

East Sussex Children's Integrated Therapy Service

Occupational Therapy Team

ACTIVITIES TO ENCOURAGE BILATERAL HAND USE

Definition:

Bilateral co-ordination is the ability to carry out co-ordinated movements of the right and left sides of the body and to cross the mid-line of the body. Co-ordination of the two body sides is an important foundation for the development of fine motor skills. The child typically progresses from performing movements with both sides of the body simultaneously to reciprocal movements – each side of the body doing the same thing at the same time, to the final stage where the child is able to do different movements with each side of the body at the same time – i.e. cut with scissors, write with a pencil.

Co-ordination of the two sides of the body is essential to fine motor co-ordination and the development of hand dominance. Good co-ordination is an important foundation for writing with pencils and cutting with scissors. Children learn to co-ordinate their body sides when they manipulate toys such as pop beads and legos.

Activities to Develop Bilateral Integration

1. Water play in the bath or the sink, including use of plastic containers for pouring water in and out of, squeeze or squirt toys, pumps and sponges.
2. Messy play (e.g. finger painting or shaving cream foam) using two hands together.
3. Washing hands by rubbing two hands together after messy play.
4. Sandpit play – e.g. using 2 hands to fill up bucket with sand.
5. Play dough activities / clay / plasticine – e.g. pulling it apart, pushing objects into it, covering one hand with it so the other hand has to remove it, rolling with two hands together, or small balls rolling in both hands.
6. Threading large beads, buttons cotton reels or macaroni onto laces or straws or pipe cleaners.
7. Simple hand sewing or tapestry / weaving.
8. Construction kits with plastic or wooden nuts and bolts or interlocking pieces.

9. Toys such as fruit halves or poppers that can be pulled apart with two hands.
10. Magnet activities – pulling magnets apart or pieces from magnets.
11. Stacking large cardboard boxes e.g. shoe boxes.
12. Clapping/tapping games with hands (e.g. patter cake).
13. Action songs e.g. “The wheels on the bus”, “Miss Polly had a dolly” and “Heads, shoulders, knees and toes”.
14. Musical instruments that can be played using two hands together e.g. guitar, violin, wind instruments, percussion instruments, drums.
15. Russian dolls or barrels of graded sizes.
16. Wind up toys.
17. Fastening clothing, doing up zips, buttons or press studs.
18. Opening containers such as jars or plastic containers, which require stabilisation with one hand whilst take the lid off with the other hand.
19. Cooking activities – such as using a manual egg whisk or holding a bowl in one hand whilst beating with the other hand.
20. Scissor activities such as cutting out shapes or between lines.
21. Paper folding – origami / paper planes /tearing long strips of paper / crushing up newspaper.
22. Using templates or stencils for drawing round.
23. Swimming.