



Upper Extremity Strengthening Exercises

Strengthening of the upper body like your shoulders, arms, hands, and fingers are vital to the ability to do many tasks independently for your child in the school setting. These include things like properly holding a pencil (or marker, crayon), cutting with scissors, tying their shoes, playing on the playground, sitting in the correct position in his/her desk, and so on.

Hands & Fingers Strengthening Activities- *these activities strengthen the gross grasp of the hand to be able to move onto skillfully using the hand and fingers in the proper position.*

- **Play-Doh or Theraputty:** Let your child squeeze the putty, pinch small pieces off with their index finger & thumb, roll it to create a “snake”, push it flat against a table to make a “pancake”.
- **Pull apart velcro or tape:** Place velcro pieces or painter’s tape onto a vertical surface and have your child pull it off isolating the index finger and thumb
- **Use squirt bottles:** Use a squeeze bottle to mist household plants, make spray pictures, or squirt off shaving cream with spray bottle filled with water colored by food coloring
- **Sopping sponges:** Use a sponge to sop up water and then squeeze it to transfer into another container.
- **Animal walks:** Do different kinds of walking on hands, the wheelbarrow walk, bear walk, crab walk, etc
- **Playground equipment:** Let children spend time playing on playground equipment, the monkey bars, a swing-- anything that encourages gripping by the hands.
- **Cutting with scissors:** Cutting with scissors on different thickness of paper-- Be sure that the child holds the scissors correctly with index finger *not in the loop*, but resting under the loop to better guide the scissors around curves.
- **Stirring:** Activities like cooking that require stirring (especially mixing ingredients) are excellent for developing hand strength.

- **Opening jars:** Screwing and unscrewing jar lids
- **Carrying tote bags:** carrying tote or plastic bags with a handle that is heavy, but manageable.
- **Hole punch:** Using a hole punch on various thickness of paper.

Shoulders & Arms Strengthening Activities-

- **Therapy/yoga ball:** Utilize a therapy ball by having child lie on it on his/her stomach and do activities on the floor such as puzzle; push therapy ball up and down the wall
- **Animal walks/wheelbarrow race:** Crab walk, bear crawl, donkey kicks, seal slide
- **Weighted ball toss:** Use a weighted ball (heavy, but manageable) to toss back and forth, or adapt the activity and push the ball across the floor if too heavy. You can also bounce these balls back and forth on the trampoline!
- **Theraband resistance bands:** Have your child stand on the thearband (with equal amount on either side) and pull the bands up as high as they can and bring them back down their side (slowly)
- **Tug-o-war** (also strengthens hands!)
- **Climbing:** Utilize playground equipment for child to climb (monkey bars, too) or the trees in your yard.
- **Play a game of Twister**
- **Balloon Volleyball:** See how long you can keep it up in the air!
- **Wall push-ups**
- **Draw shapes** in the air with your hands/fingers (keep your arms extended!)
- **Bounce a tennis ball/dribble basketball:** also works on hand-eye-coordination!
- **Wall-handstands**

Core Strengthening Activities- *your child's core muscles are vital in posture, balance, and endurance of gross and fine motor tasks!*

- **Yoga:** See examples below
- **Sit on therapy ball:** play catch while your child sits on a the ball
- **Planks:** Engage with your child to see who can hold the longest!
- **Wheelbarrow racing**
- **Lying on therapy ball:** let your child lay on stomach and roll forwards/backwards
- **Wall touches:** have your child grab a small ball and stand with his/her back against the wall. Taking the ball in both hands, your child will touch the wall with the ball over their right shoulder, then left (make it fun - see how many they can do in 30 seconds!)
- **Flying animals:** Have your child lay on their back and place a large stuffed animal in between their feet with their legs straight up in the air. First, let their animal “fly” by

keeping their legs in the air and moving the animal around. Then encourage them to “land” their animal (by bringing it close to the ground) and make it fly again (by bringing it up to the air)!

- **Hopscotch:** you can adapt this activity by adding letters/numbers for the child to jump on , ask them to switch from jumping to with 2 legs to 1 leg, instruct them to go backwards, etc.
- **“Tightrope” walking:** All you’ll need is some masking tape and you can make many different tightrope obstacle courses using your child’s toys. One example: have your child gather their favorite stuffed animals on one end of the “tightrope”, then walk across it with one animal in hand (one foot in front of the other), step up on a step stool and throw the animal into a bucket, then repeat until all animals made it across!
- **Superman pose:** Have your child lie on his/her stomach and then lift their arms & legs off of the ground-- see how long they can hold the pose!

YOGA POSES FOR KIDS:



Warrior pose:

Take a big step back with one foot. Take in a deep breath. As you exhale, bend your front knee so that it comes directly over top your ankle. Press your weight through your back heel. Take a deep breath and reach up strongly through your arms. Keep grounded, press down through your back foot, keeping your back leg straight.



Triangle pose:

Begin in Star Pose. Turn one foot, so it is pointing to the side. Keep your arms straight. Bend through your hips, over your foot with your toes pointing out. Rest your lower hand on your shin or ankle and stretch your upper arm up to the sky. Hold this pose for a couple of breaths, then return to standing. Lower your hands to your sides. Repeat on your opposite side.



Mountain pose:

Stand tall, with your toes touching and feet slightly apart. Allow your body to gently sway back and forth. Slowly bring the swaying to a standstill. Stop with your weight balanced evenly on your feet. Press your shoulders back, and straighten your arms beside your torso. Breathe deeply, and hold this pose for a couple of breaths.



Star pose:

Begin in Mountain Pose. Step your feet wide apart and stretch your arms out to your sides. Hold this pose for a couple of breaths, then lower your arms and step your feet back together.



Tree pose:

Begin in Mountain Pose. Slowly bring up your left foot. Bend your knee, & place your left foot on the inside of your right leg. Inhale and bring your hands up to your sides. Reach out like branches on a tree. Exhale & bring the hands together in front of your heart. Then lift them strongly overhead. You are a growing tree



Dancer pose:

Begin in Mountain Pose. Bend one foot up, and hold onto that foot with your same-sided hand. Keep your body upright, and lift your free hand over your head. Hold this pose for a couple of breaths. Gently release your leg, and return your hands to your sides. Repeat on your opposite side.