



# Creating Play Environments: Hand & Finger Play

Children use their hands and fingers to grab, poke, hold, bang and otherwise explore objects in their world. We often look for ways that provide practice to build up those small muscles to play in new and extended ways. Hands are used in all positions, sitting, standing or lying down. Increased exercise of muscles in the hands helps them to strengthen and to perform more refined movements. For young children, look for activities that include both edible and non-edible options. If s/he puts everything in his/her mouth, make sure the items are large enough not to choke on and are non-toxic.

## Edible Play Options

◆ A good place for using food activities is in the highchair. Moving food around the tray helps children to freely slide hands and fingers around the tray, and promotes reaching and stretching. Some favorite “feeling” foods includes pudding, whipped cream, and yogurt. For kids who prefer more interesting or different textures, try oatmeal, rice or potatoes. For even more interest, try mixing items (cheerios in pudding). See if your child prefers warm or cold foods for squishing, patting or “finger-painting”.



## Non-edible Options

- ◆ Play dough is a classic option (an excellent recipe is found on this page); kids often like it warm- right from the stove! Add props such as pegs, dried noodles, cookie cutters and small rolling pins for added fun!
- ◆ Get a shoebox or box top and fill it with dried beans, rice and/or pasta; bird seed also offers a unique “feel”. The sides will help to keep the pieces somewhat contained. Your child may enjoy using spoons, scoops and rakes with the materials. Try burying your child’s hands or hiding small objects for your child to feel and to find.

## Other Play “Environments”

Look for other materials that offer a new play environment.

- ◆ shiny pom-poms give children an opportunity to pull, grab, mouth, and shake the strings which result in new noise and movement.
  - ◆ mylar balloons that have little air in them are easy to grasp, hold and bang for almost any child.
- Many books and resources are available for hand and fingerplays that can be used at any age. A list of suggestions is found on the back.

## Cooked Play Dough Recipe

1 cup flour  
1/2 cup salt  
2 teaspoons cream of tartar  
1 cup water  
1 Tablespoon oil  
1 teaspoon food coloring

Combine flour, salt, and cream of tartar in a saucepan. Mix liquids and gradually sift them into the dry ingredients. When mixture is smooth, cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until ball forms. Remove from heat, cool slightly and knead until smooth. This is a very pliable and long-lasting dough

## Fingerplay Resources: Website

### ◆ That Home Site!

<http://www.thathomesite.com/forums/load/parents/msg03220118737.html>

### ◆ Move Over Mother Goose

<http://www.bixler.com/gryphon/activity/10006033.htm>

### ◆ National Network for Child Care (lots!)

<http://www.exnet.iastate.edu/Pages/families/nbcc/Curriculum/fingerplay.html>

### ◆ Family Village Idea Box

<http://www.worldvillage.com/ideabox/music.html#music>

### ◆ Head Start of Lane County

<http://www.headstart.lane.or.us/children/activities/music/songs-fingerplays.html>

### ◆ Spanish Fingerplays

<http://www.flint.lib.mi.us/fpl/pubs/ring/spanish.html>

## Fingerplay Resources: Books

◆ Finger Frolics  
◆ Finger Frolics 2  
◆ One Potato, Two Potato, Three Potato Four

◆ Move Over Mother Mitt  
Authors: L. Cromwell and D. Hibner  
Publisher: Partner Press

◆ 2's Experience Fingerplays  
Authors: Liz and Dick Wilmes  
Publisher: Building Blocks

◆ Move Over Mother Goose  
Author: Ruth I. Dowell  
Publisher: Gryphon House

◆ Finger Plays for Nursery and Kindergarten.  
Author: Emilie Poulsson  
Published by Dover Pubns

◆ Games Babies Play: From Birth to Twelve Months  
Author: Vicki Lansky  
Published by Book Peddlers