

## MUSCLE DEVELOPMENT

Fine or small muscle development in preschoolers has improved greatly, largely due to greater DEXTERITY, which means the skilled use of the hands and fingers. The preschooler expresses joy at his/her new ability or skill by using it. For example, most preschoolers often enjoy cutting, pasting, painting, etc.--activities that involve small or fine muscle control and development.

The following is a list of small muscle skills and the age at which the preschooler usually masters them:

Laces shoes	Age 4
Cuts on a line with scissors	Age 4
Makes a few letters	Age 4
Copies a "t"	Age 4
Ties shoe laces	Age 5
Draws a recognizable person	Age 5
Buttons/snaps/zips	Age 5
Folds a paper along a drawn line	Age 5
Copies another square or triangle on paper	Age 5
Copes most letters in the alphabet	Age 5
Writes an entire word and his/her name	Age 6
Colors skillfully by staying inside the line	Age 6

Have the students brainstorm a list of games and/or activities that can enhance a preschoolers' small motor skills. Write the list on the board for students to compile a list in their notes. Show the students some small manipulative toys like Legos, Lincoln Logs, Magna Doodle, Bristle Blocks, Lacing, Peg boards, or Klondikes, and discuss how they also help enhance small muscle development.

By age two, preschoolers begin to show a preference of handedness. By age five, their handedness is consistent and, therefore, that hand becomes the most skillful.

Just as fine (small) motor development has improved greatly in preschoolers so has gross (large) muscle development. Preschoolers show their increased ability in activities such as skipping, racing, riding a bike, hopping, etc.

Following is a list of gross (large) motor skills that preschoolers master and the age at which they usually master it:

Hops skillfully on one or the other foot	Age 4
Pumps self on a swing	Age 5
Rides a two wheeler	Age 5
Runs quickly and more controlled	Age 5
Balances on a beam	Age 6
Throws and catches more accurately	Age 6

Part of gross motor development is rhythm. It also improves during the preschool years. Therefore, preschoolers enjoy interactive music and rhymes, jingles, and jumping rope.

Have the students stand up and do the Hokey Pokey (using a recorded tape of the music) or any other gross motor interactive activity that preschoolers enjoy.

Ask students to brainstorm gross motor activities that preschool-age children would enjoy and list them on the board. For example: red rover, musical chairs, partner clapping rhymes like "Say, Say, Oh Playmate," etc.