



summertime **THERAPY FUN!**

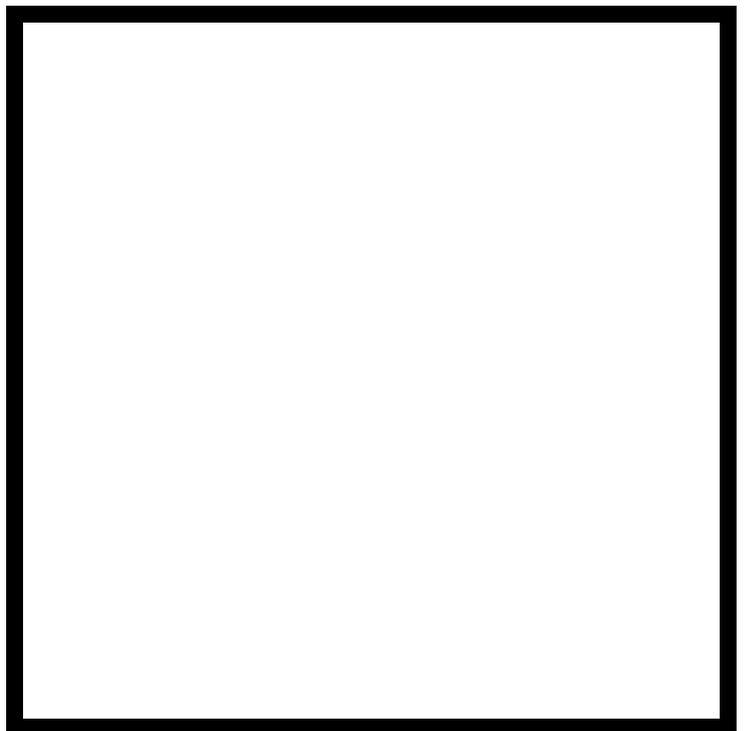
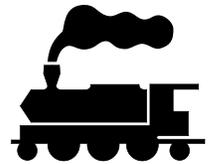
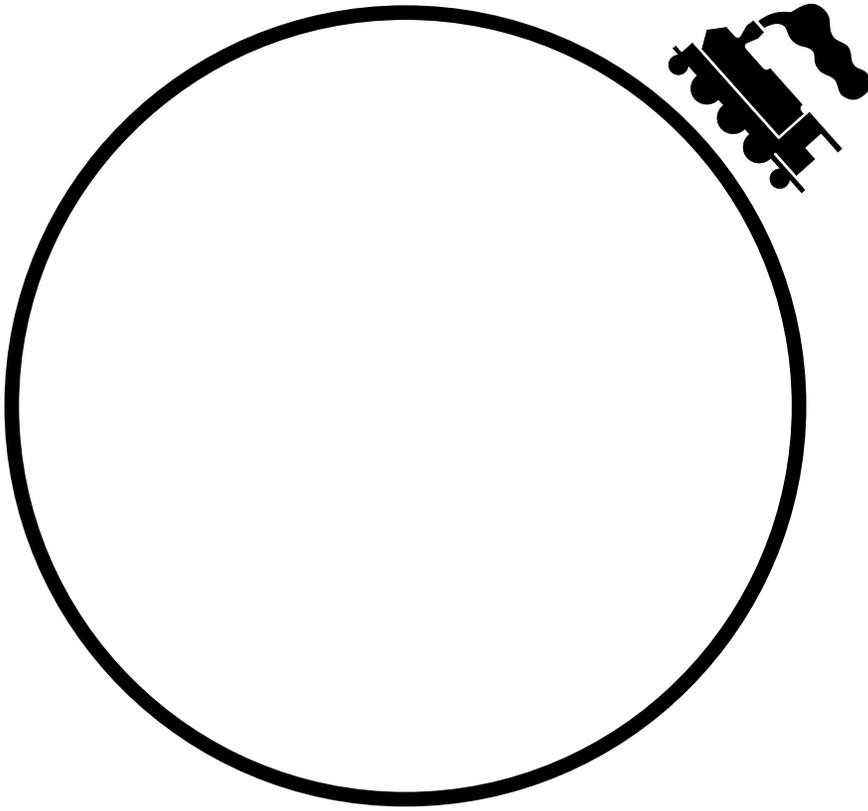
Happy summer everyone! It's been such a great school year and we've loved having your child in therapy. We wanted to be sure to send you home with some fun fine motor, gross motor, and sensory activities you can do with your child to ensure that he or she doesn't lose any of those hard-earned skills over the summer!
Have a great break and we'll see you in the fall!

Practice with scissors!

Cut on each of the lines. See if you can keep the car on the road by keeping your scissors on the lines!



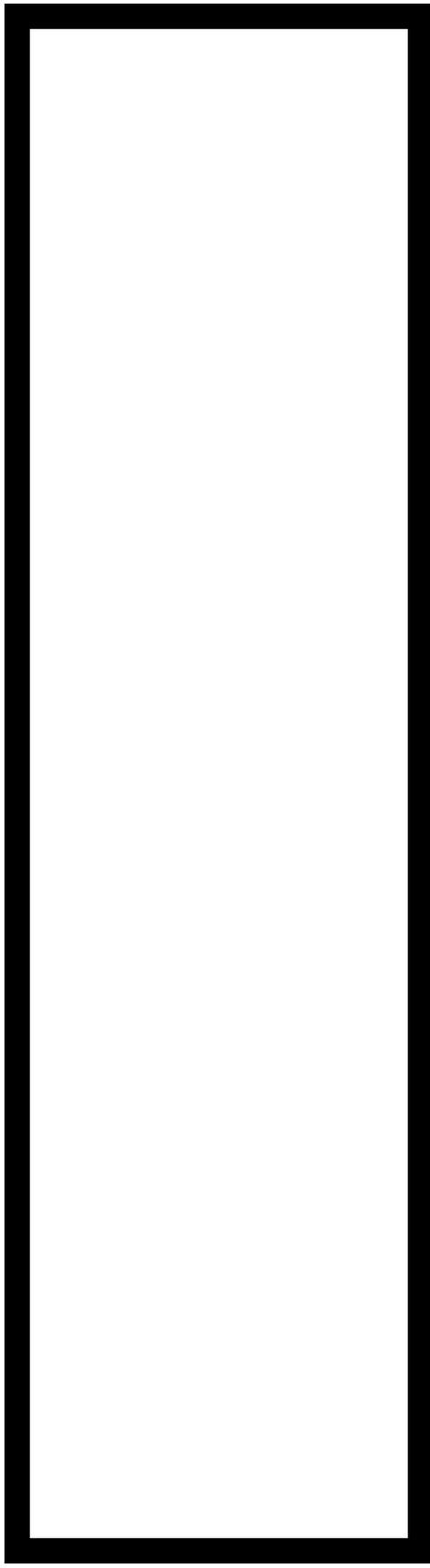
Now, cut out the shapes! Keep the train on the track
by keeping your scissors on the lines!





Write your name in the box. Then, try rainbow writing! Trace over your name with every color in your box of crayons or markers!

Too easy? Try rainbow writing other letters or sight words!





Hand Strengthening



Stickers or Tape – Pulling tape and stickers off of the roll and/or pulling them off of various surfaces (walls, tables, floors) is a great hand strengthener for kids.

Lego or Duplo blocks – Both awesome for developing grasp strength! Smaller Lego bricks are great for older kids with more advanced skills, while the larger Duplo version is best for the younger crowd.

Cooking with kids is a fun way to promote good grasping skills by practicing on cooking tools and utensils.

Crawling – Try relay races, obstacle courses, and other games.

Donkey kicks – Have the child bend forward to place his hands on the floor and then kick his legs up behind them like a donkey.

Wheelbarrow walks – Have the child place her hands on the floor while you or another child holds her feet. See how far she can walk on her hands. Try a wheelbarrow relay!

Climbing – Climbing on just about anything is awesome for building hand strength in kids. Think ropes, ladders, trees, jungle gyms, any playground equipment, and more!

Tearing paper – Two little hands working together to tear through paper is a simple and fun way to target hand strength.

Playing with play dough, putty, or clay – Squishing, pinching, rolling, squeezing, smushing – all great for building muscles in the hands!

Scissors – Try cutting against resistance: thicker paper or cardstock, play dough or clay – great for visual motor skills and hand strength!

Pencil Grasp Tricks

If your child struggles with holding a pencil efficiently, there are lots of easy little tricks we OTs like to use to promote stronger, more effective grasp patterns on writing utensils.



If your child struggles with holding the pencil either too far away or too close to the tip, try placing a small sticker or wrap a stripe of colored electrical tape around the pencil at the appropriate height.



Try having your child write with shorter pencils (like the ones used on the golf course) or broken crayons. This is a favorite trick of OTs and preschool teachers because kids naturally gravitate toward a tripod grasp at the correct height when using smaller writing utensils.



Another great pencil grasping trick is to have kids tuck a small object (e.g. craft pompom, marble) into their ring and pinky fingers, holding it there while they grasp the pencil and writing with their thumb, index finger, and middle finger.



Strengthening for Kids

Kids build strength through unstructured, spontaneous PLAY! And, the more diverse and varied their play is, the better they can achieve the strengthening they need to be successful with everyday gross motor skills.

The problem? These days, kids are doing less and less of this kind of unstructured gross motor play. Research shows how little time children spend engaging in open-ended whole body movement experiences and how much time they spend playing video games, watching television, and sitting still (or not-so-still) in their desks at school.

Even children who play organized sports aren't really getting the benefits of the type of unstructured gross motor activity described above, as they tend to engage in repetitions of very similar movements and drills during practices and games.

So what's the answer? It's simple, really. Get out there and play!

Take your child to the playground, help your child learn how to swim, teach him how to ride a bike, and then...sit back and relax. The kids will take over and do what they were meant to do – run and jump and splash and climb and race around like crazy – building tons of strength and coordination as they go!



Core Strength



Core strength is so important for everything else the body does. It's difficult to balance, perform coordinated movements, sit up straight in a chair, hold a pencil, control scissors, or jump if you don't have a strong core.

There are lots of easy ways to strengthen the core through simple play at home. Try some of these this summer!

-Picking up objects from the floor. Do you know that you can't squat down to retrieve an object from the floor without engaging your core muscles? Yep, it's true. Whether kids are competing in a relay race where they have to retrieve an object from the ground and return it to a container...or just cleaning up toys in the living room, they're strengthening their core!

-Climbing up a slide. Climbing up the slide is great for so many areas of motor and sensory development, including helping to form a strong middle!

-Rolling down a hill. Or any rolling at all! This is just plain old kid fun! And, really, you adults should try it too!

-Lifting something heavy. Kids can help bring groceries in from the car or take out the garbage – or make it even more fun – can they use a sheet to make a swing with two friends (two to hold the ends and one friend in the middle)?

-Pushing and pulling activities. Pushing a chair out of the way to sweep after dinner, pulling a heavy laundry basket across the room to move it out of the way, pushing a sibling or friend (or stuffed animal!) in a stroller or pulling them in a wagon.

-Being on all fours. Give your child a section of the floor to scrub squeaky clean! They will love the responsibility and they will get a hefty dose of core work. Playing in an all fours position also works – try doing a puzzle or playing a board game in this position.

-Doing somersaults! So. much.fun!

-Climbing the stairs on all fours.

-Sweeping or mopping floors, raking leaves, or shoveling snow —great ideas to keep your child helping around the house while strengthening their core!



Gross Motor Fun!

Ball Skills

Stack up tennis balls to make a pyramid (a square of several balls on the bottom, and then layering the balls upward to the top point). Have your child throw another tennis ball, roll a tennis ball, or kick a playground ball to knock down the target!

Jumping

Place something on the ground and encourage them to jump over it. A taped line, a favorite small toy, anything! Motivation is key here — **DON'T SQUASH IT!**

Make a target. Tape a piece of paper or stick a sticker to the ground a few inches in front of your child. On the count of 3, say **JUMP!** See if they can land on it.

Model jumping for them. Stand next to your child, encourage them to watch you, squat down and jump!

Jump to pop bubbles! Blow bubbles low to the ground for your child and see if he can jump up and pop them.

Stairs

Practice stepping onto and off of a small step stool or stack of books. Have your child go up with one foot leading and then step off the other side with the opposite foot first.

Have your child practice going up and down the stairs while carrying objects. Start light and move toward heavier (like the weight of a few books or a backpack).

Use two different kinds of stickers, placing them on each step where your child's foot should go, alternating stickers. Try to space them right where your child would actually step. Having the visual cue of the alternating stickers helps the child learn how to step on each stair with an alternating foot.



Mess-Free Sensory Play!

Making a mess with your hands is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to sensory play. We therapists love a good healthy dose of messy tactile play. But the sense of touch is only one of the avenues we can use to target overall sensory development in kids. In addition to the tactile system, kids also need exposure to play that appeals to the vestibular, proprioceptive, auditory, olfactory, oral sensory, and visual systems.

Here are some of our favorite no-mess sensory play activities for kids!

-Rolling, Tumbling, and Somersaulting – We love laying out our tumbling mat and letting kids go wild, showing off their favorite acrobatic moves! Or, take it outside! The only mess in sight will be a few grass stains from rolling around in the yard!

-Rough House Play – Get kids upside down, spun around, and rolled around with some fun rough house play! Great fun and great for the vestibular system!

-Playing Music That Gets Kids Moving – Kids songs are great for encouraging kids to listen to and follow directions and to work on processing, timing, and sequencing.

-Scratch n Sniff Stickers – There's no need for a lot of fancy materials when this tried and true classic does the trick! Kids love smelly stickers – try some fun sticker activities using these smelly little gems!

-Making Funny Faces: Play with making silly faces in a mirror or imitating each other's funny faces: open your mouth wide, stick your tongue out, smile, frown, or fill your cheeks up with air!

-Drinking from a water bottle with a straw or drinking through silly straws

-Blowing Up Balloons

-Playing With Flashlights

-Playing Matching, Sorting and Categorizing Games – Sort or match by color, shape, size, or any other visual attribute!

-Playing I Spy – Play the old fashioned way, or try this fun twist on the game!

-You can still use shaving cream, finger paint, and other messy materials without making a huge mess. Simply seal the messy material inside a large sealable bag and let kids squish away!

Draw a picture in the box. Write a sentence about your picture!



Three sets of primary writing lines, each consisting of a solid top line, a dotted middle line, and a solid bottom line.

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For more writing practice for kids, be sure to check out The Pen Pal Project at theinspiredtreehouse.com!

<http://theinspiredtreehouse.com/writing-prompts-for-kids-the-pen-pal-project/>

Each week, we'll be adding a new free printable writing prompt for kids to print out and use to write a letter to a pen pal!

Need a pen pal? We can help! Send us an email at theinspiredtreehouse@gmail.com and we will do our best to match your child with a friend who he can exchange letters with all summer long!