

Practical Life at Home: IMPROVING DEXTERITY

These are some ideas for activities you can do at home to help mirror practical life activities and help your child improve dexterity:

CLOTHING/FASTENING:

Children love working with the dressing frames, so encourage them to dress themselves, especially when there are fastenings like zippers and buttons. This will require patience on your part (not to jump in) and practice on their part – which means LOTS of extra time. This is not necessarily something to focus on in the rush of the morning when there is a lot of pressure and little time.

Remember it's a process... if the shoes are on the wrong feet it won't kill them, also if the shirt is on backward, buttons matched up, etc. I know everything on children's clothing is smaller, so you could also find something from a thrift store with larger buttons, etc. Practicing on clothes that are off their bodies and in front of them at a table will give them more chances at success.

Try... buckles, safety pins, D-ring closures, clamps, clips, hooks and eyes, etc.

TRANSFER:

Transfer work helps with hand control, strength, spatial awareness, hand-eye coordination, and self control... to name a few. Transfer can occur with grains, dried beans, corn kernels, beads, coins, and especially food at dinner (filling the serving bowl, serving to the plate, scraping into the trashcan with a rubber spatula, etc!). Always have a small sponge or special cloth (black washcloths work well since water often ends up on the floor) available so your child can clean up spills.

- Spooning beans (or anything) between 2 bowls
- Pouring water or grains between 2 small pitchers
- Pouring into smaller container(s) – shot glasses?
- Pouring into small vase with a funnel*
- Large beans, pasta, etc between bowls with wooden toast tongs* or strawberry huller*
- Water between 2 (baby food) jars with a small turkey baster*
- Small beans, beads, etc. with tweezers – to the suction cups on underside of soap holder/shower grips**

FOOD PREP

- Peeling vegetables
- Transferring yogurt, applesauce, etc. to serving bowl
- Cutting cheese (butter knife), soft fruits and veggies
- Cutting vegetables (wavy cutter with handle) on small cutting board
- Apple slicing (with slicer)
- Peeling boiled eggs
- Spreading – softened butter on muffins, cream cheese on bagels, jelly on toast, peanut butter on crackers or celery, etc.
- Putting lunch items into containers/bags (and closing zip-top too!)
- Ripping lettuce for salad
- Taking grapes off stems
- Scooping seeds from ½ cantaloupe

Other work to develop the hand:

- Travel sized spray bottle or spritzer/mister (fill with water, spray windows (outside), plant leaves, etc)
- Lacing a shoelace through cardboard with holes punched out
- Stringing beads (horse beads on a shoelace that is the same size as the hole so they have to pull the bead down the lace)
- Putting nuts on/off bolts of various sizes
- Hammering small nails into corkboard
- Pin punching – with a thumbtack or nail along the outline of a shape
- <<scissor work!>> - cutting along a straight, wavy, zig zag, (etc) line – scissors should have thumb hole and hold to fit all fingers
- Clothespin – pinning cloth to a line
- Folding laundry