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# Fine motor warm ups

All children would benefit from carrying out warm ups before any fine motor activity, particularly handwriting. However, those who have difficulty with their fine hand and finger movements will find them particularly beneficial and so a short 'desk based' set of hand and arm activities to precede every session involving handwriting or fine motor activities in the classroom would be helpful.

The following activities are some initial ideas that can be developed and can be carried out as a whole class or in a small group or 1:1 basis and shouldn't take longer than 5-10 minutes.

These activities start with warming up the larger shoulder and arm muscles before moving onto the smaller muscles of the hands and fingers:

## Chair Push-Ups

Begin by sitting straight in your chair and gripping the sides of the chair or place the hands flat on the chair seat under your bottom. Using your arm muscles, lift your bottom up off the chair. Your feet should lift up slightly from the floor.



## Desk Push-Ups

Start with your hands flat on the top of the desk with the tips of the thumbs and index finger facing each other to create a triangle. Bend your elbows to bring your nose towards the triangle in your fingers, and then push up with the arms to straighten your elbows.

## Shoulder Shrugs

Shrug your 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 you are trying to push your scapula together in the back, much like a shoulder bench press when working out.

## Crocodile Snaps

Raise your arms in the air with one above the other. Then snap your hands together like a crocodile snapping its jaw. Take turns having the left and right arm above each other.



## Head press

Link fingers of both hands on the top of the head and gently but firmly press down



## Air Traffic Controller

Start with your elbows bent and your hands in a fist in front of each shoulder. Then straighten your elbows, moving one arm out from the body and the other arm to the side of your body. Alternate arms back and forth.

You can also use this to practice crossing midline by crossing the hands and arms while doing the movement.

## Butterflies

Begin with your arms straightened in front of your body. Like your thumbs together to make an "X" and turn your hands facing out. Using the shoulders to move, make small circles with the hands, moving from left to right (remember to do this movement from the shoulders, not the fingers or hand).

## Hand push and pull

Encourage the use of the "strongest" muscles when pushing or pulling. You perform the "push" part of the exercise by putting your two hands together, pointing upwards, in front of your chest, with your elbows bend at a 90 degree angle. Push your two hands together as firmly as you can, and hold that "push" for 5-10 seconds.



You perform the "pull" part of the exercise by holding your two hands together by hooking your fingers. Again, keep your elbows bend at a 90 degree angle and pull your two hands apart, without losing your grasp, as firmly as you can. Hold this "pull" for 5-10 seconds.

## Star hands

Start by making stars with both hands by stretching out the fingers wide. Now make a tight fist with both hands and stretch the fingers wide again.

## Piano Fingers

Drum your fingers on the table or desk as if playing the piano. Make sure each finger touches the desk. You can also 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?"

## Finger pulls

Link the index fingers of each hand together and gently pull whilst remaining linked. Continue with the other fingers.



## Pencil Twirls

Get your pencils out and start to twirl them 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

Twirl a penny or similar small object such as a small rubber between all of the fingers of the dominant hand

## Inchworm

Make sure your child is holding the pencil with an appropriate grasp like the tripod or quadruped grasp. Move your fingers along the pencil from tip to tip, starting at the bottom and working towards the top. Then back down to the bottom of the pencil. Make sure you are only using your writing hand for this one, do not help out with the opposite hand.

## Scrunching paper

Using one hand, 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.

If you would like this factsheet in another language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio, please call:

**01228 603890**

E: [communications.helpdesk@cumbria.nhs.uk](mailto:communications.helpdesk@cumbria.nhs.uk)

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