

## CORE SKILL: MOVE

# Fine Motor



### What You Need to Know

Infants' fine motor development – including small muscle control, strength, and coordination – are critical in developing the skills needed to explore and learn about the world around them.

Infants are just starting to reach, grasp, tug, pick up, and release – and they love to do so! Especially as they develop into toddlerhood, development of fine motor skills is foundational to performing basic self-help skills (e.g., eating, and dressing). For now, focus on providing lots of opportunities for infants to practice, manipulate, and explore their use of fine motor skills.

### Things to Consider

Infants develop at their own pace and rate. Not all infants in your classroom will be able to show the same degree of fine motor skill – and this is okay! The goal is to encourage and build upon each infant's use of their own skills. It'd be faster, easier, and less messy if we did *everything* for infants. Especially for older infants, give opportunities to try reaching, grasping, turning, and picking up objects. This takes time, so sometimes the greatest teaching tool for fine motor skills is patience. It may feel like an eternity for you as you watch an infant struggle to put the shape in the shape sorter, but they are practicing fine motor control and learning to persist through a challenging task. The sense of accomplishment that infants experience as they begin to master these skills is well worth the wait.

### Development of Fine Motor Skills

Between birth and 9 months, infants may:	Between 8 and 18 months, infants may:
Coordinate hands and eyes when reaching for, holding stable, or moving objects.	Use hand-eye coordination for more complex actions (e.g., releasing objects into a container, stacking cups, or picking up).
Use single actions to explore shape, size, texture, or weight of objects (e.g., turning objects over, or dropping).	Explore properties of objects and materials by using various hand actions (e.g., pulling, picking up, pointing, and turning).
Use increasingly refined grasps and match the grasp to the task (e.g., using index finger and thumb to pick up objects).	Extend reach by using simple tools (e.g., pull string, stick, or rake).

### Setting the Stage

Activities and materials that support the development of fine motor skills:

- ◆ Provide a variety of materials that allow infants to practice holding and grasping (e.g., rattles, teething toys, or tower rings).
- ◆ Practice stacking and building using a variety of objects (e.g., small wooden blocks, cups of different sizes, magnetic blocks, and blocks that connect such as large Legos).
- ◆ Allow infants to explore play-dough or clay. The kneading, pinching, and forming builds fine motor skills.
- ◆ Encourage the use of small tools as often as possible (e.g., utensils during meals, brushes, and crayons).
- ◆ Use music to get those hands clapping, opening, and closing.
- ◆ Provide opportunities for tummy time. These moments require infants to coordinate and use their hands to push up, balance, and build arch development.
- ◆ Place preferred toys or objects slightly out of reach to encourage infants to practice reaching for and grasping objects.



## Intentional Teaching Practices to Build Fine Motor Skills

OBSERVE	<p><b>OBSERVE</b></p> <p>Carefully observe infants' use of fine motor skills. Take note of your own behavior as well. Are there routines/tasks that you are doing for infants that they can be more involved and independent with? Are there enough opportunities and materials available for them to practice holding, grasping, stacking, picking up, and turning?</p>
FOCUS	<p><b>Narrate or Label Use of Fine Motor Skills</b></p> <p>Intentionally focus infants' attention on their use of fine motor skills by maintaining eye contact, smiling, and encouraging the use of these skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ As you notice an infant looking at and moving their fingers, draw attention to their actions (e.g., "Wow, look at you moving your fingers! Let's see if I can move mine too.").</li></ul> <p>Demonstrate how to do things by modeling and describing your use of fine motor skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ When an infant is exploring a new toy or object, engage with them and demonstrate how to open, push, pull, or otherwise manipulate it (e.g., narrate as you press the button on a pop-up toy).</li></ul>
SCAFFOLD	<p><b>Promote Child Autonomy</b></p> <p>Find the right amount of support to help infants be successful <b>without</b> fully taking over the play. Focus on modifying your materials and interactions so that infants can draw upon fine motor skills as independently as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ If an infant cannot fit shapes into a shape sorter, give a bucket/container to put shapes in instead.</li><li>◆ If an infant is motioning for an object that is out of reach, move the object closer to them so that they can grasp or pick it up themselves (rather than simply giving it to them).</li><li>◆ If an infant is excited about turning the same block over and over again, join in and share this excitement with them.</li></ul>
KEEP IT GOING	<p>Consider what you learned from observing infants on Monday as well as their reaction to your Focus and Scaffold. Find ways to build the activities in the Setting the Stage into your regular routines.</p>