

HAND STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES FOR PRESCHOOLERS

Like any area of development, you can spend all the money you want in toys and equipment for hand exercises that lead to through all the [stages of pencil grasp development](#). But the ideas shared in this post will only include the most basic and inexpensive tools that you probably already have in your home or classroom.

HAND STRENGTHENING EXERCISES USING SQUIRT BOTTLES

Squeezing activities that use squirt bottles are another way to develop muscle strength in the hands and fingers. It's also a lot of fun, too! Don't limit yourself to just spray bottles. You can use just about any kind of plastic "squeezable" bottle, and don't forget about squirt guns, either. Try some of these:

- [traditional spray bottles](#)
- [squirt guns](#)
- empty liquid glue bottles
- [condiment bottles](#)
- [glitter glue](#)
- [foaming soap pump](#)
- empty water bottles

Preschoolers and toddlers won't even know how hard they are working doing these squirt bottle activities. They will be having too much fun to notice!

10 SQUIRTING ACTIVITIES FOR INCREASING HAND AND FINGER STRENGTH

- Add applesauce bottle caps another small, floating manipulative to a shallow bin of water and use the spray bottle to squirt the caps.
- Turn the nozzles to full spray and give houseplants the extra humidity most need by spraying down the leaves.
- Use sidewalk chalk to write the letters of your child's name and then use a squirt gun to squirt the letters until they disappear.
- Set up two bins: one that has empty glue bottles filled with various colors of water and a second bin that is empty. Squeeze the water from the glue bottles into the second bin and mix the colors.

- Or use condiment bottles to do the same activity, but add dried water beads to the second bin. Watch the water beads grow as more and more water gets squeezed into the bin.
- Let you child squeeze out their own paint. Use a [rolling pin to spread the paint](#).
- Squirt lots of paint on a large sheet of butcher paper and then bounce balls on the paper to paint.
- Add soap pumps of colored soap to the water sensory table. [Here is a recipe](#) to make your own soap pump solution.
- Place small water-proof toys (like dinosaurs) in the bottom of a sensory bin. Use a soap pump to cover the dinosaurs.
- Puncture the lid of a plastic water bottle to make a spout. Then fill the water bottle and squeeze hard!

HAND STRENGTHENING EXERCISES USING PLAYDOUGH

Playdough is a classic tool used for hand strengthening activities in preschool. It's enjoyable by everyone and the benefits are truly endless. You can use homemade playdough recipes, (which I will list below for you), or you can use store bought.

- [fool-proof playdough without cream of tartar](#)
- [silky smooth playdough recipe](#)
- [orange creamsicle playdough recipe](#)
- [gingerbread flavored edible playdough](#)
- [45 other playdough recipes to try](#)

10 PLAYDOUGH ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPING HAND STRENGTH

- Hold a ball of playdough in the palm and practice using the thumb to press into the ball, making an indentation.
- Mix two playdough colors together by smooshing and squeezing.
- Flatten playdough to make pancakes.
- Rest playdough pancake on the fingertips and then spread the fingertips to spread the playdough more.

- Hide a small toy inside the playdough and pass it to a friend to find.
- Make a ball of one color, then cover it with a second color. Then squeeze and smoosh the playdough together to make a new color.
- Make playdough ropes or snakes and freeze. Then use scissors and snip the ropes into smaller pieces.
- Roll balls of dough between the thumb and pointer/middle fingers.
- Make a maze for a ping pong ball. Blow the ball through the maze with a straw.
- Use [playdough mats](#) for form letters and shapes.

HAND STRENGTHENING EXERCISES USING CLOTHES PINS AND CLAMPS

Clothing pins don't cost very much and can be found at your typical grocery store or dollar store. Like other fine motor tools, there are a lot of different kinds of clothes pins and clamps, and they all challenge and work those hand muscles in different ways.

- [clothing pins](#)
- [heavy duty clothing pins](#)
- [magnetic chip bag clips](#)
- [binder clips](#)
- [hair clamps](#)
- [woodworking clamps](#)

10 CLOTHES PIN ACTIVITIES FOR FINGER STRENGTH (AND HANDS TOO!)

- Transfer small items like pom poms from one container to another using clothing pins.
- Squeeze game cards. How many game cards can be added to the same clothing pin or clamp. Add only one card at a time for lots of pinching practice.
- Make a fort using woodworking clamps, then add a banner using clothes pins.
- Pick up curled pipe cleaner or yarn with hair clamps.

- Hang socks from a line.
- Make clothespins animal crafts, like [this one](#).
- Create “splat” afterwork [like this](#).
- Place different kinds of clamps on a baby gate or wooden dowels.
- Get several paper cups and write a number 1-10 on each one. Then clip the corresponding number of clothing pins or clamps on each cup.
- Pretend to be a claw grabbing machine and use clamps and clips to pick up small stuffed animals

HAND STRENGTHENING EXERCISES USING A SPONGE

Sponges are a really inexpensive tool for developing fine motor skills and hand strength. Not all sponges are the same, so try to offer your preschoolers a range. Many different kinds can be found at the dollar store.

- [cleaning sponge](#)
- [automotive sponge](#)
- [natural ocean sponge](#)
- [biodegradable sponge](#)
- [Scrub Daddy sponge](#)
- [make-up sponge](#)

10 SPONGE ACTIVITIES FOR STRENGTHENING HANDS

- Transfer water from one bin to another using only a sponge.
- Use two hands to wring out a large automotive sponge.
- Cut sponges into smaller pieces and use a garlic press or potato masher to wring out the water.
- Hold a small sponge in the palm of the hand while practicing pencil grasp.
- See how many small sponges can be held in one hand. Squeeze a little more as another sponge is added.

- Add water to two bins. Color each bin with a different color or water. Transfer water from one bin to another using only a sponge and watch the water change colors.
- Use tongs or jumbo tweezers to wring the sponges.
- Practice finger movements and finger isolation by squeezing sponges between the fingers and not using the whole hand.
- Using liquid watercolor, create a drip painting by squeezing the watercolor-filled sponge onto paper.
- Stretch out your hand on the table and place a small sponge under each finger tip. Practice pushing down on each sponge, one at a time (as though playing the piano).

HAND STRENGTHENING EXERCISES USING STRESS BALLS

Stress balls are nothing new to the preschool classroom. And neither are sensory balls. Both provide important sensory input while also working on muscle strength because children can squeeze them hard. Like other fine motor tools, there are a lot of different kinds of stress and sensory balls, and they all challenge your preschoolers in different ways.

- [traditional stress ball](#)
- [emotions foam balls](#)
- [Stretch and Pull Squeeze Balls](#)
- [medium knobby balls](#)
- [water bead squeeze balls](#)
- [mesh squeeze balls](#)
- [heavy balls](#)

10 STRESS BALL ACTIVITIES FOR IMPROVING HAND AND CORE STRENGTH

- Provide a variety of stress balls and just squeeze! Squeeze hard, then soft, then hard!
- Roll a dice and squeeze the corresponding number of times.
- Offer stress balls while in line in the classroom, like walking to lunch or while waiting for parent pick-up.

- Try squeezing in different ways.
 - pushing between hands (core strength)
 - palms only
 - thumb and fingers (with open space in hand)
- Transfer heavy balls from one end of the room to the other. Make it more challenging by following one of the grasps listed above. (Heavy balls will also work core stability).
- Listen to music and squeeze to the beat.
- Or play “Freeze Squeeze”. It’s like Dance Freeze, but by squeezing stress balls.
- Try squeezing the balls in different locations around the body.
 - over the head
 - behind the back
 - over to one side
- Roll a die and then squeeze the stress ball for the corresponding number of seconds.
- Use stress balls for a sensory based foot massage! Take off your shoes and use one hand to roll the stress ball up and down the foot.



Sarah Punkoney, MAT

I’m Sarah, an educator turned stay-at-home-mama of five! I’m the owner and

creator of Stay At Home Educator, a website about intentional teaching and

purposeful learning in the early childhood years. I've taught a range of levels, from

preschool to college and a little bit of everything in between. Right now my focus is

teaching my children and running a preschool from my home. Credentials include:

Bachelors in Art, Masters in Curriculum and Instruction.

stayathomeeducator.com/



Hi, I'm Sarah!

I'm an educator turned stay-at-home mama of five. I believe in **intentional teaching & purposeful play** in early childhood education.

SUBSCRIBE
to the newsletter

PRINTABLE SHOP

PLANNING

LITERACY

MATHEMATICS

DEVELOPMENT

THEMES

PLAY