



# Hand Strengthening Through Everyday Play

There are lots of easy ways to strengthen the hands through simple everyday play! Try working these activities into kids' everyday play routines!

## **Climbing Ladders**

The vertical surface of the ladder requires kids' hands to work hard to grip those rungs and stay on against gravity.

## **Monkey bars**

Monkey bars are a great way to work the endurance of tiny hand muscles.

## **Play in Quadruped**

Maintaining the hands and knees position promotes strengthening in so many muscle groups including the neck, core and hands!

## **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.

## **Animal Walks**

Walk like a crab, bear, donkey or inchworm to promote more weight bearing through the hands!

## **Tug of War**

Assign teams and then see whose hands can hold on the longest and pull the hardest!

## **Cartwheels**

Another fun idea for promoting weight bearing in the hands.

## **Play Dough, Putty, or Slime**

Squishing, pinching, rolling, squeezing, smushing – all great for building muscles in the hands! Putty can be purchased in different levels of resistance to make the challenge harder.

## **Mr. Potato Head**

The pieces of this toy are big and easy to grasp and the repetition of changing the faces over and over again is great for strengthening!

## **Beach/Sand Play**

Kids can dig in the sand with their hands or shovels, build sand castles, and carry buckets of water or sand.

## **Chores**

Try throwing laundry down the chute or into the washing machine/dryer, washing the car, washing floors/tables/windows, shoveling snow, raking leaves, taking out the garbage.

## **Office Play**

Kids love playing with "grown up" materials. Squeezing a stapler (with supervision), folding paper, using paperclips are all fun hand strengthening activities.

## **Wind Up Toys**

Wind up toys are super fun and it takes some strong fingers to turn that tiny dial to achieve the fast moving fun!

## **Bath Toys**

Fill up an old shampoo bottle and squeeze it empty. Or try a set of fun water squeeze toys to encourage imaginative play as they squirt away!

## **Pop Beads**

Kids love to pop together necklaces, bracelets and rings and there are different sizes to appeal to all ability levels.

## **Tongs or Tweezers**

Have the child pick up objects from a sensory bin, sort craft pom poms, or pick up small blocks and stack them using a pair of tweezers!

## **Squeeze Balls/Stress Balls**

Kids can squeeze these squishable balls as hard as they can for some hand strengthening fun!

## **Squigz**

Pushing and pulling these "fun little suckers" is great hand strengthening fun!

## **Animal Poppers**

When little hands squeeze the animal's belly, it launches soft, ping pong sized balls across the room! The harder they are squeezed, the bigger the launch!

## **Gardening**

Have kids dig in the dirt with their hands or a shovel, pull weeds, lift and pour a watering can, and spraying plants with a spray bottle!