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Pincer Grasp

A **Pincer Grasp** enables a child to pick up small items using the thumb and index finger. If your child is using all fingers to "rake" items into the palm or pinching with the thumb against the side of the index finger, try these activities to develop a more mature pincer grasp.



Pinch strengthening and control

- 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.
- corn cob holders, toothpicks or large push pins (thumb tacks): Place a picture over a sheet of craft foam or cork board (or trivet). Then use the push pin or corn cob prongs to punch holes along the lines of a picture. Hold it up to let the light shine through.
- place coins or bingo chips in narrow slots; a piggy bank is perfect, Connect Four game
- eye droppers: make colorful dribble art creations by placing drops of colored water on a paper towel or coffee filter
- spinning tops
- geoboards: make shapes and letters using rubber bands on geoboards
- pick-up sticks, Jenga, Don't Spill the Beans wind up toys
- pegboard activities, Lite Brite
- Tiddly winks games, Ants in the Pants
- tong games: Operation, Crocodile Dentist, Bedbugs
- Ziplok bags: encourage using fingertips to press and seal
- Buttoning, snapping
- pop beads
- stringing beads
- peel stamps and 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
- Push a toothpick point into a styrofoam tray or plate, or in aluminum foil placed over craft foam or cork board to make a picture.
- Dress up dolls: requires a surprising amount of hand strength and endurance

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 (see [Homemade Play](#) for putty)

- 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 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

[Therapy Street for Kids STORE](#)

Bubble Pack

- 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 " Hungry Guy" (see [instructions](#)): When you squeeze the ball 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.
- rubber pinky balls
- 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 [Match the coin and pinky finger](#) of the hand.

When first starting out, many children will need to use the index and middle fingers together against the thumb for pinching. This is okay. As all of the hand muscles develop and strengthen, there will be less reliance on the middle finger.

More about pincer grasp

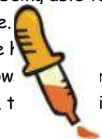


During infancy, a pincer grasp is a developmental milestone that typically occurs at 9 to 12 months of age. By using the index finger and thumb, or the index and middle fingers opposing the thumb, to pick up small objects, the child is able to pick up and place items in a controlled manner.

Why is this important?

A pincer grasp enables the young child to feed him/herself by being able to pick up small bits of food and place food in the mouth with ease. Before this, the child was only able to hold food within the palm of the hand. The pincer grasp allows food to be raked into the palm by the fingers. The pincer grasp allows for a more refined and neater way to get food into the mouth. Over time, the child will be using this pincer grasp for other important tasks, such as

- holding a pencil, crayons and markers with a 3 or 4 finger tip pinch
- holding and using feeding utensils effectively
- fastening closures (zippers, snaps, buttons) on garments easily
- using scissors
- imitating various finger positions during finger play (e.g., touching each finger to the thumb-opposition, making the "A- ok" sign).
- manipulating small items within the hand (e.g., transferring coins within the palm out to the fingertips)



Recommended Vendor



[Pocket Full Of Therapy](#)



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<p>LEGO Duplo Basic Bricks LEGO Best \$55.08</p>	<p>Uno Card Game Mattel Games Best \$1.51</p>	<p>Maxim 100 Piece Natural Wooden Blocks Maxim Best \$29.95</p>
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