Using Two Hands in Play

Children develop their hand skills by playing and using their hands to do everyday activities such as getting dressed, writing, drawing, using scissors and cutlery, as well as participating in a variety of sports and play activities. It is important to allow your child the opportunity to practise and develop these skills, so that they are able to use two hands to participate in and complete tasks in a skilful and coordinated way.

Have fun playing with your child and encourage them to use both arms and hands. Through play activities your child will develop and practise their hand skills. If your child tends to use only one hand, try activities that require two hands such as riding a bike or playing card games.

- Help your child to use their hands by showing them how and if necessary guide them (e.g. help them to hold the scissors with their preferred hand with their thumb on top and hold the paper with their assisting hand with their thumb on top).
- Encourage your child to use both hands at every opportunity.
- Reward your child whenever they try to use both hands by telling them what a good job they are doing.

There are lots of indoor, outdoor and everyday activities that can encourage your child to use both of their hands to appropriately complete fine motor tasks. Choose a few of the activities below to try with your child. Don’t forget that it’s supposed to be fun!

**Indoor activities:**

- Play with Playdough (e.g. roll, squash, and mould playdough) using a rolling pin, cutters, a garlic press, or plastic knives.
- Threading activities such as lacing cards or beading.
- Build with construction toys (e.g. Duplo or Lego blocks).
- Cooking activities – mixing, measuring, sifting, kneading, rolling or using cookie cutters.
- Draw with textas, (taking lids on/off), colouring and using stencils. Encourage your child to also sharpen pencils and use a ruler.
- Art and craft activities such as making cards, a hat, or book. Use stickers, scissors, sticky tape or glue sticks, pipe cleaners, paper and cardboard. Encourage your child to get creative and make things using old boxes, egg cartons, lids, wrapping paper, wool, and masking or sticky tape.
- Musical instruments – drums, shakers, xylophone, guitar, keyboard or piano.
- Arm and finger games such as ‘Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes’, ‘Incy Wincy Spider’, *The Wheels On The Bus*.
- Imaginary play using tea-sets, hand and finger puppets, dressing teddies and dolls, cash registers, telephones, dress ups, tool and medical kits, large cardboard boxes or a cubby-house.
- Read books together. Encourage your child to hold the book, turn the pages and point to the pictures.
- Wrap or unwrap a present.
- Deal cards when playing card games such as Snap, Fish, or Uno.
Outdoor activities:

- Sand play – dig, pour, mix, build castles or drive cars in a sand pit.
- Water play – Pour water into cups, add toy animals, ice-blocks or a few drops of food colouring. Alternatively, use a sponge to wash a doll or clean a bike.
- Playground – climb a ladder or climbing frame, swing on a swing, have fun on a seesaw.
- Ball games – use a basketball or soccer ball to throw, catch, bounce, or aim at a target.
- Woodwork activities – hammering, sawing or sanding.
- Ride a tricycle, bike or scooter.
- Hold a container of bubble mixture and blow bubbles.
- Finger painting with both hands using finger-paint or shaving cream.
- Help in the garden – water with a hose, sweep pathways or rake up leaves.
- Water plants with a spray bottle.
- Skittles – roll the ball with both hands.
- Swimming.
- Hit a suspended ball or balloon with a rolling pin or bat that is held with both hands
- Unwind and wind up the string when flying a kite.

Everyday activities:

- Encourage your child to get dressed and undressed by themselves. This includes using both hands to pull up pants and put on socks.
- Do up buttons on pyjamas and clothes.
- Do up zips on pencil cases, bags or clothes.
- During bath-time encourage your child to wash themselves or a toy with a face washer or sponge. Have fun pouring water into containers or funnels, make a cake with a bowl and spoon, or wind-up bath toys.
- Open drink bottles and lunch boxes.
- Peel a banana or mandarin.
- Open the toothpaste and squeeze the toothpaste onto the toothbrush.
- Help around the house – put clothes into the dirty washing basket, pick up toys and put them into the toy box, carry dishes from the table to the sink.
- Help with the shopping – carry unbreakable items (such as toilet paper), put items into the trolley.
- Turn taps on and off.
- Remove money from a purse or wallet while holding it.
- Remove lids from a yoghurt container, Vegemite or jam jar or drink bottle.
- Make toast or a sandwich – open jars of peanut butter or honey and use a knife to spread and cut.
- Use a knife and fork at mealtimes
- Open packets of lollies or chips.