



Occupational Therapy Department

## Fine Motor Warm-Ups

Information for parents and carers

### What are fine motor warm ups?

Before we do any activity, we should always warm up first. This is no different when doing fine motor tasks. Warm ups are aimed at waking up the muscles in your child's arms and hands and letting their body know it's time to do some fine motor tasks. These warm-up exercises are aimed at increasing the sensory messages the child receives from their hands to help your child use their hands more effectively for the activity they want to perform.

### Why children may have some difficulties

Children may have problems relating to their strength, co-ordination, or sensation that impact on their ability to complete fine motor skills successfully. By doing these exercises they will increase their awareness of what their hand muscles and joints are doing. This should help improve motor control and aid motor memory for learning movements involved in fine motor tasks such as writing.



### Strategies to help

- **Chair Push-Ups:** Your child should begin by sitting straight in their chair and gripping the sides of the chair or place their hands flat on the chair seat under their bottom. Using their arm muscles, they should lift their bottom up off the chair. Their feet should also lift up slightly from the floor.
- **Desk Push-Ups:** Your child should start with their hands flat on the top of the desk with the tips of their thumbs and index finger facing each other to create a triangle. They should bend their elbows to bring their nose towards the triangle in your fingers, and then push up with the arms to straighten their elbows.
- **Shoulder Shrugs:** The child should shrug their shoulders up and down and then front to back. To describe this to your child you can tell them to lift their shoulders to touch their ears and then push them back down. For front to back it will feel like they are trying to push their scapula's together in the back, much like a shoulder bench press when working out.
- **Crocodile Snaps:** Ask your child to raise their arms in the air with one above the other, palms facing each other. They should snap their hands together like a crocodile snapping its jaw. Take turns having the left and right arm above each other.
- **Head press:** Your child should link the fingers of both hands on the top of their head and gently but firmly press down.
- **Air Traffic Controller:** Ask your child to start with their elbows bent and their hands in a fist in front of each shoulder. They should then straighten their elbows, moving one arm out in front of the body and the other arm to the side of your body, then swap sides.
- **Alternate arms back and forth:** You can also get your child to practice crossing their midline by crossing their arms in front or behind them while doing the movement.

- **Butterflies:** Ask your child to hold their arms straight in front of their body. They should then cross their hands together and link their thumbs to make an “X”. Using the shoulders to move, make small circles with the hands, moving from left to right (they should move from the shoulders, not the fingers or hand).
- **Hand push:** The child should put their palms together, fingers pointing upwards, in front of their chest, with their elbows bent at a 90 degree angle. They should push their hands together as firmly as they can, and hold for 5-10 seconds.
- **Hand Pull:** The child should hook their fingers together. Again, they should keep their elbows bent at a 90 degree angle and pull their hands apart, as firmly as they can. They should hold this “pull” for 5-10 seconds.
- **Star hands:** Get your child to make stars with both hands by stretching out their fingers wide. Then ask them to make a tight fist with both hands, then repeat.
- **Piano Fingers:** Ask your child to drum their fingers on the table or desk as if playing the piano. Make sure each finger touches the desk. As they do to work on fast vs. slow movements with this; “How slowly can you play the piano?” “How fast can you play the piano?” “Can you use both hands together to play the piano?”
- **Pencil Twirls:** Get your child to twirl their pencils in the air like a baton, spinning them both horizontally and vertically in the air. This combines some shoulder and finger exercises together.
- **Penny twirl:** Can your child twirl a penny or similar small object such as a small rubber between all of the fingers.
- **Scrunching paper:** Using one hand, ask your child to scrunch a piece of paper into a ball without using the other hand, body or table to help!

There are also many commercially available warm up programmes such as ‘Active 8’ and ‘Wake Up, Shake Up’ which can also be used and/or adapted.

## Contact us

If you require any further information please speak to your occupational therapist on 0151 252 5660.

This leaflet only gives general information. You must always discuss the individual treatment of your child with the appropriate member of staff. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about your child’s treatment. This information can be made available in other languages and formats if requested.

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