

# Hand Strength: Red Flags for Kids

These performance issues are often present in kids who have weak hands and can be considered “red flags” when it comes to observing hand strength.

## Pencil Grasp

- Using both hands on the writing utensil at the same time
- Switching between grasp patterns frequently when writing, drawing, or coloring
- Switching hands frequently during writing, drawing, coloring tasks due to fatigue
- Using the whole hand to grasp the writing utensil instead of the fingers

## Handwriting

- Difficulty controlling writing utensils, resulting in messy or illegible handwriting
- Using very light pressure on writing utensils, resulting in marks that are not dark enough to read

## Scissor Skills

- Scissors appearing to “fall off” the fingers instead of being firmly secured in the hand
- Scissors “getting stuck” in the paper, with the child struggling to open them against the friction of the paper
- Attempting to hold scissors using both hands at the same time
- Frequently switching hands to grasp scissors during cutting tasks
- Difficulty with continuous cutting across paper (struggling with repeated open/close motion)

## Clothing Management

- Inability to grasp and pull elastic of socks open to get foot inside
- Inability to grasp and pull waistband of pants up and down over hips
- Difficulty with holding shoes open to push foot inside
- Shoelaces tied correctly, but always coming undone because they're not tied tightly

## Clothing Fasteners

- Difficulty with maintaining grasp on button to pull it through a buttonhole
- Zippers coming disconnected mid-zip because the two sides aren't being held together tightly to engage
- Inability to snap/unsnap pants, sometimes resulting in toileting accidents
- Inability to pull with enough force to fasten or loosen a belt buckle

## Mealtime

- Struggling to open lids of tupperware containers
- Difficulty tearing open food packages and containers
- Difficulty opening screw-top containers (e.g. water bottles)
- Frequently dropping eating utensils or dropping finger food items

## Self-Care

- Struggling with opening toothpaste, deodorant, other toiletry containers
- Difficulty with pushing the pump of a soap container
- Inability to turn a faucet on to wash hands

## Other

- Decreased interest in fine motor toys or games
- Frequently dropping small objects, toys, or manipulatives
- Difficulty squeezing a glue bottle
- Decreased interest and attention for crafts/art activities or frustration during these activities
- Decreased interest and engagement with climbing/playground equipment