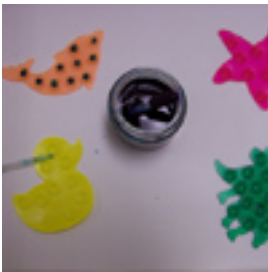


**HENRICO COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
DIVISION OF INSTRUCTION**

**PRESCHOOL FINE MOTOR SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME & CLASSROOM**

Below please find some activity ideas to support fine motor development within your home or classroom. Most people are aware that fine motor skills are the foundation children need before they learn handwriting, in order to have proper pencil grasp and control of a writing instrument, however they also welcome assistance with fresh ideas to provide an environment rich in fine motor activities and materials that are interesting and fun so that children are motivated to use them and even choose them during their free time. I found this website here <http://prekinders.com/fine-motor-skills/>, and I not only loved her ideas but her presentation so I copied below ☺. Nadine Mignardi, OTR/L

Most of these activities use “found materials” that can be borrowed, donated, or purchased inexpensively, rather than commercially produced and sold in an educational catalog. A few of these ideas were borrowed from Montessori (and noted below).



**Water Drops with Suction Cups**

The little suction cups on the bottom of these bathtub shapes become mini bowls when turned upside down and used in this activity. (These were purchased at the Dollar Tree.) Children use a finger grasp to squeeze one drop of colored water into each little bowl on the dish. *[Idea borrowed from Montessori]*



**Beads with Suction Cups**

These are the same bathtub shapes as in the above activity. Children use their thumb and forefinger to grasp each little bead and place it on a bowl on the shape. The beads are pony beads purchased from a craft store. *[Idea borrowed from Montessori]*



### **Beads in a Paint Palette**

A clear cup of multicolored faceted plastic beads was placed in the middle of the tray. The children use their thumb and forefinger to grasp each bead and place it in one of the bowls of the paint palette tray. The children sorted the beads into the tray by color. Each bowl of the tray holds about 4 beads. A muffin tin could also be used for this activity, but I prefer the paint palette tray because each bowl is smaller and the children have to be more precise about placing the bead into the bowl. The beads and paint palette trays were purchased in a craft store.



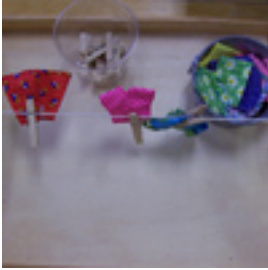
### **Poms Poms with Tweezers**

Children use their finger muscles to squeeze the tweezers in order to pick up each pom pom and place it in the ice cube tray. These colored pom poms can be purchased in craft stores. I found the ice tray at a kitchen outlet store.



### **Pom Poms with Tongs**

Children use their hand muscles to squeeze the tongs in order to pick up each pom pom and place it in the bottle. *[Idea borrowed from Montessori]*



## Clothesline

Children use their fine motor muscles to squeeze the clothespins to clip each piece of clothing to the clothesline. I tied a piece of thick string to the handles of a wooden tray to make the clothesline, and used mini clothespins (although the regular sized clothespins can be used as well). The clothes are Barbie doll clothes purchased at a dollar store. As an alternative, you could cut out shapes of shirts and pants from felt.



## Clothespins on a Box

Children squeeze the clothespins and clip them to the sides of the box. To make the activity more interesting, I wrote letters on dot stickers and placed the dot stickers around the sides of the boxes. I wrote letters on the clothespins so the children would match the letters on the clothespins to the letters on the boxes. Other skills could be used, e.g. colors, numbers, beginning sounds. This is similar to activities where children clip clothespins to a paper plate or cardstock circle; however, in my experience, those were flimsy and awkward to use, which is why I like the box better. Any sturdy box could be used (shoe box, postal box). The boxes in this picture were stacking gift boxes that held chocolate covered nuts (a Christmas gift), and they worked out perfectly.



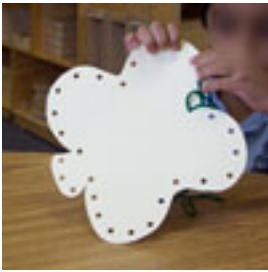
## Nuts & Bolts

These larger nuts and bolts can be purchased individually at hardware stores. The cost is usually no more than \$0.40 to \$0.50 each. Children use their fingers, hands, and wrists, coordinating both hands while grasping and twisting the metal nuts onto the bolts.



## Spooning Flat Marbles

This tray has two bowls and a spoon. Only one bowl has flat floral marbles in it. Children use the spoon to move the marbles from the left bowl to the right bowl. Surprisingly this is a very popular activity for something so simple. *[Idea borrowed from Montessori]*



## Sewing/Lacing Cards

These can be purchased or made with poster board and a hole puncher. Use shoe laces or plastic lacing. Tie one end of the lace to one hole of the card. Children lace the string through each hole. These can be made to match different themes or holidays.



## Plate Sewing

Tie lengths of yarn to plastic yarn needles, and knot the end. Children “sew” the yarn on a styrofoam plate by pushing the needle in and out through the plate.



## **Stringing Cut Straws**

Cut plastic drinking straws into small pieces, about 1-inch. (Cutting the straws is another great fine motor activity for kids.) Tie yarn to a plastic needle, or use plastic laces, and knot the end. Children string the straws onto the yarn or lace.



## **Stringing Beads**

Children string pony beads onto pipe cleaners.

(sorry – Bean Gluing photo wouldn't copy, but description is Excellent!)

## **Bean Gluing**

Children draw a simple picture on a piece of construction paper with a pencil. They trace the pencil lines with glue and glue the beans onto the design. Gripping the beans with their fingers is good fine motor practice.



## **Seeds and Tweezers**

Children pick up different types of seeds with tweezers and sort them by type into the cups.



## Unifix Cubes or Interlock Cubes

Children push the cubes with their hands to hook them together. Unifix cubes connect on one end and can make a long “train”. Interlock Cubes connect on different sides and can make different things, for example the dogs the children were making in the photo.



## Mosaic

In advance, cut construction paper into 1-inch long strips. Children “snip” the strips into smaller pieces and glue them onto their paper to make a mosaic. This activity is great for children who are not yet skilled with scissors, but need cutting practice because they can snip the paper with one cut.



## Eyedropper Art

Children use eyedroppers to drop liquid watercolor onto a coffee filter or paper towel. (I use Colorations Liquid Watercolor from Discount School Supply.) If liquid watercolor is not available, you can color water with food color. (see her blog for adapting this activity for holidays or themes.)



## Paper Clips

The children in my class are always wanting to use paper clips because they see me use them, so I set up this activity in the fine motor center. I cut squares of colored construction paper and placed them on the tray along with colored paper clips. Children stack the papers (all of the same color) and clip them with the matching colored paper clip. This was challenging for some children to manipulate the paper clip, but they loved doing it, and it gave them an opportunity to use paper clips with permission.



## Dot to Dot

I printed out the [Geoboard Dot Paper](#) from the Math Their Way website for this activity (I used the size on the second page). I added Pip Squeak markers, which are great for young children because they are short. Children draw lines with the markers to connect the dots on the paper.



## Toothpick Punch

To do this activity, cut squares of construction paper (I cut mine 6x6 inches). Draw a numeral, letter, or simple shape with a Sharpie. I placed a stack of these papers in the fine motor center, along with toothpicks and a carpet square. Children place the paper on the carpet square and use the toothpick to punch holes all along the black lines. When they are done, they can hold their paper up to the light and see the light shining through the holes. Kids enjoy it and it's great fine motor practice!



## Sand Art

Sand art is a great fine motor activity because children can pinch the sand with their fingers to apply it to their art work. Provide a simple outline (or have the children draw one), a small bowl of white glue, a small bowl of colored sand, and a “glue brush”. I buy the cheap paintbrushes with stiff bristles that are sold in a package for \$1 at dollar stores. These brushes are not a good enough quality for painting, but they make great glue brushes. Children paint the glue on their paper with the brush, pinch some sand with their fingers, and sprinkle it over the glue. Place a pan, tray, or paper plate on the table for children to shake off the excess sand.



## Insect Wrapping

Children wrap the plastic insects with pieces of white yarn (“spider webs”). When they are finished wrapping all of the insects, they unwrap them and place the yarn back in the bowl. We do this activity during a study of bugs and spiders.



## Birds Eating Worms

Cut pipe cleaners into smaller pieces and shape them to make several “worms”. Place the worms on a brown carpet square (this represents the dirt). Children use a clothespin as a bird beak and catch the worms with their beak. As they catch worms, they place them in a basket until all of the worms have been collected.





## **Marbles and Melon Scoops**

Children scoop the marbles with melon scoops and place them in the ice cube tray. This ice cube tray was found at a kitchen discount store. (See her blog for a Halloween adaptation to this activity.)



## **Pouring**

Children pour something from one bottle to another. I started out having them pour popcorn seeds. They can later try pouring sand, and then water.



## **Color Mixing**

Children mix primary-colored water to make secondary colors. The bucket in the middle is for dumping the water when finished, or to start over.

(Again, Knobbed Puzzle picture wouldn't copy)

## **Knobbed Puzzles**

Children exercise the fingers used for a pencil grasp when picking up puzzle pieces that have knobs or pegs.



## **Legos**

A bit obvious, but should not be forgotten.



## **Peg Boards**

Another old stand-by.



## **Play Dough**

An old stand-by. See following pages for ideas.

# Play Dough Ideas

From <http://prekinders.com/play-dough-ideas/>

## What to Keep in the Play Dough Area:

Rolling pins  
Plastic knives  
Cookie cutters  
Scissors  
Hand brooms (for cleaning up crumbs)

## *Creative Play*

### **Play Dough Bakery**

Add bowls, spoons, plastic knives, cookie cutters, muffin tins, mini bread loaf pans, small cookie sheets, spatulas, rolling pins, and pots and pans to the play dough area. I also have a George Foreman play dough grill and a baking rack from a real toaster that were donated to me.

### **Birthday Cakes**

Add a cake stand, mini cake pan, small plastic letters, pipe cleaners, birthday candles or pegs, plastic knife, plates, and small silk flowers for decorations to put on the birthday cakes.

### **Ice Cream Parlor**

Add ice cream bowls, spoons, and ice cream scoops to the center. Fold thick brown paper or posterboard into cone shapes. I have a cute set of ice cream bowls with spoons that came from the Dollar Tree. I see them there every year.

### **Mr. Play Dough Head**

Children use Mr. Potato Head parts with the play dough to make play dough people.

### **Alien Eyes**

Mix wiggle eyes into the play dough for children to find.

### **Construction**

Add wooden craft sticks to the play dough for children to construct houses and other buildings.

### **Barbie Shoes**

Children use the Barbie shoes to make footprints in the play dough. They can also use them as shoes for play dough people.

## **Tire Tracks**

Children flatten out the play dough and roll toy cars and trucks on it to make tire tracks.

## **Pet Food**

Provide brown play dough with pet food bowls and a bone cookie cutter. Children can roll the play dough into little balls for pet food. You could also add toy dogs and cats.

## **Astronauts**

Children make planets or the moon with play dough. Add small plastic astronaut figures and rocks for asteroids that children can crash into the planets.

## **Bug Box**

Place Easter grass in the bug boxes. Children make model bugs and put them in the boxes.

## ***Math***

### **Cookie Cutters**

Make an outline of each of your cookie cutter shapes on construction paper and cover with clear contact paper or laminate. The way I did this was to dip each cookie cutter into a stamp pad, and stamp it on white construction paper. Children use the cookie cutters to cut out play dough shapes and match them to the shapes on the mat.

### **The Three Bears**

Have children make bears of three sizes and add three sizes of wiggle eyes. Wilson also makes a set of bear cookie cutters of different sizes.

### **Cookie Math**

Write numbers on paper circles and attach them to a cookie sheet with clear contact paper. Children make cookies with play dough, count out the correct amount of chocolate chips (brown beads), and place them on a number on the cookie sheet.

### **Snake Math**

Show children how to roll the play dough to form snakes. Have them form snakes of different lengths to learn the vocabulary: long and short.

### **Flower Pots**

Add plastic or clay flower pots and a variety of silk flowers. Children fill the pots with play dough and stick the flowers into the dough. You can let them free play with them or write numbers on the pots and have children count the correct amount of flowers to put in the pot.

## **Berries**

Add berry colored play dough, green plastic berry baskets, and a melon scoop. Children make berries by rolling the play dough or scooping the play dough with the melon scoop and place them in the berry baskets. You can attach numbers to the baskets for counting.

## **Containers**

Provide lots of sizes and shapes of containers for the children to fill with play dough and experience volume.

## **Literacy**

### **Alphabet Flags**

Print the [alphabet flags](#) from Jan Brett's website and attach them to toothpicks. Have the children press play dough flat and stick the matching alphabet flags in the playdough side-by-side. Children are matching uppercase to lowercase letters.

### **Alphabet Sounds**

Use the Jan Brett [alphabet flags](#) to match letters to beginning sounds. Children cut shapes with a variety of cookie cutters, identify the beginning letter, and place the matching alphabet flag in the play dough. For example, if a child makes a bear with a cookie cutter, they would place a "B" flag in the play dough.

## **Science**

### **Boats**

Use clay instead of play dough for this activity. Have children form the clay into boats and float them in a tub of water.

### **Fossils**

Provide small toy dinosaurs for the children to press in the play dough to make fossils.

### **Leaves**

Provide leaf cookie cutters for children to cut out leaf shapes, or provide real leaves for children to make impressions.

### **Animal Tracks**

Place small toy animals in the center for the children to make tracks. You could use any color play dough, or white play dough to make tracks in snow.

## **Seashell Imprints**

Add seashells to the center for children to press into the play dough to make prints.

## **Impressions**

Add buttons, Barbie shoes, shells, toy animals, coins, and other small objects for the children to press into the play dough and make a variety of impressions.

## ***Seasonal***

### **Pumpkins**

Provide orange play dough and green pipe cleaners for children to make mini pumpkin models.

### **Snowmen**

Place white play dough in the center and add small beads, buttons, pegs, etc. for making snowmen.

### **Easter Eggs**

Add plastic Easter eggs of different sizes to the play dough area. The kids just enjoy filling the eggs with play dough or making play dough baskets for the eggs.