

Add a little Occupational Therapy to Each Day:

*Please take into account your own child's personal needs and modify activities to better fit their needs (such as if your child puts objects in his or her mouth don't work on activities with small objects that could be a choking hazard).

** All activities need to be completed under the direct supervision of an adult

Now is a great time to work on the handwashing routine which is a childhood occupation for grooming and self-help skills.



Above is a visual schedule of the handwashing routine. If your child needs extra visual supports to sequence the steps or if your child needs assistance with attending to the handwashing routine this visual can be cut out and put next to the sink your child most frequently uses. Don't forget to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice together so you know your hands are completely clean.

Dressing/ Undressing and Fasteners

This is a great time to work on the skills needed to help make your child more independent in dressing himself or herself.

Also practice when you have enough time to not rush

Use clothes that are slightly bigger to make the task a little easier.

When practicing buttons use large buttons and work on unbuttoning before you move to buttoning. Also work on Velcro fasteners before you move to buttons.

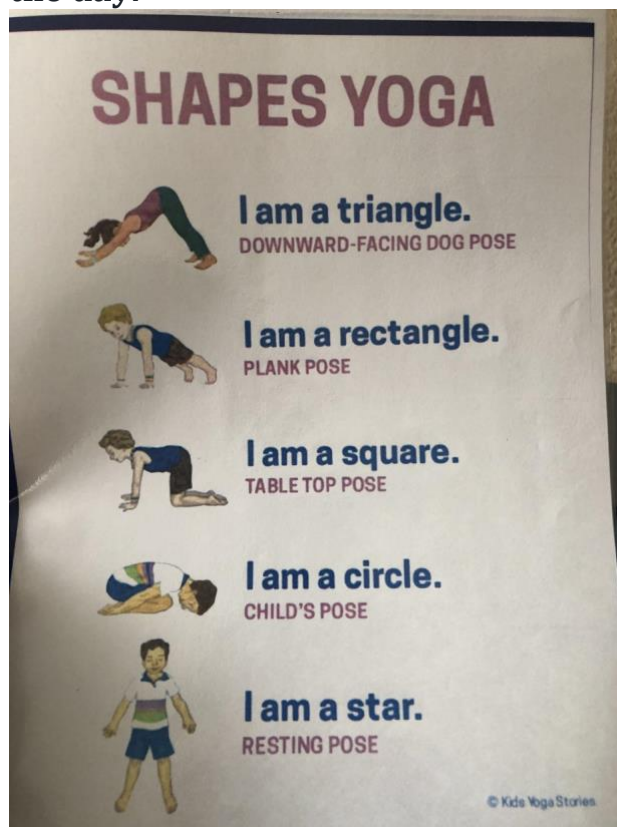
When practicing zippers start with using a nonseparated zipper then have your child work on pinching the zipper and zipping up and zipping down.

Always work on taking off shoes and socks before you start to work on putting on shoes and sock.

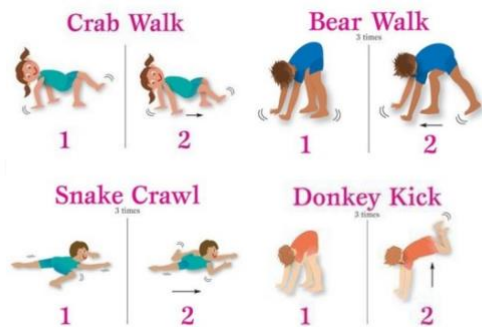
Be patient and remember your child doesn't have to complete the first step it may just be them initiating reaching down to assist you in taking off his or her sock or it might be your child completing the first or the last step of the dressing task then you can slowly add more steps.

Always remember to praise your child after every little step that they make. Dressing can be frustrating and takes a lot of time and repetition to learn. Try to make it as fun and as playful as can be. A great way to do this is by playing dress up.

Allow multiple opportunities for sensory motor activities throughout the day.



As seen above, Shape Yoga is a fun alternative. Your child will be getting gross motor movements, increasing body awareness as well as weightbearing and balance all while learning their shapes.



Animal walks and wheel barrel walks are also great sensory motor activities. I like to incorporate fine motor tasks like puzzles. While completing animal walks, have the puzzle pieces on one side of the room and the puzzle board on the other side of the room. Have your child pick which animal walk they want to try to get to the other side of the room with the puzzle piece.



Wall pushups and chair pushups provide a student with proprioceptive input that can help calm and relax the body. It can also offer core and upper extremity strengthening.

SENSORY BINS

-At home you can mix anything together that is safe for your child and use it as a sensory bin. My favorites include: sand with letters of your child's name hidden inside, sensory grass with shapes hidden inside, edible play-doh with different color treats hidden inside. (Other sensory bin items may include water, jello, pasta cooked or not cooked, rice, beans, slime, shaving cream etc.) Parents need to have direct supervision of their child when playing with sensory bins. Also parents/caregivers should pick items for their sensory bin that are developmentally appropriate. If your child mouths toys

don't make a sensory bin with small toys inside that would be a choking hazard. Make one with items that are safe to mouth such as food items that are developmentally appropriate and take into account food allergies.



Why Do We Play With Sensory Bins?

The following is from Early Intervention Occupational Therapists and Pediatric Occupational Therapists Group

“Sensory experiences provide open-ended opportunities where the process is more important than the product; how children use materials is much more important than what they make with them.” - Angie Dorrell, former NAEYC commissioner

- ☐ Tactile Desensitization: Touching the material, and having it touch all over the hands (and sometimes arms or feet), can make a child who is sensitive to touch more comfortable with it, if she goes at her own pace. As the child has opportunities to touch many different textures and materials, she will learn to respond positively (or at least appropriately) to new textures in the future.
- ☐ Tactile Input: Playing in the sensory bin helps a child who seeks tactile input to get the sensation appropriately, to help organize and regulate his body. A sensory bin might also provide input to the other senses – adding color or smell, using edible materials, hearing noises as the material moves.
- ☐ Heavy Work: Proprioceptive heavy work, making the muscles and joints work hard, is an important part of sensory play. When a child helps carry the bin or lifts a big cup full of material to pour out, his/her body can feel his muscles and joints as they work, and this is a great way to help a child organize and regulate his/her body.
- ☐ Boundaries and Borders: The child may need to practice rule-following (no throwing, no mouthing) and understanding boundaries (keep the material on the

play mat). She/he also learns the boundaries of her/his body as she moves his/her hands against the material.

- Figure-Ground, Visual Discrimination and Closure: When there are a lot of things in the bin, the child can practice looking for them among all the busyness of the background. They can learn to look and find something even when it is half-buried.
- Problem-Solving: Kids build self-esteem as they find a problem and make up a solution, whether in the course of their play or as they interact with adults and other kids.
- Tactile Discrimination: The child can work on finding items by touch only, when something is hidden under the sensory material. This also works on Object Permanence, knowing that something is still there, even if the child cannot see it.
- Visual Motor Skills: Children work on hand-eye coordination when they practice scooping and pouring.
- Teaching Play and Language: Playing in a sensory bin is fun and, for most children, it is a non-threatening, motivating way to play. Children can use “open” and “more” to work on teaching requesting. Children can also copy the ways the adult is modelling to learn to play in new, more complex ways. Sensory bins are also great for teaching pretend play, like pretending a toy is walking across a “beach” or “snow”. Adults can teach the children new words to describe textures and sensations, too.
- Attention, Focus, and Concentration: Kids who are hard to engage often focus for longer if the play involves a sensory component. They also need to concentrate as they try new things with the materials.
- Strength: Carrying the bin, scooping, and pouring is a great way to strengthen the core muscles (to stay upright) and the shoulder muscles (to stabilize the arms as they work). Opening and closing the hands in the material also helps strengthen the small hand muscles. If you try blowing the material (making waves in a water bin), it strengthens the mouth, too.
- Endurance: Playing in different positions (sitting, standing, kneeling) helps the child tolerate that position for a longer amount of time.
- Utensil Use and Grasp Patterns: Sensory bins are a fun way to practice scooping with spoons or measuring cups. It’s okay if they spill, but it’s also motivating to try again and again. You can also practice using other tools, like tongs or tweezers, and using an index finger to poke or a pincer grasp to pick up something small.
- Graded Control: The child learns that how hard or gently he or she touches affects the materials. Squeezing a water marble will make it break or shoot away. Holding a cube made of moon sand gently will enable it to keep its

shape. Scooping too hard will make rice go everywhere and her or his spoon will be empty.

- Functional Skills: Depending on what tools the child uses, he is learning about opening and closing containers, filling up cups, carrying things without spilling, how different containers can hold the same amount of material, and so on.
- Self-Directed Learning, Child-Directed Exploration, and Unstructured Fun: Kids learn that they don't need electronics to have fun, and they learn to "entertain themselves."

Now That You Have Done All of The Sensory Prep and Heavy Work You are Ready for more Fine Motor Skills Development

-Prewriting Skills: First start with having your child imitate (you draw and then have them draw) vertical lines, then move on to horizontal lines, circular strokes and plus signs.

-From there you can have your child imitate closed circles, squares and rectangles

-Moving onto diagonal lines such as in triangles

-You can work on having your child trace his or her first name. If they have mastered tracing then they can move on to imitating and finally copying their first name. If your child needs a little help getting started with his or her prewriting skills, incorporate singing into the task for example, "The wheels on the bus go round and stop," for drawing a closed circle. You can also use a multimedia approach: use a chalkboard, dry erase board, paintbrushes, pastels, markers, put sandpaper or other textures underneath the paper for increased feedback. You can imitate prewriting shapes in the sand box with your finger or paintbrush. Put foam stickers on the paper and have the child draw lines from one sticker to the next.

Please everyone stay safe during this time. You all are in my heart and I have been missing getting to see all of your smiling faces at ASC. Please contact me at jroero@annstorckcenter.org if you have any question at all or need help with modifying activities as well as if you need more activities!

Sincerely,

Jaclyn Roero OTR/L

