

OT Programme



ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE SHOULDER GIRDLE STABILITY

Shoulder girdle stability is important to provide a steady base for fine motor movements with the hands and fingers, particularly for drawing and writing and using a computer.

BEAR WALKING

Bear walking or crawling over gym equipment or through a tunnel helps to build strength in the shoulders. This can be done during PE or playtime.

ARM WRESTLES

Sit opposite pupil with elbows on table. Press against each other's palms and encourage pupil to push against the resistance. Obviously, you will be stronger, so let pupil win to make it enjoyable.

TUG OF WAR

Twist a bathroom towel to make a 'rope'. Play 'tug-of-war' with pupil either standing or sitting on the floor.

Drawing on a vertical chalk board on an easel or on paper taped on the wall will also improve shoulder girdle strength and stability

HAND STRENGTHENING EXERCISES

Pupil would benefit from these kinds of activities too - as they also involve using two hands, which will help improve his fine motor skills.

CRUNCHING NEWSPAPER

Help pupil to crunch up sheets of newspaper into a ball. Once a few balls have been made see if pupil can throw them at a target or in a bin - good for eye hand coordination.

PLAYDOUGH

These provide the opportunity to strengthen hand and finger muscles by rolling, squeezing, pinching and kneading.

Moulding and rolling play dough into balls - using the palms of the hands facing each other and with fingers curled slightly towards the palm.

Rolling play dough into tiny balls (peas) using only the fingertips.

Cutting play dough with a plastic knife or with a pizza wheel

Other ideas are.....

Using a plant sprayer to spray plants, (indoors, outdoors) to spray snow (mix food colouring with water so that the snow can be painted), or melt "monsters". (Draw monster pictures with markers and the colours will run when sprayed.)

Picking up objects using large tweezers such as those found in the "Bedbugs" game or tea bag tongs - you can find them in most shops with a kitchen section.

These are excellent for picking up cotton wool buds and help strengthen hands for using scissors. You can turn it into a race of who can pick up the most and get it in your bowl first.

Posting coins into a money box - time pupil to see how fast he can do it, this turns it in to a fun game.

Turning playing cards over on the table - memory card game is good or snap cards.

ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE BODY AWARENESS AND COORDINATION

Copying Games:

- Follow me / Simon says - place your hands on different parts of your body and have your child mirror you. Think if pupil is a visual learner, so he will need you to demonstrate to copy your moves - as well as giving him a verbal direction instruction ; such as "put your hand on your head".
- 'Hokey Coky' or 'If your happy and you know it' and other action songs.

Copy me game

Bit like Simon Says but pupil has to copy your movements - use simple sequences of movement or postures. E.g. clap hands x 2 and then touch your toes.

Ball games & throw and catch

- Ball games. Use a medium sized beach ball and encourage pupil to catch with two hands.

You can bounce the ball to pupil to catch. By bouncing a ball the speed of the ball is slowed down and this makes it easier for pupil to catch, plus it helps him to orientate his arms correctly to catch.

- Patting a balloon to each other, as well as encouraging pupil to catch the balloon with two hands. Both are excellent activities to help pupil to develop his visual attention as well as eye hand coordination.
- Suspend a balloon on a piece of string pupil can then bat it with a bit of rolled up newspaper - how many hits can he get? With one hand then the other hand.

BILATERAL CO-ORDINATION ACTIVITIES

Bilateral Coordination and Crossing the Midline

Bilateral coordination is the ability to use both sides of the body at the same time. This can mean using the two sides for the same action (like using a rolling pin) or using alternating movements (like climbing stairs). Bilateral coordination can also refer to using each side of your body for a different action, such as stabilizing a paper with one hand while writing with the other.

Crossing the midline, which relies on good bilateral coordination, means using part of one side of the body in the space of the other part.

Some examples of crossing the midline include sitting cross-legged on the floor or drawing a horizontal line from one side of the paper to the other without switching the pencil to the other hand.

Why is bilateral coordination and crossing midline important?

Having efficient bilateral coordination enables both feet or both hands to work together. This allows you to play and work with fluid body movements. Bilateral coordination and crossing the body's midline also support a child's development of fine motor skills, ability to use tools, and ability to visually track a moving object.

Bilateral Co-ordination is the ability to use the two sides of the body, in an effective manner, to accomplish an activity.

Encourage ball activities such as rolling, throwing and catching with both hands together. Large balls are more likely to elicit use of both hands.

- Hold an ice cream container with 2 hands and catch little balls or bean bags
- Construction toys such as lacing, threading, Lego, Mobilo, where one hand takes on the 'holding' role whilst the other hand is the 'doer'.
- Cooking using a manual eggbeater, rolling pin, etc. Holding the bowl steady and stirring with the dominant hand.
- Spreading on to crackers or toast / bread / icing on cakes (forces you to stabilise the bread and use the knife to spread)
- Rolling out play dough with large rolling pin (use two hands)
- Climbing on play equipment at the play park
- Swimming
- Clapping games - make up different sequences and rhythms
- Play Simon Says ("touch your left elbow")
- Kick a football (balance on one foot and kick with the other)
- Blow bubbles and reach with both hands to pop them
- Pull cotton balls apart (can glue onto a picture etc.)
- String beads to make a necklace

Scissor Activities

Once a child has developed good strength in their hands and improved bilateral coordination they can start to use scissors.

When scissors are held correctly, and when they fit a child's hand well, cutting activities will exercise the very same muscles which are needed to manipulate a pencil in a mature tripod grasp.

The correct scissor position is with the thumb and middle finger in the handles of the scissors, the index finger on the outside of the handle to stabilize, with fingers four and five curled into the palm.

Remind pupil to have 'thumb on top' to stop him from 'pronating' turning his wrist and hand down and inwards in an awkward grasp when using the scissors.

- Cutting up cardboard from cereal packets or old junk mail - remember stiff paper or thin card is easier to practise with than flimsy paper.
- Making fringe on the edge of a piece of construction paper.
- Cutting play dough with scissors.
- Cutting straws or shredded paper.

Once pupil has developed a scissors grasp the next stage in cutting is to cut down one line, then move on to two directional cuts. Cutting out a shape is the last stage.

Sensory Activities

The following activities ought to be done frequently to increase postural muscle strength and endurance. These activities also strengthen pupil's awareness of his hands.

- Wheelbarrow walking, bear walking
- Clapping games (loud/quiet, on knees together, etc.)
- Catching (clapping) bubbles between hands
- Pulling off pieces of play dough with individual fingers and thumb
- Drawing in a tactile medium such as wet sand, salt, rice, or "gloop". Make "gloop" by adding water to cornflour until you have a mixture similar in consistency to toothpaste. The "drag" of this mixture provides great sensori-motor feedback to the muscle and joint receptors, thus facilitating visual motor control.
- Picking out small objects like pegs, beads, coins, etc., from a tray of sand, or dry rice. Try it with eyes closed too. This helps develop sensory awareness in the hands.
- Feely bag, putting different small toys and objects e.g. a spoon a small cup a dinky car in a bag. Pupil has to feel around and pull the objects out.

Midline Crossing

The following activities will facilitate midline crossing. These activities will help him with his understanding of left and right as well as help with his drawing and pre-writing skills: -

- Start making the child aware of the left and right sides of his body. As a rule if you always reinforce right then the child will be able to understand their left.
- You can play a game like 'how do you do?' By shaking hands with your **right** hand - the right hand always does the shaking.
- Putting stickers on the **right** hand or through spontaneous comments like, "kick the ball with your right leg." Play imitation posture games like "Simon Says" with across the body movements.
- When painting at easel, encourage the child to paint a continuous line across the entire paper- also go diagonally across the paper to make an X shape. Lucas can also practise drawing a big X in the sand tray. And air drawing is good this will encourage Lucas to cross over his body.
- You can buy a calendar with boxes and encourage Lucas to cross off today's date with an X orientate him to go from corner to corner.

Pre-writing skills

When a certain amount of body stability has developed, the hands and fingers begin to work on movements of dexterity and isolation as well as different kinds of grasps.

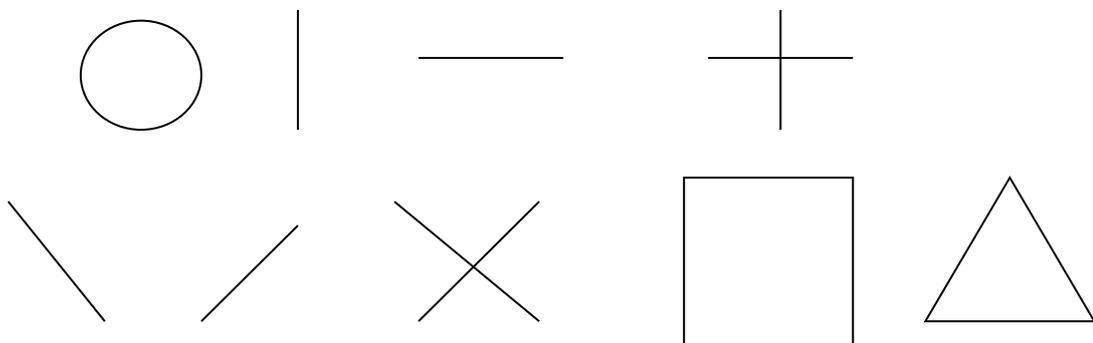
Children will develop fine motor skills best when they work on a VERTICAL or near vertical surface as much as possible. Always use chalks, crayons and pencils - as these give a good sensory feedback to the hand as they 'drag' across the paper.

Attach a large piece of drawing paper to the wall. Have the child use a crayon or chalk and try the following exercises to develop visual motor skills

- Play connect the dots. Again make sure the child's strokes connect dots from left to right and from top to bottom.
- Trace around stencils - the non-dominant hand should hold the stencil flat and stable against the paper, while the dominant hand pushes the pencil firmly against the edge of the stencil. The stencil must be held firmly. Use simple stencils like a circle, square and triangle - you can make your own out of cardboard.
- Painting on an easel.

Colouring is an excellent activity to develop skills. Encourage Lucas to cover the picture and shorten crayon's and pencil's off - giving Lucas less crayon to hold on to promote his holding the crayon with a tripod grasp near the tip rather than using his whole hand at the end of the pencil.

Ideally OT would not recommend children start writing until they can reproduce the following pre-writing shapes and patterns, once they can reproduce these handwriting will be much easier for them to reproduce.



ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE POSTURAL MUSCLE TONE

Encourage Lucas in lots play in and around the playground equipment. You may need to help him to climb and move around the play equipment initially - whilst he gains his strength and confidence. As much opportunity as you can give Lucas will help him build better coordination and confidence.

Practising the following activities will also assist with the stability required for better coordination for general movement as well as jumping, running before he developmentally moves on to hopping, skipping when he's older around age 5.

Using a trampoline

Jumping on a trampoline or carpet spots is an excellent fun exercise to improve pelvic stability.

Encourage jumping activities - jump to a target - use chalks and make a simple hopscotch. Encourage jumping in puddles.

Balance

- Stepping in and out of cardboard boxes
- Crawling through boxes as part of obstacle course
- Kicking a ball
- Walking along a 'tightrope' at home put a length of washing line out for Lucas to walk along make a game of he has to stay on the line
- Whenever you are out an about if you see a low brick wall / bench encourage him to walk on it - with you holding his hand.

This programme is to give you ideas to focus on to help develop pupil's skills by giving specific opportunities to practise.

You do not have to use all activities and it is important to build these ideas in to everyday play. They are not meant to be a 'chore' for pupil or you. Just little and often, try to complete a couple of activities.