chip. To make the container more playful, decorate it with stickers. If possible, use a metal

container because some children enjoy hearing the sounds of coins inside the container. Give your child the sandwich bag with poker chips inside. Ask her to take the money out of the bag and put it in the bank. Encourage her to use one hand to hold the bag and the other to reach inside for the coin. Place the container in front of the child. Encourage her to stabilize the container with one hand while placing the coin in the bank with the other. For an extra challenge:

- Place three coins on the table and ask the child to pick up the coins one at a time with one hand, keeping them in the hand. Once the coins are in the child's palm, have her put the coins in the bank using only that hand.
- Place a coin in the child's palm to be held there with the ring and pinky fingers. Tell her "Don't drop it!" While she is placing the coins in the bank with the other fingers of the same hand.

Lacing

Lacing cards can be created using any picture. You can easily use a greeting card too! Simply glue the card closed. Use a hole punch to punch around the edges. Holes should be approximately ½ inch apart. Tie a knot in one end of a shoelace and pull through the hole in the top left-hand corner of the card. Don't forget to demonstrate to the child how to lace the card by pulling the shoelace through the bottom from the top.

Progression:

- Place a pair of shoes on the table in front of the child. Have the child lace the shoes and then tie them. Now try it with the shoes on the child's feet.

Freeze Frame

Have the children sit in a chair with their feet flat on the floor. The adult should be seated in a similar fashion across from the children. Tell the children, "Imitate my movements and when I stop moving, you also stop moving. It's called 'freezing.' Move your body, focusing on exaggerated head and arm movements, in varying directions, and don't forget to cross midline! Suddenly freeze in an awkward position. The children should also immediately freeze in the same position. You can easily turn this activity into a *Simon Says* game. Have the children assume a position when you say and they may not change to a new position until you say, 'Simon Says' to do so. Remember to cross midline as much as possible; for example touch your right hand to your left foot.

Tic-Tac-Toe

In this version of tic-tac-toe the child will be using finger paints and the paper will be placed on the wall. This could get messy (which children love!) so make sure you prep your area first, by placing some garbage bags on the wall before hanging the paper up and have the child wear a smock or old shirt. When placing the paper on the wall make sure its at the child's eye level, so that the child need to reach up. Have the child seat (or keel) on the floor 90 degrees from the wall and sitting with the wall on their hand dominant side (right or left). Place the finger paints on their opposite side. So if there right is closest to the wall the paint would be placed on their left side. This way they have to reach across their body to dip their fingers in the paint. Now you are ready to start playing tic-tac-toe with the child. If they don't want to play the game have them simply paint a picture with the same set-up.

Shopping for Groceries

Every child likes to pretend play and do grown-ups activities, just like grocery shopping. In advance of playing set out a variety of groceries out (plastic or real) at different heights to look just like a grocery store. Make sure the child has a grocery basket to collect the items. Tell the child to go shopping and fill the basket and make sure to bring it back to you so you can check them out. To make it more challenging give the child a list of groceries using simple words or pictures. Encourage the child to cross his body to reach, using both hands to stoop and recover groceries.

Something in My Pocket

In order to play make sure your child is wearing clothing with back pockets, and have small items that fit in those pockets. Place one item at a time in the child's back pocket. You may say to the child, "Oops, something just jumped in your pocket! Can you get it out?" Continue until the child has removed then items, then switch to the other pocket. If you wish, you may alternate sides throughout instead. If your child doesn't have back pockets just place stickers on the child's clothing approximately where pockets or belt loops would be located. To make it easier make sure the pockets are bigger and to make it harder use smaller pockets.

If you have a group together, gather them in a circle with each child facing outward. Have the children pass an item, such as a ball, behind their backs, from one child to the next. You may choose to play hot potato to increase interest and speed. The children will pass the "potato" as quickly as possible while the music plays. The object is not to be the one holding the potato when the music stops.

Bubble Machine

To make a bubble machine you will need a manual eggbeater, a large bowl, dishwashing soap, and water. To start put about a tablespoon of dishwashing soap into the bowl. Fill the bowl two-thirds full of water. Place the bowl on the table with the eggbeater beside it. To use the eggbeater, ask the child to hold the stationary handle of the eggbeater with one hand and place it into the bowl. She should use the other hand to turn the rotary handle. The rotation of the eggbeater will make bubbles in the bowl. The faster it turns the more bubbles are made.

Modifications: Use a bowl of beans, flour, or rice. As the child turns the handle of the eggbeater, the items in the bowl will spin and jump around. Be careful this can get messy.

Wall Turns

You will need: two pieces of poster board or paper (2 X 3 feet), finger paints, paintbrush and be set up in the corner of the room. Place one piece of paper on each side of the wall in a corner. The middle of the paper should be at the child's eye level. Use a paintbrush to paint the child's palms with finger paint. Have the child stand with her back in the corner. Hold onto the child's feet so that she does not move them. Tell the child to turn side to side and say, "Touch both hands on the paper when you turn. Keep going until the paint on your hands is gone. Great, now let's add another colour!" Paint the child's hands with another colour and continue the activity. When you are finished, the child will have two pictures filled with handprints.

Play Dough Fun

Whether you purchase play dough or make it yourself, kids love to play with it and it helps to promote coordination skills and hand strength.

Activities:

1. Use both hands to roll dough into a ball.
2. Use both hands to roll ball on table into a long thin “snake.”
3. Other things children can do: squishing, flattening with a rolling pin, using cookie cutters to make different shapes.
4. Roll into long, thin strips and cut with safety knife or scissors.
5. Roll these smaller pieces to create numbers or letters. Make your own name or initials.
6. Practice “cutting” using long strips of play dough.
7. Cut the dough using a knife and fork.

Clay & Toothpicks

For this activity you can use clay or playdough. Have the children form the clay into tiny balls. Which can be done two ways:

1. Roll clay between hands with palms flat and wrists in neutral.
2. Roll clay between thumb and 1st and 2nd fingers, keeping last two fingers curled into palm.

Join toothpicks using the balls of clay. Form letters, numbers and shapes such as a square, letter E, or a pyramid. The clay balls will form the corner joints of the structure. Make sure the child knows to use the helper hand to stabilize the structure and use the dominant hand to build to it.

Threading/Braiding/Lacing

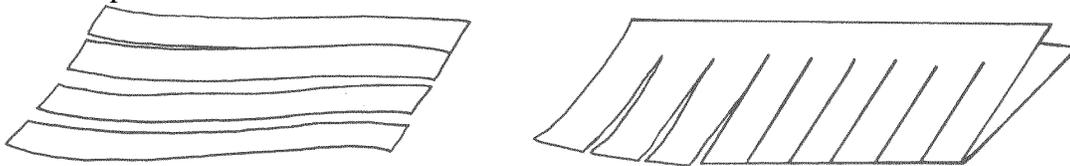
These activities help develop the skills that the children will need to help with “lifestyle activities” such as dressing, shoelace tying, and handling eating utensils.

1. Macaroni Necklace: Use coloured macaroni (if you have it, if not plain works great) and strong string, pipe cleaner or a thin shoelace. Attach a paper clip to one end, and use the other end for threading macaroni pieces onto string. Make your necklace interesting by using different colour sequences. Knot end of thread together to form a necklace.
2. Straw Necklace: Use different coloured plastic straws cut into 3 cm lengths and a shoelace or string with a clothespin clipped onto string at one end. Thread straws in a colour sequence pattern, such as yellow-red-blue-green, to create a bright necklace.
3. Lacing: Create different lacing cards using a hole puncher. Have child thread string through holes to make different lacing patterns.
4. Braiding: Use material such as thick wool, ribbons, thick cord, or strips of material. Attach three different coloured strips of material (if possible) into a support, such as a piece of cardboard. Teach child how to braid.
5. Paper Chains: Each child has several strips of paper 2cm X 10 cm. Join the ends of a strip by gluing, taping, or stapling together. Continue to add another link in this way. Join all the children’s chains together to form one long chain.

Making A Place Mat

In order to make a placemat each child will need 2 different colours of construction paper the same size. There is cutting in this activity, if the child can have them cut themselves and if the child is still learning they can tear carefully following the drawn lines. You can also complete all of the cutting prior to starting the activity with the child, the goal of the activity is weaving not cutting. Before you give the child the papers with a marker, draw straight lines on the paper for the slits and strips. The strips should go across the width of the paper and should be approximately 1" wide. The slits should also be 1" apart but should end approximately 1" before the edge of the paper. It may be helpful to prepare a second place mat in advance, following the instructions below, so the child has a model to copy.

Instruct the child to cut the first sheet of paper into strips by cutting on the lines. Then have the child fold the second sheet in half width wise (perpendicular to the slits), with the predrawn "slit" lines on the outside. (This allows the child to begin cutting at the folded edge.) Have the child cut along the marked lines, cutting through both halves of the paper at the same time. Remind the child to stop about 1" from the far edge (or to follow your predrawn lines). Finally, instruct the child to weave the strips of paper in and out of the slits (you may wish to demonstrate this step). If desired, laminate the mat to allow for repeated use.



Going on a Bear Hunt

Remember this old standby? It still does the job admirably to pass the time and to help children develop good bilateral coordination.

How to play Going on a Bear Hunt:

What you say	What you and your child do
"Let's go on a bear hunt. Come with me."	Sit in a circle – on the floor, etc.
"Let's walk. Walk, walk, walk, walk, walk, walk."	Drum your hands on your thighs, or "walk" your feet: left-right, left-right.
"Here we are in the tall grass. We'd better push the grass aside so we can pass through. Swish, swish, swish."	Bring the backs of your hands together. Press them to the sides, as if pushing apart tall grasses.
"Uh-oh, here's a river. Guess we have to swim. Swim, swim, swim."	Make swimming motions: breaststroke, crawl, backstroke, butterfly, side stroke, doggy paddle.
"Let's dry off. Shake, shake, shake."	Shake your head, arms and legs to flick off water drops.
"Let's look around. Do you see a bear anywhere? I don't see one, do you?"	Bring your hands to your brow, like a sun visor, and look left and right.
"Oh, look, a big tree. Maybe we can see a bear from the treetop. Climb, climb, climb,	Make climbing-up-the-tree motions, left-right, left-right. Stretch your arms higher

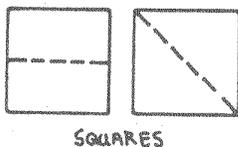
climb.”	each time. At the top, stretch your neck and look around.
“See anything? No? Me, neither. Let’s go down again. Down, down, down.”	Begin with arms high. Lower them as you climb down.
“My goodness, another stream! Here is a rowboat. Oars, too. Come on, let’s get in and row. Row, row, row.	Row your boat with two oars.
“We must drag this boat onto shore. Here’s towline for you. Pull, pull.”	Hand each child a pretend rope. Pull on your ropes to haul in the boat.
“Any bears in sight?”	Look around
“I don’t see any, either. We are in a muddy swamp. We’ll have to slog through it somehow. Squish, squish, squish.”	Lift your feet heavily, left-right, left-right, left-right, left-right and make a slurpy sound.
“Here’s a big mountain...and here’s a cave. Should we go in? Yes? Okay, but I’m a little scared. Are you?”	Shiver with pretend fear.
“Wow, it’s too dark in this cave to see. We’ll have to feel our way.	Grope in front with both hands, as if you’re feeling around in the dark.
“Hmm, what’s this? It’s big, and warm and furry...Yikes it’s bear! Come on, let’s run! Run, run, run.”	Drum your hands rapidly on your knees, or make running motions with your feet: left-right, left-right.
“Hurry! It’s after us! Let’s get through the swamp! Squish, squish. Here’s the boat. Let pull it to the river. Pull, pull. Let’s row. Row, row. Here’s the tree. Let’s climb up to see where the bear is after us. Climb, climb. Oh I see it! Let’s get down!”	Continue retracing your steps and repeating the appropriate motions.
“We’re home! Open the door! Slam the door! Run upstairs! Hide under the bed! Whew, we’re safe!...and I wasn’t scared at all, were you?”	Sigh with relief.

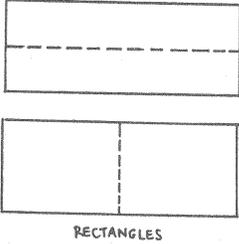
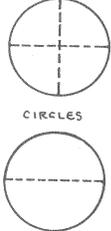
Folding

Folding is a bi-manual task that initially requires both hands to work simultaneously to achieve the spatial aspects (the fold). The preferred hand completes the creasing action while the non-preferred hand provides stability or guidance to the paper.

The following are progressive samples of folding activities.

Fold the following shapes:

Square: in half, diagonally	 <p style="text-align: center;">SQUARES</p>
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<p>Rectangle: length in half; width in half</p>	 <p>RECTANGLES</p>
<p>Circle: in half; in pie shapes</p>	 <p>CIRCLES</p>

Draw lines across a piece of paper and have the children fold along these lines. A fan can be made this way. An alternative is to have the children fold the edges of the paper to these lines.

Folding Activities

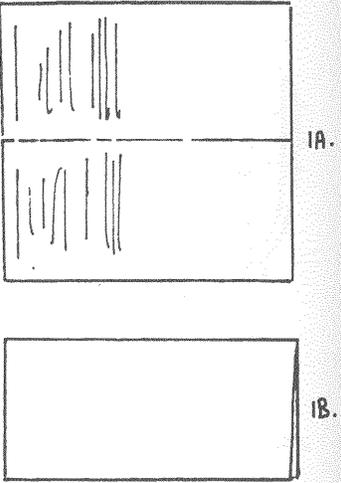
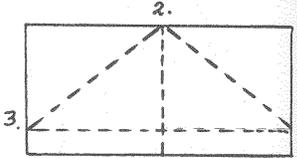
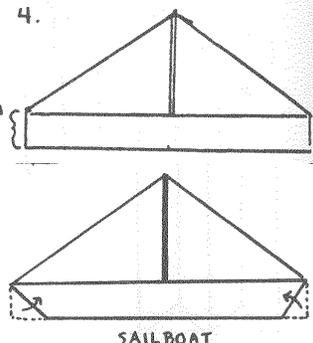
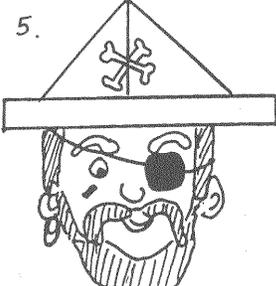
Accordion Dog

Before you begin to make the accordion dog, use the template attached to make sure that each child as the front and back of the dog already cut out and ready to go (unless they are awesome with scissors and they are able to cut out the dog on their own). Each child will need a 5" x 11" piece of construction paper. Demonstrate accordion folding, verbalizing the entire process. Instruct the child to accordion fold the 5" x 11" piece of construction paper, folding parallel to the 5" side. Make sure the child makes at least 10 folds (you may want to draw lines on the paper to the child knows where to fold). Then have the child glue the ends of the folded construction paper to the 2 halves of the dog, so that the paper becomes the middle of the body.

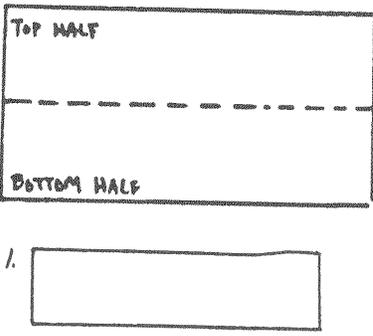
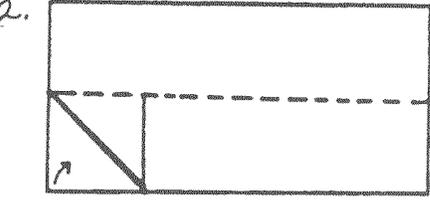
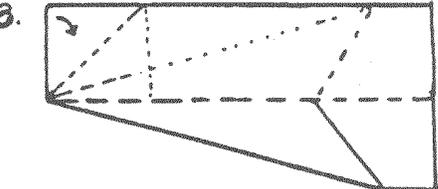
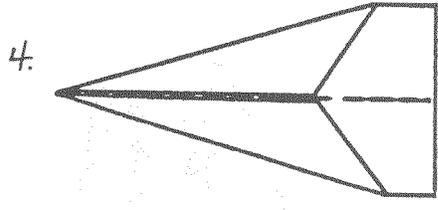
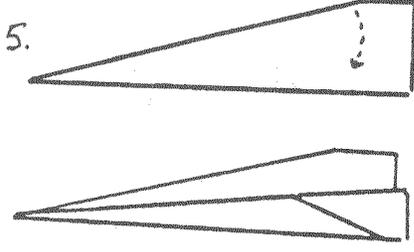
Worms

Using the same accordion folds as with the dog. The child instead will accordion fold long ovals to make worms. Then the child can draw eyes and a mouth on one end.

Pirates Hat

<p>Step 1: Using a full sheet of newspaper, fold top half to bottom half</p>	
<p>Step 2: Now fold this in half from the left side to right</p>	
<p>Step 3: Open up and fold top left corner to center, then top right corner to center</p>	
<p>Step 4: Fold each bottom strip upwards to complete your pirate's hat. Variation: fold in the corner strips to create a "sail boat"</p>	
<p>Step 5: Decorate and colour the pirate's hat in your own favourite way!</p>	

Paper Airplane

<p>Step 1: Using 8 ½" x 11" paper, fold top half to bottom half, then open up.</p>	
<p>Step 2: Fold bottom left corner to centre fold line. Then fold this part to centre again</p>	
<p>Step 3: Repeat step 2 with the top left corner</p>	
<p>Step 4: Now fold your paper in half again along the fold line.</p>	
<p>Step 5: Fold each flap top to bottom line. Open as shown. Now your plane is ready. Show me how you can decorate the wings and make it very colourful. Test your paper plane and let it fly! Can you fly at or into a target? Whose plan will fly the farthest?</p>	

Snowflakes

To make a snowflake the child will need a square sheet of paper, approximately 8'X8" (white office paper may be best). Instruct the child to fold one sheet of square paper in half, then in half again the other direction. Then instruct the child to fold the sheet again on the diagonal to make a triangle. Next have the child cut around the outside edges, with any desired designs. (Remember if cutting is difficult the child could also tear little pieces out around the outside edges). After the child has finished cutting, unfold the paper to reveal a snowflake. Finished snowflakes can be hung up around the room!

Juice Makers

Children love to help in the kitchen, so it's time to let them make their own juice! You will need a citrus juicer (manual or electric), oranges, knife (for adults) and cups. To start you will need to cut the oranges in half. Show the child how to hold the juicer's handle with one hand and the orange with the other. Holding the orange with your whole hand, press the orange onto the juicer. Encourage the child to imitate your movements. Provide verbal instruction and physically help her as needed. Pour the juice into glasses and enjoy!

To make this activity easier...

- Place your hand over the child's hand to position the orange on the juicer.
- Stabilize the juicer by placing it on a non-skid mat, freeing both hands to hold the orange while juicing (remember to encourage two hands).

To make this activity harder...

- Have the child switch hands to place and press the orange.
- Have the child pour the juice into large and small cups.
- Encourage the child to squeeze the oranges first in her hands and then use the juicer to extract the remaining juice.

Sticker Stick-Ons

This game is similar to sticking ball as it helps to develop the skill of crossing midline. In order to play this activity you will need a variety of small stickers, such as soft ones, puffy ones, and smelly ones. Place 5-10 stickers on a sheet of waxed paper. Let each child pick his own sheet of stickers and then randomly place the individual stickers up, down, and all around one of his arms. Have each child close his eyes and then feel, find, and remove the stickers one at a time, putting each one on his piece of waxed paper.

Wiggle Worms

In order to make a wiggle worm and activity board you will need: pencil, glue, pipe cleaner & wiggle eyes, magnetic tape -3/8" long, cardboard with a maze drawn on it, 1/4" dowel, 3" long with magnet glue on end.

How to make the Worm:

Wrap the pipe cleaner around a pencil to form a tight coil. If ends are sharp turn them in slightly. Slip the pipe cleaner off the pencil. Glue wiggle eyes to one end. Glue the magnetic tape to the underside of the worm. Let dry.

How to make the Worm move:

Hold the cardboard make with one hand and place the worm on the maze. Hold the dowel with a tripod grasp. Place the magnet against the cardboard under the worm. Make the worm move through the maze by sliding the dowel.

To increase development of the skilled side of the hand, make sure the last two fingers are curled into the palm while moving the dowel. If not, have the student hold a pom pom with the last two fingers.

Adaptations:

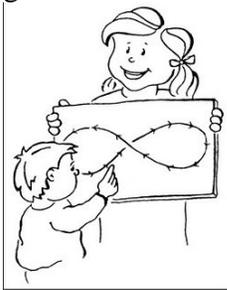
Instead of a maze on the cardboard, have shapes, letters, or numbers and the child can "write" with the worm.

Crossing Midline Exercises *(these activities were adapted from Brain Gym exercises developed by Paul E Dennison and Gail E Dennison)*

These activities can be done as a group or individually. Remember to also do these activity with the children so they have a model to follow.

Drawing 8's

With the children standing with one arm extended at shoulder level, have them “draw” a sideways 8, so it looks like an infinity sign. If this is too difficult for the child draw an infinity sign on a poster board and tape to the wall at shoulder level. Have the child stand far enough away that just their finger tip is on the wall and their arm is straight and held at shoulder level. Now the child can trace the 8. Make sure when you do this exercise you go both clockwise and counter clockwise and use both the right and left arm.



Cross in Front #1

With the children standing facing you with hands up and arms extended. Touch left knee while lifting it up with right hand meeting to touch at midline. Return to start and then touch right knee with right hand. Repeat 10 times. If you are noticing some children having difficulty patterning the activity it may help if you put stickers on one hand and the opposite knee so they can match the stickers.



Cross in Front #2

Have the children standing, facing you and arms up in the air. With this exercise they are going to bring their right hand to the inside of their left foot, return to start then touch their left hand to the inside of their right foot.. Lifting their foot up and bring their hand down to meet at midline. Repeat 10 times. If you are noticing some children having difficulty patterning the activity it may help if you put stickers on one hand and the opposite foot so they can match the stickers.

Cross in Front #3

This exercise starts as all the cross in front exercises. The goal of this exercise is to have the child touch their right elbow to their left knee, return to standing then have them touch their left elbow to their right knee. Repeat 10 times. If you are noticing some children having difficulty patterning the activity it may help if you put stickers on one elbow and the opposite knee so they can match the stickers.



Paper Clips on a Lid

You will need a margarine tub lid (approximately 3”) and paper clips to play. Have the child hold their nondominant hand as if they were playing the piano. Then turn their hand up, so that all of their fingertips are up in the air. Put the margarine lid on top of your fingers. With your dominant hand, pick up the paper clips one at a time, and drop them onto the lid. See how many paper clips you can put on the lid.

This activity can easily be adapted into a math activity with counting and adding.

Hole Punch Art

To make some hole punch art you will need a piece of paper (3”x3” size is best), a hole punch, and a pencil. Draw a picture (shape, letter, number) on a piece of paper or just let the child imagine one in their mind. Using a hole punch the child will follow the outline of what you have drawn. They will use the hole punch with their dominant hand and hold the paper with their “helper hand” turning it as required. (This patterning of the helper hand and turning the page may need demonstrating and physical prompting until the child learns and is comfortable with this activity). When holding the hole puncher make sure the child’s thumb is always pointing up.

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