St. Peter's Preschool Newsletter

November 2026



From the Director's Chair – by Rita Dai Wang

The season for giving thanks is upon us. I am so thankful for our St. Peter's family: teachers, church, and all of you! The things the kids say and how they see the world remind me to be present and enjoy every moment. Thank you for sharing them and entrusting them to us.

Trunk or Treat/Dreamkeepers Fundraiser: Thank you to everyone who came to our first Trunk or Treat! It was a beautiful day, and we had such fun seeing everyone's creative trunks and costumes. We also raised over $700 for USCRI to support girls in the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya!

Dinner and Dialogue: We are looking forward to a night of good food and good conversation on Tuesday 11/10! *(Note that this is a different date from originally published on the calendar.)* RSVP at https://forms.gle/yNHfJdVC5uJaF7uw7

Big Truck Visit from Kiewit: On 11/17, Kiewit will be bringing a few big trucks to show the kids. The kids will be over the moon! If you have a 3's student who would like to come to school for this presentation, you are welcome to bring them. Stay tuned for more details.

Spanish Class: The 4-year-old classes have been loving Spanish class with Senora Carolyn! She comes every Friday and has the kids singing, dancing, waving scarves, reading books, and coloring, all while learning Spanish. This is a new program for St. Peter's this year, and we are so excited with everything the kids are learning!

Artist Studies: Ms. Katelin has been using her Art History major to great effect recently by doing artist studies with the 3's/4's students at St. Peter's. In September, they learned about Mary Cassatt and her focus on family portraits. In October, they studied Claude Monet with his "en plein air" style of painting out in nature, and in November, they will learn about Maria Martinez and her traditional Pueblo pottery. The 2's will start with Ms. Katelin later in the year. See below for artwork Ms. Katelin has shared with them.

Emergency Drills: We practice a Fire Drill with each class once a month, where we evacuate the building and go sit on the curb in the Nature Center. Twice yearly, we also practice Shelter-in-Place Drills in the bathrooms downstairs. The 3's and 4's also practice another evacuation drill where we go inside the backyard of the Rectory (church-owned house with white fence on the left as you drive up the driveway to school). We hope to never have to employ these skills, but it's always good to plan for the worst.

Mittens, Hats, and Boots: At St. Peter's, we go outside to play just about every day, even in the rain/snow. Please dress your children accordingly and send in mittens, hats, and boots (labeled please). If you have not yet sent in warmer clothes to leave at school, please remember to do so. Special request to send in MITTENS, not GLOVES. 10 fingers per student x 67 students = quite the challenge 😊 Thanks!

Fine Motor and Scissor Skills: Developing and strengthening the small muscles in the hand is something we work on every day here at school. Fine motor skills are crucial to learning to write, cut with scissors, and general success later on in school, See the flyers below for more details and ways you can help your kids strengthen fine motor skills at home.

Dates to Remember

11/2 Jump Bunch – 4's in
11/3 Teacher Work Day – no school
11/4 Black Barn Alpaca Farm field trip – all classes
11/4 No Extended Day
11/4, 11/13, 11/20 Spanish class – 4's
11/6 Mom's Night Out, 6:00
11/10 Dinner and Dialogue, 6:00-7:30
11/17 Big truck visit from Kiewit
11/24 4's Parent Conferences (no class or Enrichment for 4's this day)
11/25-27 Thanksgiving Break
TBD Restaurant Night – Coal Fire Pizza



11/6 Karley
11/8 Ms. Erinn
11/14 Nora
11/26 William

St. Peter's Parent Referrals and Online Presence

As you may know, many of our families come to St. Peter's through the recommendation of a friend or neighbor. Thank you for your referrals!

As a sign of our appreciation, referrals that result in a new family enrollment will result in a $50 tuition credit (so keep those recommendations going!).

Another way potential new families find us is through online reviews. If you are happy with your experience here, I would be so grateful if you would take a moment to leave a review of St. Peter's. Thank you!

Google Reviews:
https://g.page/r/CXnJRgSwyZiYEAE/review

FaceBook reviews:
https://www.facebook.com/stpeterspreschoolec

Yelp.com

GreatSchools.org



Some of the Artwork introduced in Ms. Katelin's Artist Studies

Poplar Tree Series
by Claude Monet



Young Woman Sewing
by Mary Cassatt



Children Playing on the Beach
by Mary Cassatt



Pottery
by Maria Martinez





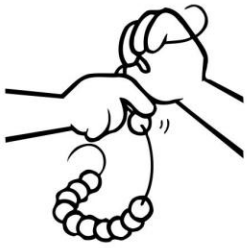




Help Your Preschool Child Develop Fine Motor Skills

by Tara Calder, ORT/L

What Are Fine Motor Skills?



Molly is working hard in her kindergarten classroom. She cuts out pictures from a magazine and glues them on paper. She colors and writes her name on her paper. During art, she strings beads to make a necklace. At snack time, she opens her milk carton. Later, before going to the playground, she buttons her coat. Throughout her entire school day, Molly uses fine motor skills.

Fine motor skills are activities that require the use of the small muscles in the hand. These activities include grasping small objects like beads, holding a pencil correctly, cutting, and buttoning. It is easy to see how critical fine motor skills are to every area of a child's life! Fine motor skills can directly affect a child's self-esteem and success at school.

Why Do Some Children Have Problems with Fine Motor Skills?

With today's emphasis on technology such as video games and computer skills, children are spending less time playing with fine motor manipulatives. This leads to an underdevelopment of the small muscles in the hand. Underdevelopment of these muscles can lead to handwriting difficulties when your child enters school. Some children may show delays in fine motor skills due to developmental delays or medical diagnoses such as Down syndrome or cerebral palsy.

How Can I Improve My Child's Fine Motor Skills?

Some important hand skills children need to develop include:

- Being able to cup their hands (palmar arching).
- Using the index finger and thumb to hold an item, and using the ring and middle fingers to stabilize the hand (hand side separation).
- Making a round shape with the thumb and index finger (an open web space).

Activities for Developing Hand Skills

- **Vertical Surfaces —** Vertical surfaces help develop the small muscles in the hand and wrist as well as the larger muscles in the arm and back. The large muscles are necessary for providing stability while performing fine motor tasks. Think about how hard it would be to thread a needle on a rocking boat! Drawing and coloring on an easel or a piece of paper taped to the wall is the easiest way to use vertical surfaces. Other activities include drawing and playing with shaving cream on tile surrounding the tub/shower during bath time, "painting" your backyard fence with water and a paintbrush, or removing and placing magnets on the refrigerator. The only limit is your imagination.

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- **Tearing and Crumpling —** Tearing and crumpling paper develops the small muscles of the hand – the same muscles we use for handwriting. Have your child tear newspaper with his/her fingers and crumple it into balls to stuff craft projects (such as a scarecrow or a snowman), or simply toss it into the trash can to make a basket. Once your child masters this task, have him/her crumple paper with only one hand. Finally, have your child crumple tissue paper into a tiny ball using just the fingertips. Glue these tiny paper balls onto cardboard to make pictures. A similar activity is to have your child tear colored paper or tissue paper and glue onto various materials to make a mosaic picture. Glue tissue paper onto waxed paper to make pretty sun catchers.

- **In-Hand Manipulation —** In-hand manipulation requires the use of all the fine motor skills outlined above. We depend on in-hand manipulation many times throughout the day. One example is when we place coins in a vending machine. We hold all the coins in the palm of one hand (palmar arching). As we place coins into the machine, we bring one coin out to the tips of the thumb and index finger, one at a time (web space), while at the same time keeping the extra coins secured in the palm of the hand with the ring and pinky fingers (hand side separation). Your child can work on this skill by placing coins into a bank. Make a game to see how many small items, such as coins, cotton balls, or small game pieces your child can manipulate into his/her palm. Moving items into the palm is easier than moving items out of the palm. Start with one item and increase in number as your child becomes more skilled.

- **Drawing and Coloring —** Often children are using pencils, crayons, and markers before their hands are ready for these items. This can result in the learning of inefficient pencil grasps that may become problematic. To encourage the development of proper grasp patterns, give your child writing tools that promote the development of fine motor skills. Short crayons, no more than 2-inches long, require your child to use his or her skill side of the hand rather than the entire hand. Egg-shaped chalk (often available at drug stores in the spring) requires your child to use an open web space. Finally, coloring and drawing on a vertical surface places the wrist at the correct angle to promote palmar arching.

Where to Go for Help

If your child appears to be having difficulties developing fine motor skills, an occupational therapist may be able to help. Visit the American Occupational Therapy Association at www.aota.org for more information and a list of occupational therapists in your area.

Resources

American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc. www.aota.org

Mary Benbow (1999), Fine Motor Development, Columbus: Zaner-Bloser, Inc.

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Developing Coordination for Scissor Skills

By Tara Calder, OTR/L

Cutting accurately with scissors is a skill we sometimes take for granted. When we watch a child having great difficulty using scissors, we may scold them or insist that we "show" them how. Cutting, however, requires the coordination of many skills including fine motor coordination, bilateral coordination, and eye-hand coordination. Like many other skills, scissor skills develop sequentially and require appropriate instruction and practice to develop fully.

Prerequisite Skills

Before a child learns to use scissors, he/she should be proficient with the following five skills.

- Use a fork or spoon.
- Open and close his/her hand.
- Use his/her hands together in a leader/assist fashion (e.g., one hand holding a jar while the other takes off the lid).
- Isolate the thumb, index, and middle fingers.
- Stabilize his/her shoulder, forearm, and wrist.

Development of Scissor Skills

Once the child masters the above skills, he/she is ready to learn how to use scissors. Scissor skills develop in eight stages.

Stage One: The child learns how to hold the scissors (18-19 months). Initially, many children try to manipulate scissors using both hands to open and close the blades (see Figure A).

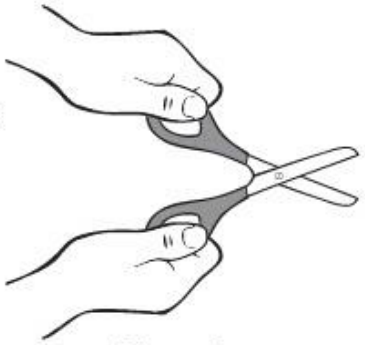


Figure A

Children will then attempt to place their fingers in the loops. Often children will place the index and middle fingers in the loops, but not the thumb (see Figure B).



Figure B

The most efficient grasp is the thumb in the top loop and middle finger in the bottom loop (or middle and ring fingers, depending on the size of the hole). Placing the index finger below the bottom loop provides stabilization and directional guidance (see Figure C).

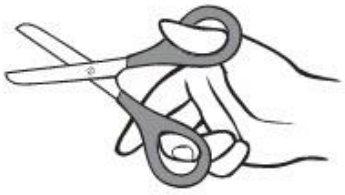


Figure C

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If children do not have the necessary shoulder, forearm, and wrist stabilization, or if the scissors are too big for their hands, they will hold the scissors close to the knuckles of the hand rather than near the middle joints of the fingers (see Figure D).



Figure D

Holding the scissors near the middle joint of the fingers provides better scissor control (see Figure E).



Figure E

Stage Two: The child learns how to open and shut the scissors (20-23 months). Once children can hold the scissors correctly, they are ready to practice opening and shutting the scissors. At this point, children are not ready to use paper. Additional tools to practice opening and shutting include picking up items with tongs, using a small squirt gun or spray bottle, and using a small, hand-held hole punch.

Stage Three: The child learns how to snip paper (23-29 months). In this stage, children make random snips on paper. Cutting is not directional and there is no forward movement of the scissors. During this stage, children often open and shut the entire hand, which causes an exaggerated opening and closing of the scissors (see Figure F).

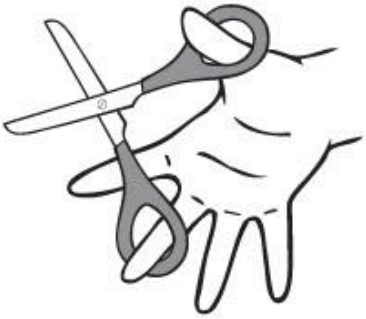


Figure F

Stage Four: The child learns how to snip paper (30-35 months). During this stage, children begin to push the scissors forward to cut across a piece of paper. To start, children often do well cutting a one inch strip of heavyweight paper (such as an index card). This allows the child to cut across the paper with one snip. Heavyweight paper provides additional stability, allowing the student to concentrate on manipulating the scissors rather than stabilizing the paper. As the child's ability progresses, increase the width of the paper.

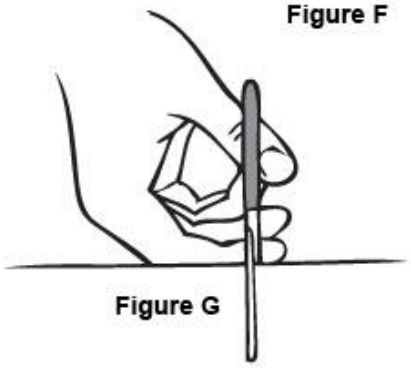


Figure G

Stage Five: The child cuts on a straight line (36-41 months). In this stage, children begin to manipulate the direction of the scissors to stay on a line. Manipulation of the paper is still limited mainly to stabilization. Scissors cut most efficiently when held at 90 degrees to the paper (see figure G). This requires forearm stability, as children must hold their hand with the thumb up and their arm in mid-position between pronation (palms down) and supination (palms up) (see Figure H).



Figure H

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Children with decreased forearm stability often have a hard time keeping the scissors at 90 degrees to the paper which leads to the bending and tearing of the paper (see Figure I).

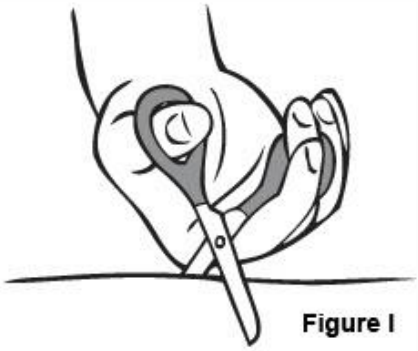


Figure I

Stage Six: The child cuts on a curved line (42-47 months). Children are now learning to turn and manipulate the paper as well as the scissors to stay on lines. During this stage, children often have better control opening and shutting the scissors, generally only opening the scissors half way which provides a smoother, less jagged and more controlled cut (See Figure J).

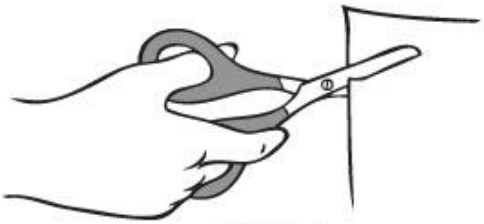
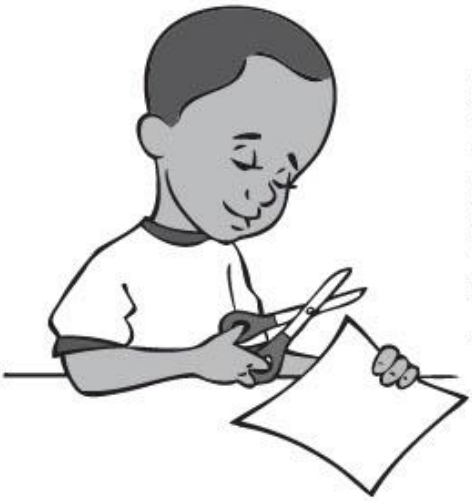


Figure J

Stage Seven: The child cuts out simple shapes like circles and squares(42-47 months). Once children have mastered this stage, they are ready to cut various weights of paper and non-paper materials. Easiest to cut is heavy paper like index cards, then thinner paper such as copy paper, and lastly, non-paper materials.

Stage Eight: The child cuts complex shapes and figures (48-57 months).



Help With Scissor Skills Mastery

If your child is having difficulty mastering scissor skills and/or the prerequisite scissor skills, please contact an occupational therapist for a screening or evaluation. An occupational therapist can assist your child in developing these skills. Additionally, many different types of adapted scissors exist – loop scissors to electric scissors. An occupational therapist can help you select the appropriate adaptations, if necessary, for your child.

Resources

American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc. http://www.aota.org

Folio, M. Rhonda and Rebecca R. Fewell. Peabody Developmental Motor Scales, 2nd Edition. Austin: Pro-Ed, 2000.

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