

Advice for education settings

Ideas for Finger Gym boxes

A finger gym is a fun way of developing fine motor skills and is more exciting than handwriting practice. It can be used to promote social skills if shared with a peer. When shown as a reward on a visual timetable it can motivate a child to engage in adult directed tasks.



Source: oobeedoo.com

To set up a finger gym you will need:

- a sturdy box such as a shoebox covered in attractive paper or fabric, or an attractive bag
- items that are fun to use and require the child to use hands and fingers to achieve a desired effect
- Ideas for suitable resources: anything that can be squeezed, pulled, pinched or manipulated to motivating effect

Make sure that you warm up the hands before a finger gym session.

Developing a pincer grip

- Putting coins into a money box
- Stickers and sticker books
- Touch each finger tip with thumb to form a circle. Try doing this with both hands and then putting to eyes to make glasses.
- Pegboard activities. Placing pegs in a board in a row. Anything more complicated, for example following patterns, adds a different dimension to the activity.
- Removing items from a container with a small opening, using thumb and index finger. Pegs for the pegboard activity in a cylindrical plastic spice container or raisins in individual boxes.
- Spinners, spinning tops
- Using tweezers to pick up small items
- Placing clothes pegs on a card
- Turning over individual cards or discs



Source: Pinterest

Developing bi-lateral skills

- Threading cards and also using beads, macaroni etc
- Construction toys, lego, sticklebricks, etc
- Using knife and fork on playdough.
- Hand Jive
- Turning over individual cards or discs
- Putting clothes pegs onto cardboard, perhaps colour matching, or hanging out dolls clothes on a line
- Pretend shopping, putting food into bags and money into purse
- Play people with moveable parts

- Kaleidoscope
- Zipper bags
- Screw top containers
- Push up and pull off lids – hand cream bottle
- Putting on glove puppets
- Slinky
- Cat's cradle (string games)
- Threading beads, buttons, pasta
- Paper folding
- Clothes fastenings — buttons, zips, snaps buckles
- Taking tops off felt tips
- Pull apart popper beads, duplo or unifix cubes
- Velcro activities — pictures, words or scenes
- Playing card games, cards to be held in one hand and selected from fan
- Key and padlock
- Bursting bubbles by clapping
- Cord pulling to make toy work



Hand strengthening activities

- Hammer toys
- Clothes pegs
- Bandage, lay out straight on table. Place thumb on edge and with fingers draw bandage towards the thumb.
- Hinged hair clip
- Jumping animals — pneumatic bulb has to be pressed, between thumb and first finger
- Wind up toys
- Playdough, plasticine, blu tac - pinch and roll balls between thumb and first finger, then try second finger and so on. Make a ball of plasticine and try making different depths of holes in it with a pencil.
- Placing clothes pegs on a card
- Popping bubbles in bubble wrap. The small bubbles are much easier than the bigger ones.
- Construction toys, lego, sticklebricks, etc
- Playdough or plasticine, roll, squeeze, pinch, make models
- Pegs, with strong springs to be put on card
- Putting hair scrunchies around rulers
- Stress ball



Co-ordination

- Crab walking fingers. Place hand flat on table with four fingers together. Move fingers away from thumb to make digit span, then move thumb to join fingers.
- Glove puppet
- Jigsaws
- Playdough, plasticine, blu tac - pinch and roll balls between thumb and first finger, then try second finger and so on.

- Putting clothes pegs onto cardboard, perhaps colour matching, or hanging out dolls clothes on a line
- Handling large objects, catching a balloon, picking up a shoe box.
- Spooning from containers, eg sequins, small plastic items etc into container
- threading / plaiting / weaving (use bright beads or sequins, make a friendship bracelet)

Developing finger isolation

- Magnetic pieces — dressing Barbie, or Make a Scene
- Isolating and lifting individual fingers. Place hand(s) flat on table and lift thumb of right hand and then lower, repeat lifting each finger in turn
- Hand and Finger action songs, eg Tommy Thumb, Two Little Dicky Birds
- Placing clothes pegs on a card

