I'm not a robot

Fine gross motor skills examples

DefinitionVs. fine motorExamples by ageDelaysSee a doctorActivitiesTakeawayShare on PinterestAs your baby grows and starts to investigate their surroundings, they develop new skills. Gross motor skills are one set of skills they'll add to their repertoire of tricks right from the start.Let's take a look at some of those skills, as well as what to do if you suspect something might not be quite right.Gross motor skills are those skills that involve the whole body — your core muscles (think belly and back) and the muscles of your arms and legs.Gross motor skills include skills such as:sittingstandingwalkingrunningjumpinglifting (a spoon, a hairbrush, a barbell — they all count)kickingYup, these are actually skills.And then there are the skills that need, well, a little more skill:riding a bike or a horseplaying sports like football or baseballroller bladingswimmingWhen your child uses their gross motor skills, they're also working on balance, coordination, hand-eye coordination, and strengthening the neural pathways in their brain.You've heard mothers at the park tossing these terms around with the same nonchalance they use to toss a ball. So what's the difference?While gross motor skills involve the bigger muscles, fine motor skills work the smaller muscles of the hands, fingers, and wrists. Fine motor skills are about dexterity.Here's an example, taken from the previous section: Your child uses gross motor skills to lift a hairbrush — but fine motor skills to grasp it in their hands in the first place.Your child needs fine motor skills to do finicky things such as:holding a pencil or scissorswritingcuttingthreading beadsplaying with Legosbuttoning up their coatThe better their fine motor skills are, the easier they'll find tasks like drawing and the faster they'll be able to do them.But appropriately developed gross motor skills can help your child build their fine motor skills. Knowing how to sit will give your child the ability to be at a desk and practice controlling the movements in their shoulders, arms, hands, and fingers.Your newborn has a ways to go before they're crawling. Your toddler has a ways to go before they're playing baseball. So what are the age-appropriate gross motor skills to look out for at each stage?As your baby's startle reflex fades, you'll notice that their movements become more voluntary and controlled. With their developing hand-eye coordination, your baby will be able to bat at brightly colored toys.When you place your baby on their stomach (you'll want to schedule plenty of tummy time into their day), you'll notice them lift their head and chest.At this age, babies start to move. Typically, they'll start to roll from their back to their side. And then they'll start to roll all the way over — first from their belly to their back and later from their back to their belly.Hold your baby's hands when they're lying on their back and gently pull them into a sitting position. Notice that they can raise their head.At first, your baby will sit with a little bit of help from you. Then, they'll be able to sit as long as they're leaning on their hands. And finally, when their back and abdominal muscles get stronger, they'll be able to sit alone.As your baby becomes more mobile, they'll start sliding around on their tummy to explore. Watch them rising up on their hands and knees to rock back and forth. And then, just when you're least expecting it, they'll start to crawl.Each time your baby pulls themselves up to stand, they're working out those leg muscles. Add to this a good dose of coordination and your baby will start taking a few tentative steps — as long as there's something there to hold on to, like the coffee table or your pants.Your baby has discovered that they can see what's going on around them much better if they're sitting up. Watch them sit up alone.Your toddler can not only walk alone pretty well, but they're also starting to run. Watch out, though — at this stage it's still easy for them to fall. Hold on to their hand tightly and your child will enjoy the challenge of walking up and down steps.By this stage, your child can jump with both feet.As your child's leg muscles get stronger and their balance improves, they can stand on one foot for a few seconds at a time.Peddling a tricycle requires hand-eye coordination and arm-leg coordination that they're starting to get the hang of.Your child is now able to enjoy playing on climbing frames at the park. Balancing on one foot is now a cinch, so your child begins to hop on one foot.Ball games become more fun as your child can catch a ball — almost all of the time.Get ready for games of jump rope now that your child can skip.With well-developed gross motor skills, your child is ready to learn how to skate and swim.Always remember that each child is absolutely unique — just like everyone else. Your unique child may not follow given guidelines and that's perfectly OK. We all develop in sync with our own internal clock.That said, here are some things that you may want to look out for:Your child isn't interested in the physical activities that their peers are happy doing. In fact, they even try to wiggle out of them.Your child goofs up tasks on purpose to mask that they're having a hard time doing them.Your child tells other kids how catch a ball, reach the top of a jungle gym, or skip — but they won't take part in the game.If your child isn't meeting many of the milestones above, you may want to reach out to your pediatrician for an evaluation. Very often, early intervention with a pediatric physical or occupational therapist can close the gaps you see.Sometimes parents notice that their child has difficulty in many areas of physical activity. For example, if your little one is clumsy, has an unsteady gait that makes it hard to negotiate steps, and can't manage to tie their shoes or complete arts-and-crafts projects.When several signs come together, they may signal a condition known as developmental coordination disorder (DCD). Talk to your pediatrician if you have concerns.There are lots of ways you can encourage these skills at different stages.Head position practice. Alternate the side that you position your baby's head when you lay them down. Left one day; right the next day. This will encourage your baby to lift their head and to strengthen both sides of their neck.Tummy time. Tummy time strengthens your baby's neck and back muscles. Keep your baby interested by shaking a colorful toy in front of them.Rattle tug. It's never too early to start building those biceps. Put a rattle in your baby's hand and tug gently.Sitting your baby up. Prop your little one up to encourage them to develop the motor skills to sit independently. As they're learning, offer a hand to keep them stable.Sticky notes on the wall. Once your baby can pull themselves up to a wobbly stand, try putting Post-It notes on the wall just out of their sitting reach. They'll delight in pulling themselves up to grab the notes and pull them off the wall.Free movement. Once you've babyproofed and created a safe space for baby, spending less time with them in bouncers and jumpers and more time encouraging them to move on their own is best. Try scattering favorite toys around a room and watch them crawl to their treasures.Going for walks. It won't be as fast as cruising in the stroller, but your new walker needs lots of opportunities to practice walking. Create a safe space in your home for this by childproofing and setting up a play pen. Allow your toddler lots of time to walk around when on a grassy lawn or at the park.Sand play. It may look like child play, but as your child digs, scoops, pours, and sifts, they're working on their gross motor skills.Create obstacle courses. Set up (safe!) objects around a room so that your toddler needs to duck, crawl, sidestep, reach, pull themselves up and even move items to get from one side to the other.Gross motor skills are mostly developed early and, as noted above, involve just the large muscle groups. Once your child has those skills in their repertoire, they can add other layers of skill like coordination, muscle development, posture, balance, and more.Some examples of building upon their gross motor skills include: hopscotch and skippingtrampoline jumpingswimming playing musical instrumentsAccompanying you child through their journey in life is one of the most satisfying things you'll ever do.When you watch your child pulling themselves up only to fall back onto that well-padded butt, you may not believe the adage that time flies. But it won't be long and soon you'll be eating popcorn on the sidelines while your superstar hits a home run. Developing fine and gross motor skills is an essential part of a child's growth and development. These skills involve the use of small and large muscles to perform different actions. As an occupational therapist, I see how difficult many activities (or "occupations") are difficult for children if they struggle with fine motor and gross motor skills. Here are some fine and gross motor skills examples. Fine motor skills refer to the use of smaller muscles in the hands, fingers, and wrists to perform more precise actions such as writing, drawing, and buttoning clothes. On the other hand, gross motor skills involve larger muscle groups such as those found in the arms, legs, and torso, and are used for activities such as running, jumping, and climbing. Both fine and gross motor skills are interconnected, and the development of one can affect the other. The larger movements of gross motor abilities using the large muscle groups develop first as an infant and toddler. Then the more skilled, intricate movements of the small muscles of the hand develop the child's fine motor coordination. Motor skills are essential for everyday life. They are the basis for all physical activity, from walking and running to writing and drawing. Motor skills are divided into two categories: fine motor skills and gross motor skills. Fine motor skills involve the use of small muscles, such as those in the hands and fingers, to perform precise movements. These skills require a high degree of control and precision. Examples of fine motor skills include: Writing with a pencil Using scissors Buttoning a shirt Brushing teeth Using a fork or spoon Fine motor skills are important for many everyday activities, including self-care tasks, schoolwork, and work-related duties. Children develop fine motor skills gradually over time, and they require practice to improve. Gross motor skills involve the use of large muscles, such as those in the arms, legs, and torso, to perform movements. These skills are important for balance, coordination, reaction time, and physical strength. Examples of gross motor skills include: Walking Running Jumping Climbing Throwing a ball Gross motor skills are important for many physical activities, including sports, exercise, and outdoor play. Children develop gross motor skills gradually over time, and they require practice to improve. Motor skills and coordination are an essential part of everyday life. Fine motor skills involve small muscles and precise movements, while gross motor skills involve large muscles and physical strength. Children develop these skills over time and require practice to improve. Is it a meltdown or a tantrum? Learn the differences so you can respond with confidence! Fine motor skills are those that require a high degree of control and precision and use the small muscles of the hand or wrist. These skills are important for everyday tasks such as writing, drawing, and using utensils. Here are some examples of fine motor skills: Picking up small objects such as coins uses a refined pincer grasp of the pointer finger and thumb. This ability develops around age 12 months, but becomes more and more refined as a child ages. Finger feeding foods such as cherries involves picking them up with their fingers and placing them into their mouths. This takes both fine motor abilities and eye hand coordination. Writing and drawing require the use of small muscles in the hand and wrist to create precise movements. These movements involve the coordination of the fingers, hand, and wrist to produce legible writing or accurate drawings. Buttoning and zipping require the use of fine motor skills to manipulate small objects, such as buttons and zippers. These tasks require the coordination of the fingers and hand to grasp and manipulate the objects. Using utensils, such as a fork or spoon, requires the use of fine motor skills to grasp and manipulate the utensil. These tasks involve the coordination of the fingers and hand to hold the utensil and bring food to the mouth. Overall, fine motor skills are important for everyday tasks and activities. By practicing these skills, you can improve your ability to complete tasks that require precision and control. Gross motor skills are those that require the use of larger muscle groups in the body. These skills are important for a child's physical development and can be improved through regular practice. Here are some examples of gross motor skills that children can develop: Walking and running are fundamental gross motor skills that children learn at a young age. These skills require coordination between the legs and the rest of the body to maintain balance and move forward. Encouraging children to walk and run on different surfaces, such as grass, sand, and concrete, can help them improve their gross motor skills. Jumping and hopping are more advanced gross motor skills that require the use of leg muscles and coordination with the rest of the body. Children can practice jumping and hopping by playing games like hopscotch, jumping rope, or playing on a trampoline. Throwing and catching are important gross motor skills that help children develop hand-eye coordination and spatial awareness. Children can practice throwing and catching by playing games like catch, dodgeball, or frisbee. Overall, gross motor skills are important for a child's physical development and can be improved through regular practice. Encouraging children to engage in physical activities that promote gross motor skills can help them develop these skills and improve their overall health and well-being. Motor skills are essential for everyday tasks and movements. They are divided into two categories: fine motor skills and gross motor skills. Fine motor skills involve the use of smaller muscles, specifically those in the hand and wrist, while gross motor skills involve larger muscles, such as those in the arms, legs, and torso. The development of motor skills occurs in stages throughout life. Infants begin developing motor skills shortly after birth. They start by developing gross motor skills, such as lifting their heads and rolling over. As they grow, they develop more advanced gross motor skills, such as crawling, standing, and walking. Fine motor skills also develop during infancy, with infants learning to grasp objects and bring them to their mouths. During childhood, motor skills continue to develop and become more refined. Children learn to use their gross motor skills for activities such as running, jumping, and throwing. They also develop fine motor skills, such as writing, drawing, and using utensils to eat. It is important for children to engage in physical activity to promote the development of both gross and fine motor skills. In adolescence, motor skills continue to develop and become more complex. Adolescents may engage in more advanced physical activities, such as team sports or weightlifting, which require a high level of gross motor skills. Fine motor skills also continue to develop, with adolescents learning to type, play musical instruments, and engage in other activities that require precise hand movements. Overall, the development of motor skills is a lifelong process that starts in infancy and continues throughout adolescence and adulthood. By engaging in physical activity and practicing fine motor skills, individuals can promote the development and refinement of their motor skills. Developing motor skills is a complex process that can be challenging for some children. Children develop motor skills at different rates. However, children with certain neurological conditions or developmental difficulties such as autism spectrum disorders may have delayed developmental milestones. Here are some common challenges that children may face during motor skills development: Difficulty with eye-hand coordination Struggling to grasp and manipulate small objects Weakness in intrinsic hand muscles Difficulty with pencil grasp and handwriting Poor balance and coordination Difficulty with jumping, hopping, and skipping Weakness in leg muscles Difficulty with sports and other physical activities Difficulty with motor planning It's important to note that every child develops at their own pace, and some may face more challenges than others. If you notice that your child is struggling with motor skills development, it's important to talk to their pediatrician. They may refer you to a physical therapist or occupational therapist, or early intervention services, who can provide additional support and resources to help your child reach their full potential. There are also many therapeutic exercises and interventions that can help improve motor skills. Occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech therapy can all be helpful for individuals looking to improve their motor skills, particularly after an injury or illness. These therapies can provide personalized exercises and techniques to help build strength, coordination, and control in specific areas of the body. Preschoolers develop fine motor skills through activities that involve using their hands and fingers. Examples of fine motor skills for preschoolers include holding a pencil or crayon, cutting with scissors, buttoning clothes, and manipulating small objects. Gross motor skills involve using the large muscles of the body to perform movements such as running, jumping, and climbing. Examples of gross motor skills activities for preschoolers include playing catch, riding a tricycle, dancing, and jumping rope. Gross motor skills can be developed through activities that involve movement and physical exercise. Encourage your child to participate in activities such as running, jumping, and climbing. Outdoor play, sports, and dance classes can also help develop gross motor skills. Gross motor skills involve using the large muscles of the body to perform movements such as walking, jumping, and lifting. Fine motor skills involve using the small muscles of the hands and fingers to perform movements such as writing, cutting with scissors, and picking up small objects. Activities that involve manipulating small objects, such as playing with playdough, stringing beads, and building with blocks, can help improve fine motor skills. Drawing, coloring, and writing also help develop fine motor skills. Encourage your child to participate in physical activities such as running, jumping, and climbing. Outdoor play, sports, and dance classes can also help develop gross motor skills. Limit screen time and encourage active play instead. Fine and gross motor skills use entirely different muscles. These skills are critical for social interaction, academic success, and self-care. There are many activities you can try to help develop motor skills. Certain signs may point to a fine or gross motor delay in your child. The lifeblood of strength and movement, motor skills are a critical part of your child's development. You may have noticed when you take your little one to the doctor, they'll ask about their physical milestones, often giving very specific scenarios. As it turns out, gross motor skills are the reason for those questions! If you're like I was as a new parent, I didn't know much about motor skills beyond that checklist at the doctor's office. It wasn't until my son didn't meet a milestone that I knew what to look for and when to get help. Get ahead of the game and learn the difference between fine and gross motor skills, along with how to support your child no matter their stage! Fine motor skills are movements made by smaller muscles, primarily in the hands and wrists, in an exact (or fine) way. For example, the pincer grasp, using scissors, turning pages, and brushing teeth all use fine motor skills. Your child's fine motor movements can be developed through everyday activities like getting dressed, opening containers, sorting, and the like. Gross motor skills are different in that they require the whole body to move, using large muscles to get the job done. For example, walking, throwing, and jumping are all gross motor milestones. Gross motor skills can be developed through numerous activities, including those as simple as playground time, dancing, riding toys, and playing catch. Both fine and gross motor skills are important to a child's development because they have a direct impact on a child's ability to participate in life. You can see this in three main categories: social interaction, academic success, and self-care! Children often rely on their motor skills during their social interactions, whether they realize it or not. They're used when kicking a ball with a friend, playing a board game, coloring together, playing hopscotch, mimicking animals while playing pretend—and the list goes on. Their developed motor skills are what make up a majority of their social interactions. As it relates to academic success, Megan McClelland finds in her study Developing together: The role of executive function and motor skills in children's early academic lives11. McClelland, M. M., & Cameron, C. E.. Developing together: The role of Executive Function and motor skills in children's early academic lives. Early Childhood Research Quarterly. 2019;46, 142–151. that "In addition to EF, motor skill development provides a foundation for children to acquire academic content in early childhood classrooms." She continues by saying, "These skills enable children to effectively manage their physical environment and learning materials." In short, motor skill development has a profound impact on your child's ability to function in the typical early academic environment. Last, self-care relies on a child developing motor skills. This encompasses everything from dressing themselves, using utensils, hair brushing, getting in and out of the car, and all those day-to-day actions that couldn't be done without the help of both small and large muscles that function thanks to their motor skills. There are a few practices to keep in mind when you're looking to support your child's motor skills. First, make the task challenging enough to stretch them but not frustrate them. For example, if you're trying to get your baby to crawl, put a toy just out of reach, not across the room. Likewise, if you're trying to get a toddler to catch, start with a bigger ball that's easier to handle. Also, give them space to explore. No matter the age, kids need a little leeway to practice trial and error while exploring their surroundings. Help them if they need it, but don't be afraid to take a step back and let them lead the way. Last, and likely most important, is to make it fun! If they're struggling in a specific area of motor development, don't let your support feel like homework. Consider implementing some exciting and entertaining activities that not only refine their motor skills but are truly fun to engage in. If you're looking for more specific ways to help support your child, take a look at some of the ideas below to get you started! Fine MotorGross Motor"Ice skate" on paper platesSorting pom poms by colorCutting out patterns on paperPut clothespins on a line As parents, we want to be aware of the signs that point to potential delays in gross and fine motor development. After all, these functions act as the foundation for nearly all their activities! If you're unsure whether or not your child might have a delay in motor skills, review the lists here, recalling if their actions regularly meet any of those below. Trouble writing or drawingIssues grasping itemsGeneral clumsinessPoor hand-eye coordinationStruggles with zippers and buttonsWon't use both handsTrouble picking up items Stiff arms and legsRegression in learned skillsDoesn't sit unsupported by 6 monthsWon't push a wheeled toy by 18 monthsLimited weight-bearing abilityLoose limbs or trunkMissing multiple gross motor milestones Always remember children develop at different paces, but if you have any concerns about your child's motor skills, talk to their doctor. They'll be able to access your child's progress based on their age and medical history, offering the right course of action if needed. There are a multitude of medical conditions that could impact fine and gross motor skill milestones and development. A common condition is developmental coordination disorder which affects motor skills across the board, making everyday tasks challenging. It can appear as clumsiness, issues in school performance, and poor coordination. Other conditions or disabilities include Down's Syndrome, Hydrocephalus, Spina Bifida, and Cerebral Palsy, to name a few. While each of these diagnoses comes with its differences, you can best support a child with these conditions by working closely with their doctor. Treatments like occupational therapy can help in developing their motor skills over time, even if it isn't to full independence. Playtime and physical activities are crucial to developing every gross and fine motor skill. Playtime with everything from dolls to blocks to books engages a child's fine motor skills, forcing them to focus on those meticulous hand and wrist movements that eventually make day-to-day actions like feeding themselves with utensils possible. Similarly, kids will develop gross motor skills during nearly any physical activity since it necessitates large movements of the entire body. When they climb to the top of the jungle gym, jump on a trampoline, kick a ball, or whatever it may be, what you're seeing is more than just physical play; these are all gross motor skills examples in action! There are factors in both categories that can have an influence, the cultural side being particularly interesting. Babies in Kenya have been shown to walk a bit earlier than Western babies, while those in Central Asia developed the latest, the timing of which all seemed to be based on cultural practices like baby-wearing. It could be said that motor development models based on Western standards are too narrow22. Gupta, S.. Culture helps shape when babies learn to walk. Science News. 2019. • There are some considerations when it comes to environmental factors, too. An environment with extensive opportunities to explore and play will naturally provide more room for motor skill development. Encouragement is also a key component of any successful learning environment! Despite all its good, technology is proving to have a rather negative effect on the development of motor skills in kids today. Prior to handheld technology like phones and tablets, the normal pastimes for children were simple playtime, whether it be tinkering with toys or playing outside, opportunities to refine gross and fine motor skills. Now we're seeing more and more children fall behind in development due to their lack of physical activity and traditional gameplay, opting for more time spent in front of screens. It's also led to a rise in childhood obesity, known to cause far more issues in the long run than delayed motor skills alone. It's easy to take for granted just how much we need fine motor skills day-to-day since many of our movements are so well-trained that we use them without even thinking! While we tend to think of fine motor activities for kids as pencil work, there's a much broader set of movements and skills we use and that kids need to learn, especially integrating visual skills (source) and building practical know-how.As an early elementary teacher and piano instructor, I've seen that as our tech-savvy kids grow up with devices that don't require a range of hand and eye-coordination movements, we need to be more aware of how we can also target fine-motor skills purposefully – not just for academic learning, but for life skills and play as well!Little fingers, especially in developing hands, follow a progression of development that parents, caregivers, and educators should know what these look like so that children can engage in targeted, developmentally appropriate activities (source). I've worked with many ages and abilities and have come up with fun ways to explain how to move and strengthen their hand-eye coordination and build up fine motor skills gradually. This helps avoid frustration when children aren't ready to take on a particular task.In this article, I'll list some examples of fine motor skills that are important at different stages with some suggestions that can help strengthen any child's fine motor skills with easy-to-access materials.Fine motor skills develop over the course of a child's life from infancy to age 12, and all children will develop at different rates. Of course, if there's ever any question, working with a qualified OT is the best course of action.We might think of fine motor skills as just small movements we do with the muscles in our hands, but they're more than that! We develop visual-motor skills at the same time, and these help us control our arms, wrists, and other gross motor skills as well. Gross motor skills are also a big part of how well we control our hands and wrists – it's all connected!Babies often use both sides of their body at the same time and gradually start to develop independence and hand preference as they get older. Infants and toddlers will often use both sides of the body at the same time when they're young, as their gross motor skills are still developing, and they're also learning to track objects with their eyes and learn to measure distance.Here are some early fine motor skill examples we'll see in infants and toddlers as they grow that make up the foundation of later movements:Moving arms and bringing hands to mouth as babies learn to make visual-motor connections.Opening and closing hands as they start to develop awareness and grip.Grasping and letting go of something as they start to control their hands.Bringing toys to mouth integrates grasp and movement.Bilateral reaching for someone or something – you'll notice a smiling baby will reach up with both arms, as it takes time to develop independence on both sides of the body.Following movement with eyes – visual tracking is part of hand-eye coordination.Pointing – this is the beginning of finger independence. Reading and pointing is a great practice for this.Pinching, or using a pincer grasp: think of a baby eating Cheerios.Holding a cup and drinking.Throwing objects in front of them or down – what baby does not love playing this game for endless hours?Waving "bye-bye" with the wrist going forwards and backwards instead of an open-and-closed grasp or moving the whole arm, or from the elbow. This is developing wrist flexion (bending forward) and extension (bending backwards).Scribbling with a crayon or marker held in the fist.Turning the pages of a book, starting with two or three at a time and then moving to one.Stacking objects, starting with two and then moving on to three or four.Putting large objects into a container.Turning door knobs and big dials – this helps develop control over wrist movement side to side.Doing a "thumbs up" is early finger isolation, and so is making the "OK" sign The bones in a child's hands are not finished forming until up to age 7, so it's important to remember that fine motor skills at this stage are so much more than just pencil grasp! Tendons are still loose and so long sessions (more than a few minutes) of forced hand positions are challenging for this age. I have a lot of parents asking about piano lessons for their 3-4-year-olds to develop fine motor skills, but I encourage them to focus on play and wait a few years for just this reason.These are examples of the wide range of fine motor skills a preschool child may be beginning to explore or master in different areas:Cutting with safety scissors – hands may tire quickly, and cuts will be imprecise.A great way to encourage straighter cuts is to have a child imagine a line on their paper first by using their index finger to trace where they will cut; this helps them integrate the visual skills they need for cutting and making fine movements.May be able to draw very basic figures, such as a line, a circle, or a cross – these are prewriting symbols.Tracing a square or triangle drawn by an adult is also a skill they'll build now.Learning the names of different fingers and wiggling them one at a time. Putting stickers on each finger is a fun way to turn this into a game!Holding pencils with a fist, either with thumb turned down and the whole arm and shoulder involved, or thumb turned up and more wrist involvement. They may also try to use just their fingertips and use their wrist to write or draw (source).It's better if they're using thick writing utensils like big chalk, egg pencils, and round paint brushes at this stage.Isolating fingers in activities like finger painting or counting on fingers. Playing finger-counting games like "This Little Piggy" are great for fine motor development – using one finger at a time is part of early fine motor development.Even counting on fingers while touching each finger or raising them as they count is an important fine motor skill!Getting dressed takes lots of fine motor skills! This can include putting on and taking off socks and shoes with velcro, and buttoning clothes, although small buttons can still be a challenge.Pushing buttons on a remote control, using a tablet, or pushing buttons are all part of fine motor development.Make sure they're pushing with the thumb braced against the index finger and not bending too much when pushing hard, or have them make a "rooster head" with the thumb, index, and middle finger for extra stability.Keeping a balloon up in the air is an example of good visual-motor connections, or chasing and popping bubbles with an index finger helps with finger independence and visual processing.Putting tape or stickers on things, and learning to peel them off. Big bubble stickers or masking tape are great for this!Using clay or play-dough is one of the all-time favorites for strengthening little hands at all ages. There is no end to how useful working with play-dough can be, from squishing it, to pulling off little pieces, to rolling it into snakes or small balls between the palms or fingers!It can be really tricky to make balls, so older children will fare better with that skill.Stacking and linking blocks, like wooden blocks or large MegaBlocks.Wrapping different thicknesses of rubber bands around a can or tissue box – this requires pulling and stretching and using different fingers independently.Preschool-aged children will show a wide range of fine motor skills that need lots and lots of repetition to master, and may need more time with some skills than others. Some may be ready for writing letters earlier or later, but there's no rush. The more children at this age wiggle, play, and work with their hands to explore the world around them, the stronger their visual-motor connections will be and the better their fine motor skills will become! It's also important to note that strong gross-motor skills are important too, as they build the foundation for good posture and muscle control.We might think that fine motor skills start to be limited to writing and pencil work once a child reaches school age, but there's so much more than just writing skills that children can continue to work on!Children are still working on building hand-eye coordination and visual processing skills that require more complex, fine movements and focused attention. The following is a list of examples of fine motor skills for school-aged children:Starting to show preference for one hand and developing good grasp, although some children will start earlier or take longer to show true hand dominance.Children will also start using an acceptable version of a tripod grasp to hold big pencils and markers; some younger children may still need their grip corrected and may revert to a less advanced grip at times but that's not a sign of a problem unless it's consistent and uncomfortable.They will be using a greater variety of writing implements with more ease, but pencils should still be thicker and using pencil grips is still a great idea!Beginning to write capital letters properly is a classic example of fine motor skills, moving on to lower case letters later. There's no rush, and writing can look like writing with a pencil, or tracing in the air, or using sand or rice to practice letter formation.Doing dot-to-dot drawing is an important example of visual processing and fine motor skills that really challenges children to develop excellent hand and wrist control.Pencil control activities like tracing between objects is another great example of fine motor control, such as circling, drawing lines to keep things separate, or outlining.Cutting skills improve, and children start to master rotating the paper to cut zigzags and in circles. A lot of children need explicit help with not using the tip of the scissors to cut and to open them wider and cut closer to the handles in order to strengthen their cutting skills.Older children will start using measuring objects such as rulers to draw lines or start to measure as they develop hand independence and use tension to hold the ruler in place as the other hand traces a line.Opening containers involves a lot of fine motor skills! It requires two hands and a strong grasp, plus keeping the container stable to avoid spills. Start with larger containers like mixing bowls with lids with dry ingredients, then try smaller, tighter-fitting lids.Twisting open a thermos or water bottle uses the same skills with more wrist control. And peeling the top off of yogurt containers is also a surprisingly hard skill to master! Because the containers are so flimsy, children need to learn to regulate pressure as they stabilize with one hand and peel with the other!These are (surprising) challenges for a lot of kids but well worth practicing.Brushing teeth requires strong wrists and fine flexion and extension movements to get all the teeth. Flossing teeth requires pulling string out, wrapping it, and using fine wrist and finger movements to move the floss between teeth.For practice, putting together a toothy monster mouth using big marshmallows glued to some cardboard is a great way to learn flossing motions. Stick balled up paper between the teeth to "floss" out.Helping with supervised meal preparation is a great example of practical fine motor skills in action: kids love tasks like mixing, measuring, and pouring, and these are all great for wrist strength and using hands for precise movements, especially using tongs: kids love to use tongs to help serve at dinner time.Even setting the table is evidence of the ability to do fine movements like laying and lining up utensils and that they can make visual connections and comparisons.Cutting soft foods with a butter knife, like butter or cheese, and using a knife to spread are evidence of improving fine motor control. Or what kid doesn't love making cookies – kids with strong fine motor skills have no trouble with mixing, rolling, and using cookie cutters or scooping cookie dough onto a pan in even spoonfuls.Sorting small varied objects using a pinch grasp, like pebbles, shells, beads, or buttons.Threading large beads onto wire or pipe cleaners; threading onto string can be a little challenging but with practice, some children are ready to move on to smaller beads with wire, or can stick with large beads and thicker string.Wrapping yarn onto something; making pompoms is a great way to strengthen wrist and finger movements.Cutting string, thin cardboard, snack packages, or other materials.Glueing paper, sequins, foam shapes, or other small objects that are sticky and require finger independence.Playing video games with a controller requires finger and hand independence and some games require balance as well.Tying a basic knot with large strips of fabric, and later, shoelaces. Using fabric scraps is a great way to make a decorative garland that makes knot-tying practice fun.Playing an instrument, such as piano, ukulele, recorder, or drums. Piano is excellent as early method books start out with one-handed songs then begin to build mirrored two-handed skills and move on to hand independence, where two hands are doing something completely different at the same time!Children who are interested in guitar may want to start out with ukulele, as it has fewer strings that are easier to press.One of the most practical sets of fine motor skills children can have as they start school is opening their lunch boxes and snacks – so many young children struggle to open different packages and twist-off tops, so practice this at home to build confidence and independence!Overall, there are so many surprising examples of ways children can build fine motor skills in day-to-day activities that the possibilities are endless. The best way for these skills to grow is for children to experience them through play and doing safe tasks independently and repeatedly. Having strong fine motor skills is the foundation for exploration and problem-solving, which helps children build confidence. While these skills are vital for academic work, you can also see how they go far beyond paper and pencil! I hope this gets you thinking about other ways you can encourage the children in your life to build their fine motor skills as they learn and grow!