

Occupational Therapy Suggested Resource Options for Students and Parents

Occupational Therapy Activities

Online Resources

Go to <https://www.toolstogrowot.com/> for free access to resources and handouts relating to developing fine-motor, coordination, visual perceptual, and sensory processing skills. Other free resources can be found through <https://www.rehabalternatives.com/2016/11/10/occupational-therapy-activities-for-children/>

Fine-Motor Development:

Grasping Skills

- Provide opportunities to develop hand strength with the use of tools such as scissors, hole punch, tweezers, tongs, construction toys/building blocks, and resistive balls to squeeze
- Consider giving opportunities for crafts/tasks that include lacing, stringing, braiding, etc. Clay and playdough are other fun activities that can help strengthen the hands.
- Whenever possible, allow opportunities for coloring, painting, or drawing on paper attached to the wall or an easel. Also give opportunities to lay on their belly on the floor to complete tasks/activities. This develops muscles needed for writing and other fine-motor activities.
- Picking up and counting, sorting, or placing money in a piggy bank can also be good practice of needed pinching skills and holding small items. If a piggy bank isn't available, a spare tupperware or old playdough container with a small slit cut on the lid can also be used.
- Other Online Resources:
 - Mama OT - 25 Fine-Motor Activities Using Household Items
<https://www.firesara.com/blogs/handwriting/35-activities-to-improve-pencil-grasp-with-things-easily-found-at-home>
 - OT Mom Learning Activities - Hand Exercises for Kids
<https://www.ot-mom-learning-activities.com/hand-exercises-for-kids.html>
 - Firesara - 35 Activities to Improve Pencil Grasp with Things Easily Found at Home
<https://www.firesara.com/blogs/handwriting/35-activities-to-improve-pencil-grasp-with-things-easily-found-at-home>
 - OT Toolbox - Neat Pincer Grasp Activities
<https://www.theottoolbox.com/neat-pincer-grasp-activities/>

Hand-Eye Coordination

- Provide activities with the use of tools such as scissors, hole punch, tweezers, tongs, construction toys/building blocks.
- Consider giving opportunities for crafts/tasks that include lacing, stringing, braiding, etc.
- Practice throwing/catching a ball with a sibling or parent. If your child has a harder time catching smaller items, try using a larger one. Hitting a balloon back and forth can also be a fun way to practice coordination skills.
- Crawl through an obstacle course
- Other Online Resources:
 - Active For Life - Activities For Kids
<https://activeforlife.com/activities/>
 - OT Mom Learning Activities - Hand Eye Coordination
<https://www.ot-mom-learning-activities.com/hand-eye-coordination.html>

Handwriting Legibility:

Too Much/Too Little Pressure

- Try writing on vertical surfaces (i.e. walls, 3-ring binders, easels)
- Place a sheet of fine sandpaper underneath the writing surface
- Practice coloring activities distinguishing coloring that is “Too Dark,” “Just Right,” and “Too Light”
- Prior to writing, help get your child’s hands “warmed-up” by pressing down on the desk/table/nearby wall or firmly pressing their palms together. This applies deep pressure to the palm, webspace, and fingers. Doing a fun activity involving crawling through an obstacle course or squeezing playdough before writing can also help prepare their hands for writing
- Encourage your child to hold pencils with the pads of their index finger and thumb while resting on the side of their middle finger. Using photos of proper pencil grasp can also be helpful in adjusting poor grasps. To help maintain a mature grasp, try holding a small item (i.e. cotton ball, pompom, clothespin, quarter, etc.) within the palm of their writing hand with the pinky and ring fingers. Writing with golf pencils can also help if your child tends to use an immature grasp.
- Practice using a mechanical pencil without breaking the tip.

Messy Handwriting

- Ensure your child is sitting with proper posture using the 90-90-90 rule (hips, knees, and feet bent to a 90-degree angle). The student’s back should be straight tilted slightly forward. The desk/table should be no taller than his/her elbows when seated. If their feet dangle from the chair, try placing a footrest below your child’s feet (i.e. box, old phone book, books stacked on top of each other, etc.).
- Encourage your child to hold pencils with the pads of their index finger and thumb while resting on the side of their middle finger. Using photos of proper pencil grasp can also be helpful in adjusting poor grasps. To help maintain a mature grasp, try holding a small item (i.e. cotton ball, pompom, clothespin, quarter, etc.) within the palm of their writing hand with the pinky and ring fingers. Writing with golf pencils can also help if your child tends to use an immature grasp.
- Try writing on vertical or slanted surfaces (i.e. walls, 3-ring binders, easels)
- Allow your child to skip lines to help improve overall legibility
- Highlight the left and right margins of the paper - using green on the left for a starting point and red on the right for a stopping point
- Provide lines to write on rather than writing in open space
- If using 3-lined paper, try highlighting the bottom half of the lined space to help with letter sizing
- Provide your child with his/her own handwriting checklist. They can use this to self-correct punctuation, spacing, line use, letter size, capitals, etc.
- Highlighting the baseline can help overall handwriting neatness and “floating” letters that do not sit on the bottom line. Some children have a hard time controlling their movement during writing tasks and often write their letters below the bottom line. Highlighting the baseline can serve as a reminder to keep their letters on top where they should be.
- Practice using a popsicle stick, a pencil, or a finger to serve as a reminder to put enough space between words. Placing a sticker or other fun, motivating items on the popsicle stick can also be used to help make these strategies more fun.

- Use a multisensory approach, such as writing letters in the air, forming strokes and curves with eyes closed, and using foam/sand/sandpaper/playdough/craft sticks/shaving cream for practicing letters
- Post a letter strip along the surface of the child's writing area

Visual Perception Skills:

- Practice finding a specified letter/number in a magazine or a page from the newspaper with a highlighter
- Play "I Spy" games for shapes: For example: "I spy 5 things that are rectangles."
- Use "I Spy", "Where's Waldo?" books, board games, and computer games
- Place a stuffed animal somewhere in a cluttered room (make sure a portion of the item is visible) and challenge your child to find it
- Find specific magnetic letters on a refrigerator full of magnets
- Complete a "Connect the Dots" picture; encourage your child to guess what the picture may be before connecting the dots.
- Complete the picture - child draws in the missing part of an incomplete, yet recognizable shape/picture/symbol.
- Provide opportunities for word searches
- Other Online Resources:
 - OT Mom Learning Activities - Visual Perception Activities
<https://www.ot-mom-learning-activities.com/visual-perception-activities.html>
 - Therapy Fun Zone - Visual Perceptual Skills
<https://therapyfunzone.net/blog/ot/visual-perceptual-skills/>
 - Kid Sense - Visual Perception
<https://childdevelopment.com.au/areas-of-concern/visual-perception/>

Sensory Processing:

Below are links to a variety of free, online resources that provide strategies and accommodations to help meet the needs of people with sensory differences...

Attention

The Inspired Treehouse - Paying Attention: 30 Sensory Strategies

<https://theinspiredtreehouse.com/paying-attention-30-sensory-strategies/>

Your Therapy Resource - 10 Quick Fixes to Increase Attention Span

<https://www.yourtherapysource.com/blog1/2017/05/14/sensory-quick-fixes-increase-attention-span/>

The OT Toolbox - Attention Activities

<https://www.theottoolbox.com/attention/>

Handling Sensory-Seeking Behaviors at Home

Understood - Heavy Work and Sensory Processing Issues: What You Need to Know

<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/child-learning-disabilities/sensory-processing-issues/heavy-work-activities>

And Next Comes SL - 50 Heavy Work Activities for Kids

<https://www.andnextcomesl.com/2015/06/heavy-work-activities-for-kids.html>

MamaOT - 40 Heavy Work Activities for Kids

<http://mamaot.com/40-heavy-work-activities-kids/>

Sensory Play

The OT Toolbox - Sensory Play

<https://www.theottoolbox.com/sensory-play/>

A Sensory Life! - Tactile Play and Activities

<http://asensorylife.com/tactile-play-and-activities.html>

Growing Hands On Kids - The Best Activities for the Tactile System

<https://www.growinghandsonkids.com/the-best-activities-for-the-tactile-system.html>

Centre for Autism - Auditory: Over-Responsive

<https://sensory-processing.middletownautism.com/sensory-strategies/strategies-according-to-sense/auditory/over-responsive/>

Understood - Ways to Help Kids Who Are Sensitive to Noise

<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/child-learning-disabilities/sensory-processing-issues/7-ways-to-help-your-child-cope-with-noise-sensitivity>

Understood - Sensory Processing Issues: Strategies You Can Try at Home

<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/child-learning-disabilities/sensory-processing-issues/sensory-processing-issues-strategies-you-can-try-at-home>