

## Activities to Promote Motor Development in Preschool-Aged Children

1. Make sure the child has lots of opportunities for whole-body movement. Development of bilateral integration (coordinated use of the two sides of the body together, such as is needed to cut out a circle while steering the paper with the other hand), spatial perception, hand-eye coordination, and overall strength/stability begin with larger (“gross”) movements before “fine” (fingers, etc.) movements. Specific suggestions to work on bilateral integration include: climbing and hand-over-hand swinging on monkey bars, learning swimming strokes, ball bouncing/kicking/throwing, T-ball or baseball, riding a trike or scooter.
2. Explore musical play that involves movement, such as drumming, play keyboarding, toy guitars, hitting a tambourine while holding it, shaking maracas.
3. Some fine motor suggestions to work on bilateral integration are: pushing cars or train along a track that crosses the body “midline” (so that the hand has to pass in front of trunk to the opposite side of body); simple building toys, especially ones that use tools (erector set, tinker toys, play screwdriver/hammer set); cooking activities of stirring, using rolling pin, cookie cutters, spreading butter or peanut butter on crackers; beading or pop-beads.
4. For pre-writing activities, I recommend that children NOT use “skinny” pencils or pens or markers until they can spontaneously use a mature grasp. This is usually not present until 4-5 years of age. A rule of thumb is no pencils until the child can form an X. Instead, use preschool crayons that are round and fat, or fat crayons broken into 1” lengths, or fingerpaints, paintbrush, sidewalk chalk, etc. Otherwise, you are helping them form a habit of using an immature grasp.
5. Present materials on a vertical or near-vertical (tipped up) surface as much as possible. That will promote an optimal wrist, hand, and thumb position. Some examples are: using window markers to draw or form pre-writing strokes; use an easel to paint, color, etc. Other activities that can be done on an easel are placing stickers on a paper, using stamps and a stamp pad, and ColorForms. Lite Brites involve a near-vertical surface for poking pegs, which is an excellent fine motor task.
6. Play-doh or other puttys, clays, etc. are a good way to work on hand strength. Also, just carrying their own objects from place to place will also work on this. Sweeping, dusting, and helping with other household chores demand and improve hand strength, as well as shoulder stability and hand-eye coordination.

J. Dodge, OTR 2005

Submitted by Brenda Jennette, OT specialist  
Henrico County Schools