

Using Our Hands for Meal Time

Hume Valley School Occupational Therapy Department

Today we will focus on using our hands in these activities to help make meal time easier as we can practise eating all by ourselves.

KEY SKILLS:

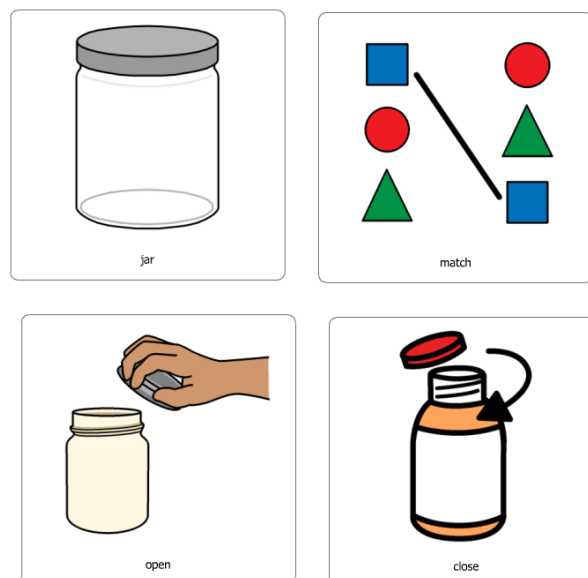
- Pinch grip to support pencil grip
- Hand strength and endurance: being able to do activities for longer before our fingers and hands get tired
- Coordination of finger movements to grasp and manipulate objects

WHAT YOU NEED:

- 3-5 empty jars of varying sizes
- Packaged foods to pinch and pull
- Small containers to open (boxes)
- Play dough
- Plastic knife and fork

ACTIVITIES:

1. Matching Activity Using Jars



1. Decorate the jars:

- If using paint or markers: take a single colour and shade in the top of the lid and the side of the jar e.g. purple lid and a purple label. Wait for the ink or paint to dry.
 - If using stickers: take 2 matching stickers and put one on the lid and one on the glass jar.
2. Open jars:
- Show your child how you hold and steady the jar with your helper hand (non-dominant hand) and use your writing hand (dominant hand) and all five fingers for the bigger lids and your tripod fingers (thumb, index and middle finger) to grasp smaller lids.
 - Now it's your child's turn to open all of the jars!
3. Match and close the jars:
- Shuffle the lids on your table.
 - Match corresponding lid to jar base.

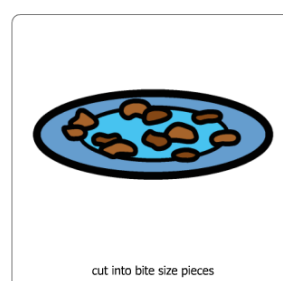
MAKE IT EASIER:

- If your child is having difficulty *opening* jars, loosen the lid slightly and then allow your child to do the rest!
- Consider body position: if the jar is held closer to the body with bent wrists and elbows, then it is easier to open the jar.

MAKE IT HARDER:

- Use containers with smaller lids such as a water bottle or soft drink bottle, this will work the smaller muscles in the hand which can help with your child's handwriting and scissor use when learning.

2. Playdough Bite Size Snacks

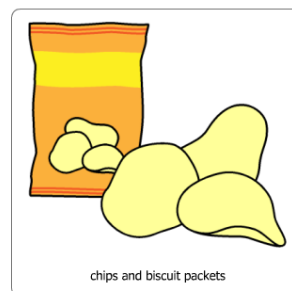
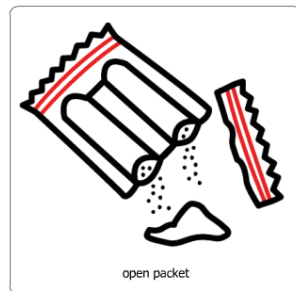


1. Ask your child to roll playdough into a sausage.
2. Hold the fork in your helper hand (non-dominant) and your knife in your writing hand (dominant hand).
3. Steady the playdough with the fork and cut bite size playdough sausage pieces with the knife.
4. Time to serve our snacks to a family member or a favourite toy!

MAKE IT EASIER:

- Stand up while rolling the playdough in order to use more body weight and push from the shoulders.
- Roll with both hands.
- Instead of using a fork, just use the helper hand to steady the playdough sausage.

3. *Pinch and Pull*



1. Instruct your child to take their tripod fingers (thumb, index and middle finger) of each hand and to hold the food package at the top/opening with their helper hand and then use the writing hand to "pinch and pull."
2. Eat the snack and enjoy- you have worked hard!

MAKE IT EASIER:

- Use snacks with packages made of paper instead of plastic and foil.
- Open the food packet slightly and then allow your child to do the rest!