

# Occupational Therapy Ideas For Your Child

The following activities were chosen to help your child work on occupational therapy (OT) components specific to their IEP goals, while we are out of school. By helping your child with one of the following activities at a time, you're giving them opportunities to improve the underlying OT skills necessary to be more successful at school!

Please record the date, which activity your child participated in, and your initials for each activity you try (using the form below or a paper of your own.) This will help you track how long you worked on O.T. skills. Each child receives different therapy minutes when in school, so refer to your child's IEP plan to know what to aim for (i.e. 60 minutes per month could be choosing one activity to do for 15 minutes a week, 120 minutes per month could be choosing one activity to do for 30 minutes a week, etc.)

Thank you so much, and I'm available by phone should you have any questions at all (304) 704-0603.

We'll get through this together!

Debbie Groves  
occupational therapist

DATE	Activity Initials
<hr/>	
<hr/>	

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Activity Ideas for Hand/Pinch Strengthening and Fine Motor Control

Try any of these activities to support the hand and finger skills necessary for supporting handwriting, typing, and managing buttons/zippers/snaps!

- Tongs, tweezers, connected chop sticks, strawberry hullers: use these to pick up small objects for sorting, such as beads, marbles, beans, pompoms and cotton balls
- Place a coloring book page/picture over a sheet of craft foam, paper plate, or cork board, then have child put toothpicks or large push-pins around the outline of the picture (pressing into the foam or cork)
- place coins or bingo chips in narrow slots; a piggy bank is perfect
- eye droppers: make colorful dribble art creations by placing drops of colored water on a paper towel or coffee filter

- geoboards: make shapes and letters using rubber bands on geoboards
- pick-up sticks; Jenga; Don't Spill the Beans; Connect Four; any wind up toys
- pegboard activities, like Lite Brite
- Tiddly winks games; Ants in the Pants
- Games that use tongs, like Operation or Bedbugs. Can use tongs or tweezers to pick up small game pieces.
- Open and close Ziplok bags: encourage using fingertips to press and seal
- Buttoning and snapping---- please show the child how to by providing a visual model, then let them practice on shirts and pants. (Letting them dress up you or another sibling or even a stuffed animal is always fun!)
- pop beads, or stringing beads or pieces of plastic drinking straw that's been cut up into 1" segments
- peel and place stickers
- crumple small bits of tissue paper using fingertips, dip in glue and paste onto a paper plate or paper to make a flower bouquet
- tear small pieces of paper with finger tips and paste them onto a sheet of paper to make a picture

### Clothespin games:

- use the pads of the thumb and index finger to open the clothespin rather than pinching it open against the side of the index finger
- When pinching clothespins open, try alternating each finger to squeeze opposite the thumb.

- place clothespins along the top of a container and then on top of each other to construct a design.
- Pick up small objects with the clothespin: cotton balls, pompoms, crumbled paper, beads, pegs, etc.
- Attach several clothespins along the bottom hem of shirt and then pull them off.
- Place clothespins around an index card or a paper plate
- Hang up pictures or plush toys on a string, like a clothesline.
- Clay, therapy putty, Silly putty, play-doh, Sculpey, bread dough, modeling foam; break off small pieces, then try rolling the putty or clay between the pads of the thumb and index finger to make small balls.
- flatten small balls of dough by pinching them between the pads of the thumb and index finger
- starting with a larger round ball of putty or clay, form the thumb and index finger into a large round shape, place the ball between the fingertips and try to pinch the fingers together.

### Interlocking construction toys:

- Mega Blocks are large sized Legos and are best for preschool age children
- Bristle blocks are a good choice for preschool age
- Legos and K'nex are best for older children
- Pop beads: large size for preschool, small (play jewelry type) for older children

- Linking chains, Cootie game

### Water play with spray bottles, water guns, squirt toys:

- spray bottles: help water plants or spray the windows to clean, play with it in the bathtub, play outdoors in warm weather, add food coloring to make spray bottle pictures in the snow.
- water guns: outdoor summer fun as well as in the bathtub.
- small squirt toys, often look like fish or animals, encourage pinching with 1 or 2 fingers opposite the thumb
- pop the bubbles on large or small bubble pack by pinching with thumb and index finger or by pushing down on bubbles when sheet is placed on a hard surface.

### Squeeze toys and materials:

- foam balls, animals and shapes: alternate each finger pinching toward the thumb using the foam toy as resistance
- tennis ball "Hungry Guy" (made by cutting a horizontal slit into a tennis ball): When you squeeze the ball on the sides of the slit, the "mouth" will open. Hide pennies, pegs, beads and other small things inside. Squeeze to open and shake out the contents, then feed the Hungry Guy by slipping in the food; The wider the slit, the easier it will be to open the mouth wide. Start with a wide slit for young children.
- Squeeze a large sponge (have them help "wash the car" or wipe down shower walls then squeeze out sponge when done; kids can help wash plastic dishes in the sink
- bulb syringe (usually in infant supply sections of stores) or turkey baster to squirt water, or have a race by squeezing them to blow cotton balls and pompoms across a finish line.

- craft activities that require using bottles to squeeze: glue, glitter glue, puffy paint, fabric paint, etc.

NOTE: If the child is having difficulty pinching with just the index and middle fingers opposite the thumb, have him/her hold a small object (coin, pompom, marble) against the palm by closing the ring and pinky fingers of the hand around the small object (so that only the thumb and first 2 fingers are used to pinch)

- Read a short, easy-reader style book with your child. **\*\*\*If handwriting or pencil grasp are goals for your child**, ask him to write a word from each page three times. Provide a visual model (you write it first), if needed. Kids who are working on correct pencil grasp do better with a pencil no longer than 3 inches in length, as it helps them remember to only use the first three fingers in a tripod grasp. Broken crayon pieces also work nicely to promote a tripod hold. You can also have your child look around the room and name objects, then (after you write the word first to provide a visual reference), have them copy the word. Some kids have more legible writing when using adaptive writing paper. I like this large centimeter grid graph paper, if you can print from home--- <https://print-graph-paper.com/Default/DownloadGraph?units=10&paperSize=letter&orientation=portrait&act=open> . They write one letter in each square, then leave a blank square between words for a space. Or you can just use regular lined paper (for a visual cue for a baseline), then provide a verbal cue to “leave a finger space between words” to improve spacing. If your child struggles to stay on a baseline, use a ruler or edge of a folder/book to sit underneath the baseline, so there is a physical barrier there to cue them not to go below (unless the letter calls for it, like “p”, “g”, “y”, etc.)
- For kids with **\*\*\*typing/keyboarding goals**, here are some terrific online sites to allow typing practice at a laptop or desktop computer. Dance Mat generally takes 30 minutes to complete 1 to 2 individual levels. Individual drills on the other sites can be timed with a timer to reach your activity engagement goal:

1. Dance Mat Typing <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zf2f9j6/articles/z3c6tfr>
2. TypeTastic! <https://typetastic.com/>

3. Free Online Typing Games (click the orange “games” tab then let the child select a game of his choosing) <https://www.freotypinggame.net/>
4. Typing Club <https://www.typingclub.com/login.html> (You need a gmail account to sign in to this.)

Other fun activities for either handwriting or typing would be:

- Have your child choose their favorite book and then copy (print or type) 10 sentences out of the book into a word document.
- Compose a short story (3 to 5 paragraphs) and then print or type it out.
- Have your child pretend to be a reporter and make a list of fun interview questions to ask someone else in the house.
- Have your child write or type three sentences every day about what “quarantine life” looks like for them.

\*\*If your child has an iPad, try these free apps: TypeFun, TapTyping, or Animal Typing-Lite

*Most of all, enjoy your child as they explore and grow. Learning should be fun! :)*
