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## FINE MOTOR SKILLS GAME – EAT THE CHEESE (FREE PRINTABLE)



This fine motor skills game, Eat the Cheese, is super adorable and fun to get little fingers ready to pick up small objects. You can download it for free at the end of this post!

### **How to Play the Fine Motor Skills Game**

Eat the Cheese requires very little preparation and the directions are simple. You could also modify the game as needed depending on the skill level of the child.

### **Preparation**

Download and print out the one-page color printable. An adult or the child can cut out the cat and the mouse. An adult will probably have to cut out the two circles in each animal.

The child can cut out the 12 pieces of cheese. Encourage the child to use their thumb, index and middle fingers to crinkle each piece of cheese. These are the three active fingers when holding a pencil and other small objects.

If you have two players, choose one player to be the cat and the other one is the mouse.

## Ready to Play

When you are ready to play the fine motor skills game, put your index finger and thumb through the holes. Flip a coin. If the coin lands on heads, pick up two pieces of cheese. If the coin lands on tails, pick up one piece of cheese.

When all the cheese is gone, the winner is the player with the most pieces of cheese!

## Other Ideas

If you have more than two players, just make extra copies of the free printable fine motor skills game.

If you have only one player, just try picking up the pieces of cheese and transferring them to a bowl. Time the player and see how fast he or she can pick up the pieces of cheese.

Use the cat and mouse for other activities to encourage the child to tuck the middle, ring finger and pinky finger into the palm while they use the thumb and index finger. If the child has difficulties with this, try putting a cotton ball or pom-pom in the palm for them to hold onto with the ring and pinky fingers.

## Are you in search of other fine motor games and activities?

[\*\*Flip and Snip\*\*](#) scissor game is a fun and creative way to practice scissor skills. Add some variety to simple cutting skills with this differentiated scissor game.

[\*\*Hair Cutting Sticks\*\*](#) are simple cutting projects so children can have fun while practicing scissor skills!

This download includes 35 “hair cutting” sticks to create (4-6 hair cutting image per page). Just print out the black and white pages, color and style the hair using scissors. Toss on a craft stick and create a puppet show too!

[\*\*Visual Perceptual Clothes Pin Games\*\*](#) – This digital download includes 4 games to print and play to encourage hand strengthening, visual discrimination, form constancy, visual motor and math skills. Match up the dinosaur shadows, move along the number clothesline, hang up the patterned socks or give the spiders 8 legs.

The [\*\*Basics of Fine Motor Skills\*\*](#) is a comprehensive overview of fine motor development that includes age-appropriate fine motor activity suggestions for kids of all ages. Written by Heather Greutman, COTA, the *Basics of Fine Motor Skills* explain which skills are important for fine motor development and what fine motor development looks like in children at all age levels.

[\*\*Download your FREE Printable Fine Motor Skills Game at the bottom of this post.\*\*](#)



## 15 SILLY DRAWING GAMES FOR KIDS

Here are some super simple and silly drawing games for kids and adults to play. All you need is a pencil and paper. You can play with one person or a large group.

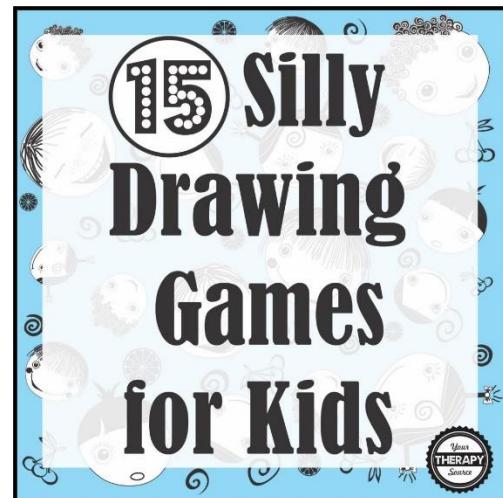
Give everyone a pencil and paper. Start by drawing one object with your dominant hand. Now it is time to switch it up and try drawing a different way.

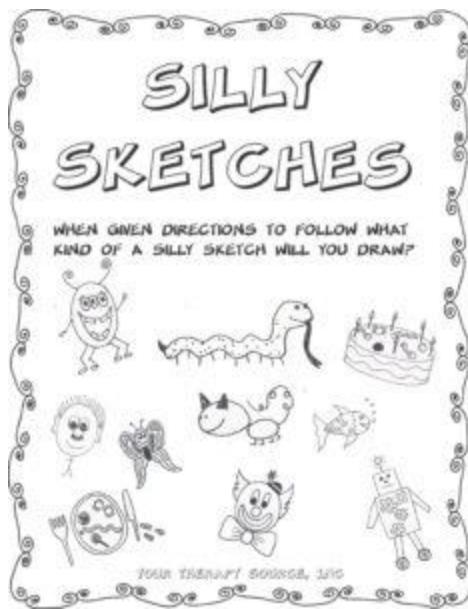
### **Silly Drawing Games for Kids**

Try drawing:

1. using your non-dominant hand
2. with the pencil in your mouth
3. with the pencil in your toes
4. with your head upside down
5. with your eyes closed
6. with your dominant hand after you spin around in a circle 10x
7. using a super tiny pencil (use a golf pencil or smaller)
8. using a huge pencil (duct tape the pencil to a wiffle ball bat)
9. with your paper taped to the underside of a desk (Michelangelo style)
10. a round of [Silly Sketches](#)
11. with both hands at the same time
12. using a white paper plate on your head and try to draw a picture on it
13. the silliest face you can think of
14. a round of [draw a doggy hangman](#)
15. some themed Squiggle Drawing: Draw a squiggle on a piece of paper. Write a theme on the top of the paper (i.e. – farm animal). Pass the paper to someone else and they have to create a farm animal from the squiggle on the paper. Download some free sample pages from [Doodle Diaries](#) to get started.

Ask the children what crazy and silly drawing games they can create. You will be surprised what they come up with.





[Silly Sketches](#) includes 10 drawings to create by following 6 simple directions. There are 10 drawing starters for each silly sketch to make the activity easier if necessary. This is suitable for one child to complete or for a group of children. This electronic book is in black and white.

This download encourages: drawing skills, ability to follow step by step directions, creativity, visual motor skills and visual perceptual skills.

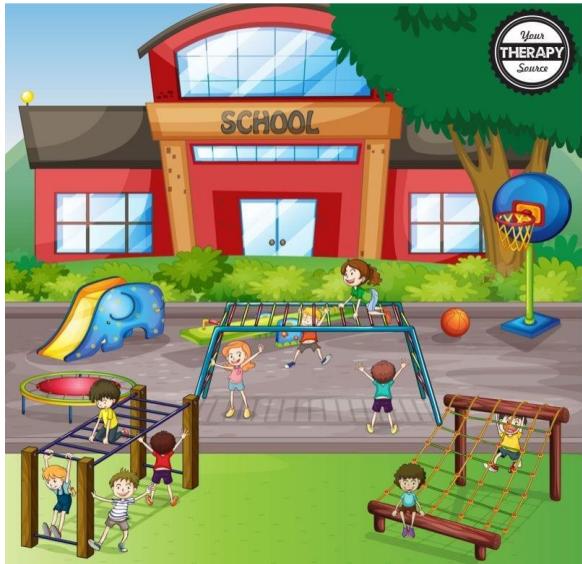
[Find out more information about this drawing game for kids.](#)

#### **When to Play the Drawing Games for Kids**

The best thing about these quick and easy drawing games, is that they can be played anytime anywhere. Here are a few ideas of when you can start up these games:

- indoor recess
- five-minute filler activity
- anytime the kids are getting antsy
- boredom buster
- to encourage children that drawing can be fun! It is a novel warm-up for those students who dislike handwriting practice.
- want to add in academics? Pick a theme for the silly drawings. Maybe draw pictures from a vocabulary list.
- try some of the activities with paper taped to the wall. This will encourage all sorts of different muscle activation.

## INCREASING ENGAGEMENT ON THE PLAYGROUND FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISM



If you are a school-based therapist, teacher, or parent you may be looking for suggestions and tips for increasing engagement on the playground for students with autism. It can be a struggle for some students to participate on the playground if they have deficits in motor skills, social skills or sensory processing. Many times, professionals and parents will wonder what can we do during recess or playground time to increase engagement. Recent research indicates that you may want to look at the dynamics in the classroom too!

### **What does the research say?**

The *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disabilities* published research on increasing

engagement on the playground for students with autism. What they found was quite interesting.

The study examined how social network inclusion in the classroom is associated with playground peer engagement for 55 children with ASD from 42 general education classrooms in 16 public elementary schools in the northeastern United States. To determine social network inclusion, friendship surveys were administered. Playground engagement was recorded.

Following data analysis, the researchers determined the following:

- an association between social network inclusion and playground engagement.
- the children who were included to a greater degree in their classrooms' social network spent more time engaged with peers on the playground.
- 

### **Conclusion**

The researchers concluded that it is important to support social interactions in multiple contexts throughout the school day in order to increase engagement on the playground for students with autism.

### **Resources to Help Support Social Interactions Throughout the School Day**



The [\*\*Making Friends Social Stories for Girls And/Or Boys\*\*](#) digital download offers help for one of the most distressing problems that our students and children face which is the inability to make and maintain friendships. So often what happens between children is out of our direct view and we only hear about what is happening when there are problems. Created by school-based Occupational Therapist, Thia Triggs, the [\*\*Making Friends Social Stories for Girls And/Or Boys\*\*](#) digital resource gives us concrete skills to teach to children, the context to practice skills, and positive language and illustrations so children feel successful at every step of the way. Clear, consistent visual expectations, previously rehearsed scenarios, and specific accommodations help children easily make friends! Designed specifically for students on the spectrum, as well as for children with ADHD, anxiety disorder, and intellectual challenges, this product also has applications for the shy or new child within a given setting. [FIND OUT MORE.](#)

#### **Reference:**

Santillan, L., Frederick, L., Gilmore, S., & Locke, J. (2019). Brief Report: Examining the Association Between Classroom Social Network Inclusion and Playground Peer Engagement Among Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 1088357619838275.

#### **Read more on increasing engagement and Friendship**

[Autism and Friendship Skills](#)

[Increasing Classroom Participation for Students with Delays](#)

[Gross Motor Skills and Social Skills in Boys with Autism](#)

## VISUAL SCANNING ACTIVITIES – FREE PRINTABLES AND IDEAS

Visual scanning is basically the ability to find and search for information in your environment. The information could be letters on a page, headlines, people, or objects. Children need to search and compare what they are looking for as they scan the environment at school, and home. By practicing visual scanning activities, children may become more efficient and quick at finding the information that is necessary for different tasks.

An example of visual scanning is looking for someone in a crowd, searching for a matching sock in a pile of laundry, or locating a vocabulary term in a textbook.

### **Visual Scanning Activities Can Be Fun**

Children love novelty and to play games. Working on visual scanning activities can be fun and entertaining! Here are 5 suggestions:

1. [Download a FREE printable to challenge visual scanning skills.](#) The children have to scan and find 10 different objects as quick as possible. This freebie is from [Ready, Set, Scan Level 2.](#)
2. Play “I Spy” with extra clues. Ask the children to scan the room for very specific objects and see who can find it first. This adds in executive functioning skills as well. For example, ask the children to visual scan and find a black object that helps hold paper together. The children can scan the classroom to find and point to the stapler.
3. Complete letter finds, word finds or hidden pictures puzzles to visually scan and find objects on a page. For younger children, [Find and Follow](#) is fun! For older children, check out [One of a Kind.](#)
4. Play Hide and Seek with Toys. One player takes a small toy and hides it in another room where at least part of the toy is showing. The other player(s) then go into the room and see who can visually scan and find the object first. They both have to stand in the same spot in the room.
5. Have a scavenger hunt in a book. Grab any random book. Call out words that are used often such as the, and, said, who, etc. The child has to find the word you call out in the book as quick as possible.



## INTERVENTIONS FOR HANDWRITING THAT WORK FOR STUDENTS



Do you see students struggling with handwriting skills on a daily basis? Maybe it is the increased use of technology at a younger age. Perhaps it is the lack of fine motor skill free play during childhood development. Or it even could be from a lack of muscle strength to produce legible writing. Regardless of what the cause may be, Occupational Therapists, teachers, and parents need interventions for handwriting that work for students.

### **What does the research say?**

The *Journal of Occupational Therapy, Schools, and Early Intervention* recently published a systemic review on handwriting acquisition and interventions for handwriting for preschoolers through second grade. The results indicated the following:

- [writing letters in late preschool](#) contributes to letter recognition.
- Elementary students do better when [handwriting is explicitly taught](#).
- Legibility improves with [adequate practice](#).
- [Interventions based on motor learning theory](#) and cognitive learning strategies are effective in improving legibility.
- remediation of performance deficits was not shown to be effective.

Reference: Fancher, L. A., Priestley-Hopkins, D. A., & Jeffries, L. M. (2018). Handwriting Acquisition and Intervention: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Occupational Therapy, Schools, & Early Intervention*, 11(4), 454-473.

## **How do you assess if a student needs interventions for handwriting?**

How do you assess if a child is making progress in foundational skill areas to support handwriting performance? How do you determine if further intervention is required? Ingrid S. King MScOT, BOT developed the [Fantastic Fingers® Handwriting Foundations Screen](#) to identify handwriting needs fast and monitor progress. The screen provides standardized observations of functional skills in context.

The image shows the logo for the Fantastic Fingers Handwriting Foundations Screen. It features the text "Fantastic Fingers®" at the top left, followed by a large, bold title "HANDWRITING FOUNDATIONS SCREEN". To the right is a white rectangular box containing the text "HANDWRITING FOUNDATIONS SCREEN" above a cartoon illustration of three colorful cartoon characters riding in a red rocket ship. Below the illustration is a bulleted list of features: "Identify needs fast and monitor progress!", "Use for individual or group administration", "Includes rubric for scoring, intervention guidelines & writing", and "Plus intervention guide with five activities online". At the bottom right of the box is the name "Ingrid C. King MScOT, BOT". To the right of the box is the text "Identify handwriting needs fast and monitor progress!".

### **The Fantastic Fingers® Handwriting Foundations Screen:**

- Is based on research and best OT practice to establish what foundations are important for early handwriting performance.
- Focuses on motor foundations as so many children today are vulnerable or at risk in their motor development.
- Includes 5 tasks (used with children between the ages of 3.5 and 7 years old) that are relevant and meaningful for young children to do, especially in preschool and school settings.
- Takes less than 15 minutes to administer.
- Also captures important qualitative observations while the tasks are being performed.
- Uses a rubric for scoring that is sensitive and reliable enough to measure changes over time when the same person administers the screen.
- Includes an easy report template with intervention guidelines and a cover letter in Word format for quick electronic sharing.

### **Read more about INterventions for handwriting research**

[CURRICULUM-BASED HANDWRITING PROGRAMS – WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?](#)

[EVIDENCE BASED RESEARCH ON WHY STUDENTS NEED TRADITIONAL HANDWRITING PRACTICE](#)

[IMPORTANCE OF HANDWRITING FOR WRITING](#)

## MORE SCREEN TIME ASSOCIATED WITH DECREASED FINE MOTOR SKILLS

As technology and screens take a stronger hold on our children's lives every day, it is important to analyze the relationship between screen time and fine motor skills in preschoolers. Teachers and therapists continue to report that when they observe young children, motor skill development is lacking. Some hypothesize that this is due to an increase in screen time instead of open-ended free play outside of the school day or prior to entering the school system.

### **What does the research say?**

There is more and more research slowly emerging on this topic. None of it has determined a cause and effect relationship between too much screen time and decreased motor skills. Although there is research that supports a negative association between screen time and language, cognitive and motor skills.



Recently, the *Journal of Sport and Health Science* published research examining the fundamental motor skills, screen-time, and physical activity in preschoolers. The results are quite interesting.

To determine fundamental motor skill abilities, a total of 126 children (ages 3-4 years old) were evaluated with the Test of Gross Motor Development-3rd edition (TGMD-3) and the Movement Assessment Battery for Children-2nd edition (MABC-2). Of those children, 88 wore accelerometers for 7 days to determine physical activity levels. Parents completed a screen time survey to determine screen time usage.

The cover of the book 'Play~Move~Develop: 100 activities to encourage motor development' by Your Therapy Source. The title is in large blue letters at the top. Below it, a subtitle reads '100 activities to encourage motor development'. To the right of the title is a small image of a child playing on a playground. The 'Your Therapy Source' logo is in the bottom right corner.

### **Results of the Study on Screen Time and Fine Motor Skills in Preschoolers**

After data analysis, the study indicated the following about the characteristics of the participants:

- children engaged in an average of 5.1 hours of screen time per day.

- when compared to girls, boys scored higher on the TGMD-3 total scores, ball skills, and MABC-2 aiming and catching scores.
- children engaged in about 5.9 hours per day of total physical activity of which 1.7 hours was moderate to vigorous physical activity.
- when compared to girls, boys participated in significantly more total physical activity, moderate to vigorous physical activity and significantly less sedentary behavior.
- 

When analyzing the association between screen time and motor skills the researchers determined that:

- children's total screen-time was inversely related to MABC-2 manual dexterity skills, meaning the children who participated in more screen time had lower fine motor skills.
- there was not a significant relationship between screen time and TGMD-3 total scores (locomotor skills, ball skills).
- there was no association between screen time and physical activity levels.
- children with better fundamental motor skills participated in more physical activity.

**Basics of Fine Motor Skills**  
Developmental activities for kids

## Conclusion

The researchers concluded that a higher amount of screen time was related to lower fine motor skills. Screen time amount was not related to fundamental motor skills in the 3-4-year-old children in the study. Longitudinal studies were recommended to determine later outcomes.

## Reference

Webster, E. K., Martin, C. K., & Staiano, A. E. (2019). Fundamental motor skills, screen-time, and physical activity in preschoolers. *Journal of sport and health science, 8*(2), 114-121.

## Read more on Screen Time and Fine Motor skill Development

[SCHOOL-RELATED FINE MOTOR SKILLS – UNDERSTANDING THE COMPONENTS](#)

[FINE MOTOR SKILLS ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS](#)

[EXCESSIVE SCREEN TIME FOR CHILDREN – WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?](#)

## HOW TO IMPROVE HANDWRITING IN KIDS – TIPS FROM DR. BEVERLY MOSKOWITZ, OTR/L



Many people say that handwriting instruction is no longer a necessity because of the prevalence in the use of gadgets that effectively replace our need to write using traditional writing tools. Dr. Beverly Moskowitz, OTR/L, creator of the Size Matters Handwriting Program, shares with us her thoughts and suggestions on why handwriting instruction is still important and relevant today.

Dr. Moskowitz states that “preschoolers and early elementary students are just learning to think. And for your beginner learners, there is no better way to open the channels of inter-hemispheric communication than by putting pencil to paper. And the research proves it.”

From her 43+ years of experience as a pediatric Occupational Therapist, Dr. Moskowitz offers us her 10 suggestions on how to improve handwriting in kids!

### **10 Tips to Improve Handwriting in Kids**

In the schools, students often receive [handwriting remediation](#) from occupational therapists to help students with legibility, speed, and functional handwriting. Here are several tips on how to improve [handwriting in kids](#) for occupational therapists.

#### **Focus on Size.**

Try scoring for letter size. Teach students how to score themselves. For example, when conducting a Size Matters lesson at the board or on their paper, make as many ‘bad’ letters as possible. Letters that are not STAR-WORTHY, defy the Rules for letter size. In other words, the Letter Lines either go above, below or do not touch the Writing Lines.

The letters may actually look like the intended letter. However, if it is not touching the Writing Lines in all the right places, it would not earn a Star. Correcting errors in Letter size will make an immediate

difference in the consistency and therefore readability of the page. Ask the children if you have printed a Star-Worthy letter, and why it is or it isn't. A critical analysis is an important component of the Size Matters program. Besides, you know that there is nothing your students like more than telling a grown-up they messed up.

#### **Be realistic.**

Readability and functionality are the [goals](#). We are not entering any handwriting contests. We do, however, need to make sure that children can complete assignments, take notes, handwrite messages, fill in forms, keep pace with their classmates, and finally... have all of the above read back by teachers, peers, parents and themselves alike.

#### **Empower teachers and students.**

[Empower your teachers and students](#) with handwriting rules. The Size Matters Handwriting Program Rules are like giving the kids the answers to the test. In addition, children are encouraged to say them, sing them, add the hand movements and more, all day every day across all curricular content. But like a record repeating in their heads, the Rules give them concrete guidelines to judge their own printing.

#### **Try the Dice Game**

Turn students on to The Dice Game. It is so simple, yet so effective, especially once they know that dice determines practice.

Instruct the teacher to walk around with dice in his or her hand during any and all writing assignments. The audible clinking of the die reminds children to 'Think Letter Size.'

Periodically, a teacher could stop by a student's desk and ask him to critique a letter. Of course, they should only ask students to critique a letter(s) already been taught and practiced.

If the letter is printed the wrong size, ask the student "What size is this letter?" And what's the Rule?" At that point in time, the teacher could present the die, and to allow the student to select a die that is 'Calling their name.' Then, at the bottom of the page, the back of the paper or on another piece of paper entirely, the child could practice making that letter (or word) Star-Worthy.

Encourage teachers to focus on the assignment. We OTs must appreciate that they have a curriculum to follow. But in this way, the children are reminded to print their letters the correct size. And believe me... if you stop one student, his classmates are similarly alerted. They could be next!!

#### **Offer Low Tech Options**

Offer low tech options than enable them to model accurate letter sizes, like [adapted writing paper](#) scanned into Smartboards, writing lines on the wipe-off whiteboards or permanent lines on any board.

#### **Provide Various Levels of Writing Paper**

Provide samples of various grade levels of [adapted writing paper](#). Get children excited about graduating to a higher-grade level paper because they are making their letters the right size.

#### **Slow and Steady**

Start slow. For example, the Size Matters Handwriting Program teaches the Size One letters first, upper then lower case. Only hold your child accountable for the letters you've taught and mastered.

### **Get Accuracy with Letter Size First**

Don't focus on spacing until you have 80% accuracy on Letter Size.

### **Provide Visual Cues**

Offer [near point visual cues](#) for Letter Size and near point propped samples for copying.

### **Our Goal Needs to Be Functional Legible Printing**

Let's be honest. Our children are growing up in an era of instantaneous networking. The need to communicate and the demand to do so in a timely manner will dominate our students preferred options down the road. Just the same, there will always be a need to print, even if it is in limited quantities. Our goal needs to be functional legible printing. Teachers are our partners. We are on their turf. Respect the fact they have a full plate already. Share materials and strategies that are doable within their already busy days.

### **About Dr. Beverly Moskowitz, OTR/L**

Dr. Beverly Moskowitz is a nationally recognized speaker with 43+ years experience as a pediatric Occupational Therapist, and a fellow of the American Occupational Therapy Association.

As a school therapist, she serviced more than fifteen school districts, visiting over 60 different schools. Her broad exposure to varied teacher methods, administrative styles, and treatment interventions confirmed her resolve to ensure function, participation, and inclusion for all students without wasting time.

She is the author of multiple publications including *Practical Strategies for Increasing the Effectiveness, Efficiency and Impact of your School Based Occupational Therapy Practice*, she strives to teach other therapists how to implement best practices while 'keeping the fun going.'

Visit [RealOTSolutions](#) for more information on the Size Matters Handwriting Program.



## 5 REASONS TO USE A THERAPY PLANNER IF YOU ARE A SCHOOL-BASED THERAPIST



Ever wonder what you can do to make your life easier as a school-based therapist? Whether you are a school-based occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech therapist or counselor, it can be very difficult to stay on top of all the paperwork requirements, scheduling and tasks. Here are 5 reasons to use a [therapy planner](#):

Reason #1: It will help you to stay organized. School-based therapists have a tough job in terms of keeping all the paperwork requirements in an organized fashion. With large caseloads and different schools, it can be a daunting task to keep it all in order. A [planner](#) can help you to keep all your information in one location.

Reason #2: It will help with documentation. The Therapy Planners for 2019-2020 help you to keep track of attendance, evaluations that need to be completed, daily to-do lists, weekly planning, scheduling and more! If you need specific documentation forms for session visits check out the [Data Tracking Forms](#).

Reason #3: It will help motivate you. By creating lists and notes, it will help you to be more productive and achieve that feeling of self-satisfaction when you can check a task off as completed.

Reason #4: It will help you with memory retrieval and formation. I know for myself, if I write something down then I am more likely to remember it. And if I do forget it, I can easily look up what I need to do in [the planner](#).

Reason #5: It will help you to decrease your stress level. I always feel less overwhelmed if I break down tasks into smaller more manageable chunks. It helps me to be prepared and plan ahead versus stressing out right before a report, paperwork or presentation needs to be completed.

The [new, updated planners](#) are ready for you to get started on organizing your work life. The [planners](#) start in July 2019 and go through June 2020. Wow, I can't believe we are even talking about the next school year already!

# Therapy Planner 2019-2020

Available in Word and PDF format  
8 different designs - YourTherapySource

[FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ON THE THERAPY PLANNERS AND SEE THE DESIGNS](#)

## DO KIDS NEED RECESS? HECK YES, AND HERE IS WHY!



If you ask children what their favorite school subject is many will respond recess! Unfortunately, unstructured, free play for kids is becoming a thing of the past. Thirty to forty percent of elementary schools in the United States are eliminating, decreasing or considering eliminating recess. (1,2). Some schools are making these decisions due to increased academic pressures and state testing. So do kids need recess?

Heck yes, kids need recess and here is why! Recess provides learning experiences, social experiences and physical activity time that can not be accomplished in the classroom or even in a structured physical education class. (1) All students can benefit from increased motor skill practice time during recess which is needed due to

the sedentary lifestyle of children today. It is important to promote the positive aspects of recess to school districts, teachers and parents.

### **Why Do Kids Need Recess?**

It is crucial for all school staff, students and parents to be informed on the benefits of recess. Recess teaches children numerous important skills beyond just getting a break from the rigors of the classroom.

For example, children learn the ability to follow rules and self-control during a fun game of tag. Positive behaviors are achieved through turn taking and sharing. Cognitive skills such as mathematical concepts (counting, shapes, spatial awareness) and science skills (problem-solving skills) are reinforced on the playground.

### **Recess increases physical activity**

During recess time children are physically active. Educate the school staff on all the benefits of children being physically active. The *American Heart Association* states that physical activity in children is important to control weight, reduce blood pressure, raise good cholesterol, reduce the risk of diabetes and improve psychological well being. (3) Physical activity also affects concentration, elevates mood, enhances creativity and facilitates memory. (4)

### **Recess Improves Behavior**

More and more research has concluded that recess proves to be a positive experience for children across many domains. Children's behaviors in the classroom have been shown to improve if they experience at least 1 period of recess per day lasting a minimum of 15 minutes. (2) If recess is scheduled before lunch, research indicates healthier food choices, decreased visits to the school nurse by as much as 40% and improved behaviors. (5)

## **Recess Improves Academics**

There is extensive research to support that children who are more physically fit have higher academic scores. (6,7) Additional research indicated the following:

1. higher levels of physical activity at recess were related to better reading skills.
2. participation in organized sports was linked to higher arithmetic test scores.
3. boys with higher levels of physical activity, especially walking and bicycling to and from school, had better reading skills than less active boys.
4. boys who spent more time doing activities involving reading and writing on their leisure time had better reading skills compared to boys who spent less time doing those activities.
5. for girls, there were only few associations of physical activity and sedentary behavior with academic achievement when various confounding factors were controlled for.

The researchers concluded that higher levels of physical activity during recess, before school and in organized sports may help to improve academic achievement, especially in boys. (9)

## **ROLL SOME FUN**



**30 fun, no-prep, boredom busting brain break games**

## **Don't Take Away Recess to Punish Students**

Encourage teachers not to withhold recess as a punishment. The *National Association of Sport and Physical Education* states that “administering or withholding physical activity as a form of punishment and/or behavior management is an inappropriate practice”. (8) Offer alternative suggestions to withholding recess such as developing routines, include students in setting behavior goals and giving positive feedback when a student is doing something right.

## **Pre-Teach Skills If Necessary**

Children with mild and multiple disabilities may feel isolated and left out during unstructured recess time. Students may need to be pre-taught recess skills. Having children practice negotiating the playground equipment is important, but don't forget other playground skills. Observe a student's class during recess to see what types of games the children play. Perhaps pre-teach the rules of hopscotch, four square, tag, and other games so that the student is prepared socially as well as motorically.

## **Recess and Inclusion**

Due to physical limitations, some children will not be able to negotiate the playground equipment or participate in traditional recess activities. It is still important for these children to be included. Provide the teachers with ideas for the children to do during recess time.

Perhaps try water play, bowling, beach balls, bubbles, music and more (see Create Active Play Boxes below for more ideas). At first, an adult may need to be present to guide the children during the activities. The adult can modify the rules of different games to make it simpler for all children to participate.

## Create Active Play Boxes

Playground equipment is not always available at a school during all recess times. Perhaps it is available, but the children are tired of climbing on it. Provide the teachers with play boxes or ideas to include in an active play box. These active play boxes can then be taken outdoors during recess time or at any time of the day. Maybe create a lending library of active play boxes for the elementary school teachers. An additional benefit to the play boxes is that research has indicated children increase moderate to vigorous physical activity time when there is more portable playground equipment. (7)

**Here are some suggestions for different themed active play boxes:**

- **Ball box** – include various sizes and textures of different playground balls
  - **Bubble box** – include bubbles, different bubble wands and bubble trays
  - **Jump rope box** – add traditional jump ropes, chinese jump ropes and double dutch ropes
  - **Sidewalk chalk box** – have an art contest, create new black top games, hopscotch, etc.
  - **Activity card box** – write one playground games on each i.e. Freeze tag, hide and go seek, obstacle course, etc. The children can pick out one card at a time to choose a game.
  - **Science box** – magnifying glasses, bug containers, tweezers
  - **Water paint box** – buckets for water, large paintbrushes and paint rollers to “paint” the black top with different designs
  - **Beach party box** – include beach balls, tether ball set, paddle ball and Velcro mitt set
  - **Celebration box** – include streamers and ribbon sticks to run and play with
  - **Catch All Box** – Velcro mitts, Frisbees, soft footballs, small balls, recycled plastic milk jugs with tops cut off but handles left on to catch balls
  - **Hula Hoop Box** – suggest hula hoop contests or use hoops to create obstacle courses
  - **Race Box** – include stopwatches and cones. The children can set up races and time each other

**Don't forget to create some active free play boxes for indoor recess as well.**

- **Pedometers** – children can see how many steps they take during recess and try to increase each time
- **Dance party box** – radio with batteries, dance music
- **Indoor balls** – balloons and cardboard tubes
- **DVD box** – a collection of exercise DVD's for kids – [here are some downloads to get you started!](#)
- **Bean bag box** – include bean bags and targets to throw at
- **Yoga Box** – Everything you need for [Yoga in the Classroom can be found here.](#)

Recess should be fun, engaging and productive for all students. Work on rallying teachers, parents and students to give recess the respect it deserves.

## ROLL SOME FUN

30 fun, no-prep, boredom busting brain break games

### References:

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## 5 EVERYDAY OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES TO PRACTICE SELF REGULATION SKILLS



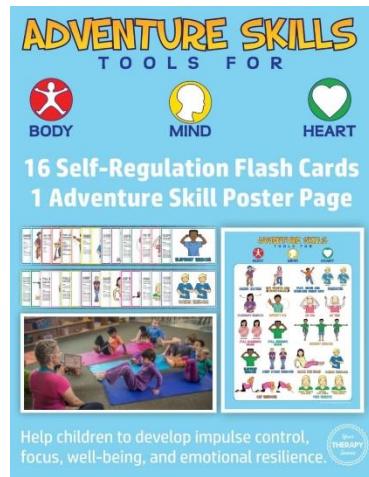
Self-regulation is the ability of a person to tolerate sensations, situations and distress and form appropriate responses to that sensory input. Simply stated, it is the ability to control behavior. The ability to [self regulate in children is a predictor for academic abilities.](#)

**Here are 5 everyday outdoor activities to practice self- regulation skills in children:**

1. **Outdoor free play** with a group of children without much adult interaction is an excellent self regulation activity. A game of tag, kick ball or hide and go seek will certainly require self regulation. Kids will argue and fight and try to work it out. Many children may tend to lose it in situations where adults don't intervene to keep it "cordial". But in the end it is these situations where children really gain the self-regulation skills because they've used their own coping mechanisms to problem solve.
2. **Recess also requires self regulation.** Children may come out of school bursting with energy and need to control it outdoors to remain safe.
3. **Walking to school** requires self-control. For younger children, the child needs to stay with an adult when walking and must control the desire to run ahead. For older children, they must exhibit self control to avoid other pedestrians and traffic. **Waiting for the school bus** requires a significant amount of self-regulation especially when children have to wait for long periods of time. Walking the dog requires responsibility and self-regulation to walk a certain speed, to wait for the dog to sniff the grass and to hold the dog's leash.
4. **Be mindful of the beauty of the outdoors.** Teach children to slow down and appreciate the outdoors. Practice deep breathing and just relax. This models a calm body for children. In order to remain in control in difficult situations children need to have calming experiences.

5. On the playground, children need to exhibit self-regulation to follow the rules, wait on line to use different equipment and to exhibit safety awareness. Without self-regulation, the child and others are at risk for injury.

#### More Resources to Help Children Develop Self-Regulation Skills



The more practice children have to develop self-regulation skills, the more children will be better able to think before they act. Need more ideas? Check out the [Adventure Skills Self-Regulation Flashcards](#) or the [complete self-regulation videos bundle](#).



## HOW TO USE BREATHING EXERCISES FOR EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS

Breathing techniques can offer easy-to-practice activities for building basic self-regulation in the body of youngsters and in your classroom. Here are suggestions on how to use breathing exercises for executive function skills.

The official definition of executive function is a set of processes that all have to do with managing oneself and one's resources in order to achieve a goal. It is an umbrella term for neurologically-based skills involving mental control and self-regulation. Think of executive function as the “conductor” of all cognitive skills, enabling us to manage our lives, responsibilities, and projects.

The ability to self-regulate is also needed for executive function. Without being able to focus, control impulses and manage everyday stresses and emotions, children are disruptive, unhappy, inattentive, emotionally unstable and fall behind academically.

### **Executive function skills include:**

1. **Inhibition** – The ability to stop one's own behavior at the appropriate time.
2. **Shift** – The ability to move freely from one situation to another and to think flexibly in order to respond appropriately to the situation.
3. **Emotional Control** – The ability to modulate emotional responses by bringing rational thought to bear on feelings.
4. **Initiation** – The ability to begin a task or activity and to independently generate ideas, responses, or problem-solving strategies.
5. **Working memory** – The capacity to hold information in mind for the purpose of completing a task.
6. **Planning/Organization** – The ability to manage current and future- oriented task demands.
7. **Organization of Materials** – The ability to impose order on work, play, and storage spaces.
8. **Self-Monitoring** – The ability to monitor one's own performance and to measure it against some standard of what is needed or expected.

Looking at this list, it's obvious that self-regulation is a critical competency of executive function in two major ways: social-emotional (appropriate behavior in a social context) and cognitive (focus, academic learning, problem-solving).



## What does the research say about self-regulation?

When children are self-regulating, they can both stop or start doing something, even if they don't want to. For example, they can delay gratification. They can think ahead. In addition, they can control impulses and consider options. It is crucial that children learn basic self-regulation in early childhood because research indicates that "children who cannot control their emotions at age four are unlikely to be able to follow the teachers' directions at age six, and will not become reflective learners in middle and high school." (Zins et al, 2007)

## Breathing Techniques for Executive Function

As mentioned previously, breathing techniques offer easy-to-practice activities for building basic self-regulation in the body of youngsters and in your classroom. With something specific to do to support themselves when confronted with transitions, sharing, waiting, and re-directing impulses, children are better able to navigate those challenges. As they experience how specific ways of breathing enable them to tolerate feelings and manage impulses, they start to embody greater control. This process strengthens executive function, which builds self-esteem and self-trust.

Help kids learn how to count on their inner wisdom and intelligence. Make time for self-reflection and self-care throughout the day. Then introduce and practice breathing exercises regularly as a way to de-stress, recharge, and reset to an optimal mind-body state.

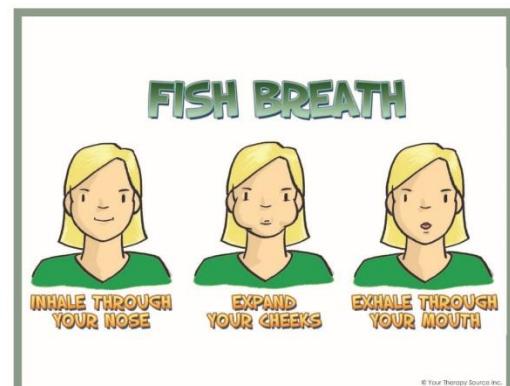
## Two Breathing Exercises for Executive Function as a tool for Healthy Self-Regulation

### Fish Breath

Fish breath breathing exercise is a fun technique that is sure to make kids laugh and not take things too seriously. Because it requires make a silly blooping sound on the exhale, like a fish, it disperses tension, releases frustration, and busts the stress of over-efforting. Humor and playfulness are keys to accessing executive function and creative thinking. Physiologically, when you inhale deeply, you pull in lots of oxygen needed by our brain and body to stay relaxed and alert. When you exhale completely, you make room for more which helps us release toxins and recharge.

### Directions:

Take a deep breath through your nose,  
Fill up your cheeks with that breath and ...  
Push it all out through your mouth while saying...  
Bloop, bloop, bloop, blooooooop.



And again, deep breath in your nose...  
Fill up your cheeks with it and ...  
Exhale it out your mouth ...  
  
Bloop, bloop, bloop, bloop, blooooooop.

### Ocean Breath

Ocean breath breathing exercise activates the midline of the body, connects both hemispheres of the brain, and relieves tension in the eye muscles. As they inhale, direct children to place one hand on their belly button and the other on their sternum, like giving themselves a hug. Then, as they exhale, have them move just their eyes (head remains still) slowly from right to left and back again 2-4 times. This movement facilitates improved eye teaming skills and cross-motor coordination.

Overall, Ocean Breath slows, calms, and centers both mind and body, which will enable children to access executive function.

### Directions

Place one hand on your belly button,  
place the other in the middle of your chest.  
Press your thumb and forefinger into the  
soft tissue points beneath your collar bones  
on either side of your sternum. Inhale fully  
through your nose and then, as you exhale  
slowly, move just your eyes from right to left.

By introducing these 2 breathing exercises for executive function to your students, you will help them build basic self-regulation skills, de-stress, recharge, and reset to an optimal mind-body state.



### Additional Resources for Self-Regulation

The [Adventure Skill Self-Regulation Flash Cards](#) include Fish Breath and Ocean Wisdom to provide child-friendly activities that support well-being, physical development and enhance social-emotional learning.

This [Self-Regulation Videos and Flash Cards Bundle](#) includes 9 Videos & the 16 Self-Regulation Flash Cards to provide you with everything you need to support your students/children in being physically fit, emotionally stable & learning able.

### Reference

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## IMPULSE CONTROL GAME FOR KIDS

Are you looking to work on impulse control, focus, and self-regulation in children? This fun and challenging impulse control game for kids can be downloaded for free at the end of the post!

If your students or children have trouble focusing, settling down, staying on task, or dealing appropriately with their impulses this is a great game to try!

### **What is impulse control?**

Impulse control or inhibition is an executive function skill that can be defined as the ability to stop one's own behavior at the appropriate time. This is part of the ability to self-regulate. Self-regulation is also needed for executive function. Without being able to focus, control impulses and manage everyday stresses and emotions, children are disruptive, unhappy, inattentive, emotionally unstable and fall behind academically.

Children, especially young children, need plenty of time to practice impulse control and self-regulation. One simple way to accomplish this is through free play time where children learn to develop behavior strategies (i.e. impulse control) and emotional regulation. Another idea is to play games to offer extra practice time such as this impulse control game for kids.



The image shows a product box for "Adventure Skills Tools for Self-Regulation". It features three icons: BODY, MIND, and HEART. Below the icons, it says "16 Self-Regulation Flash Cards" and "1 Adventure Skill Poster Page". There is a small image of a child on the poster page. At the bottom, it says "Help children to develop emotion control, focus, self-harming, and emotional well-being". A circular seal on the right says "Your Therapy Source".

### **How to Play The Mixed Up Version Of Head, Toes, Knees, and Shoulders**

Maybe you just re-read that title or you read it wrong top begin with. This game requires the participants to stop and think before they perform an action. It is super tricky since many children (and adults) are so used to singing "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" and moving a certain way.

This impulse control game requires you to touch your toes when you sing head or touch your knees when you say toes. It can become super hard especially when you try to go fast.

#### **Directions:**

To start, (before you show the students the printable) sing and act out the traditional "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" song. Touch your head, shoulders, knees, and toes, knees and toes and you sing along. Repeat the song two times.

Now print the free impulse control game for kids printable at the bottom of the page or project it on a screen for the class to view. Instruct the children to sing the traditional song, but do the actions the boy is performing instead of the traditional song. It will require concentration and focus to touch your toes while you sing "head". Give it a try!

Don't forget to repeat the actions at knees and toes, knees and toes.

Start out slow moving from action to action and checking if the students are performing the motions correctly based on the boy pictures and not the words you are singing.

After they practice it a few times, try to go a little faster.

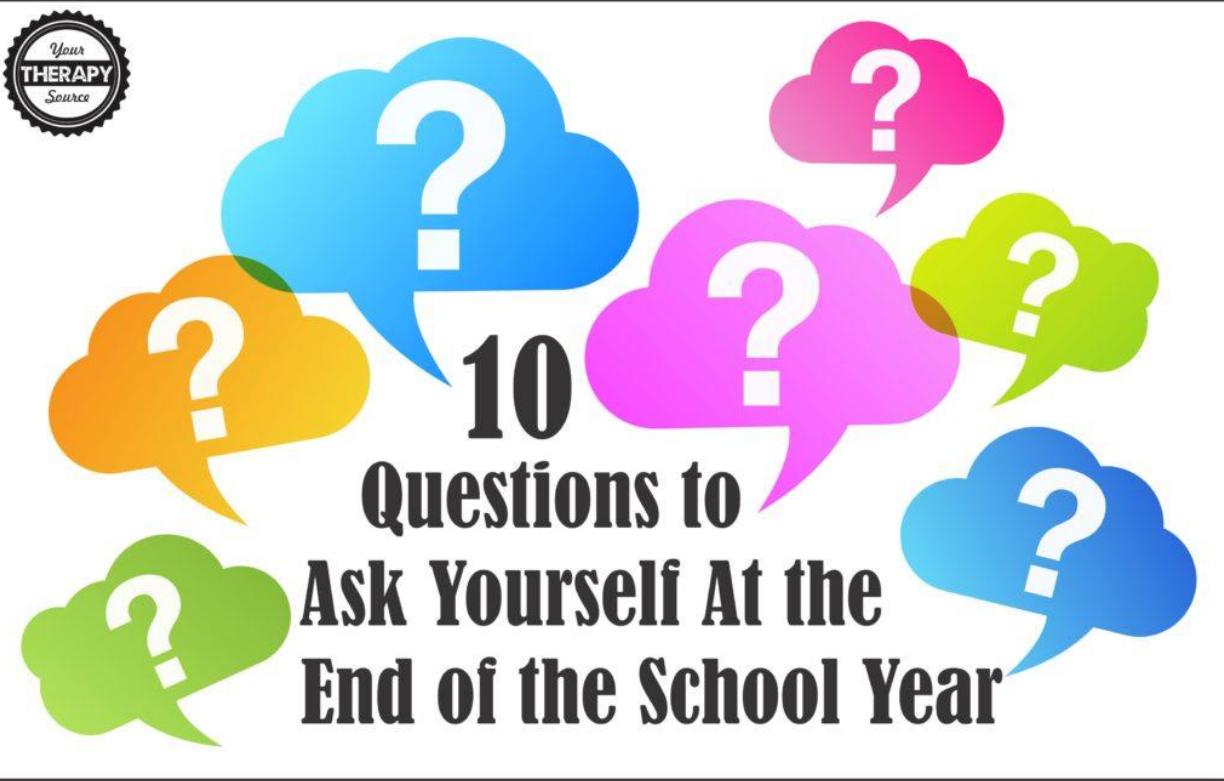
To keep it fun, put away the mixed up version and try singing the traditional song with motion again a few times. Then show the printable again and do the mixed up impulse control game for kids by following the boy pictured. Were the students able to use their inhibition skills or was it just as hard as the first time?

[Download your FREE Impulse Control Game for Kids](#)

The image shows a free printable worksheet titled "HEAD, TOES, KNEES, AND SHOULDERS?" in large blue letters at the top. Below the title is a musical staff with four notes. A circular logo for "Your Therapy Source" is positioned above the second note. The main activity consists of two sets of four boxes each, arranged in a grid. The top set is labeled "Head, shoulders, knees, and toes, and toes." and the bottom set is labeled "Head, shoulders, knees, and toes, and toes." Each box contains a small illustration of a boy performing a specific action: the first box shows him covering his eyes, the second covering his ears, the third covering his mouth, and the fourth covering his nose. The bottom set of boxes also features illustrations of the boy performing the same actions. The entire worksheet is set against a blue background with a white border.

www.YourTherapySource.com

## 10 SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR THE END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR



Self-reflection helps you to analyze your professional and personal growth. By keeping a record of your ideas, reasons, actions, techniques, and assessments you can plan for your future and facilitate a positive outcome. Take a few minutes to look back on the past school year. Use these 10 open-ended questions to ask yourself at the end of the school year (or any time of year)!

### **10 Self-Reflection Questions for the End of the School Year**

What was your biggest accomplishment at work this year?

What do you wish you did more of at work?

Name one thing that would have made the school year more enjoyable.

What was your biggest failure at work this year?

What was your favorite goal that a student achieved this year?

What was the hardest goal for a student to achieve this year?

Name one thing you would like to change next year at work.

Name one supply, resource, book, etc. you would like to have next year at work.

Name one way that you can help your colleagues more next year.

Name three ways how you can become better at your job next year.

[DOWNLOAD YOUR FREE COPY OF THESE QUESTIONS HERE.](#)

## Reflective Journaling



[Reflective Journaling for Therapists, Teachers, Parents and Students](#) digital download includes the materials to help you analyze your personal and professional growth. By keeping a record of your ideas, reasons, actions, techniques, and assessments you can play for your future and facilitate a positive outcome. [FIND OUT MORE](#).

### Students Benefit from Self-Reflection Too!

Have you ever considered having the students you currently work use self-reflection to help create a list of advice or tips for other students for the next school year? You could ask the children to submit tips and suggestions that make functional tasks easier for them. This activity will hopefully empower the children to see that they can help others (and sneak in handwriting practice if they need it). It may also allow them to think about different aspects of functional tasks possibly leading to goal setting for the following school year.

[My Memory Book](#) digital download encourages self reflection for students on accomplishments, improvements, challenges, goals and more. Students can practice handwriting and drawing skills while creating a memory keepsake book. This download includes the materials to create one 11 page memory book (available in three different font styles).

### Suggestions for Student Self-Reflection Questions

1. What do you do to be more organized at school?
2. What is your favorite physical education activity to participate in?
3. If an activity has to be adapted for you to participate in gym class or recess, what have you found to be the most helpful adaptation?
4. Is there anything that makes getting dressed easier for you?
5. Is there a certain entrance to the school you find easiest to enter in at?

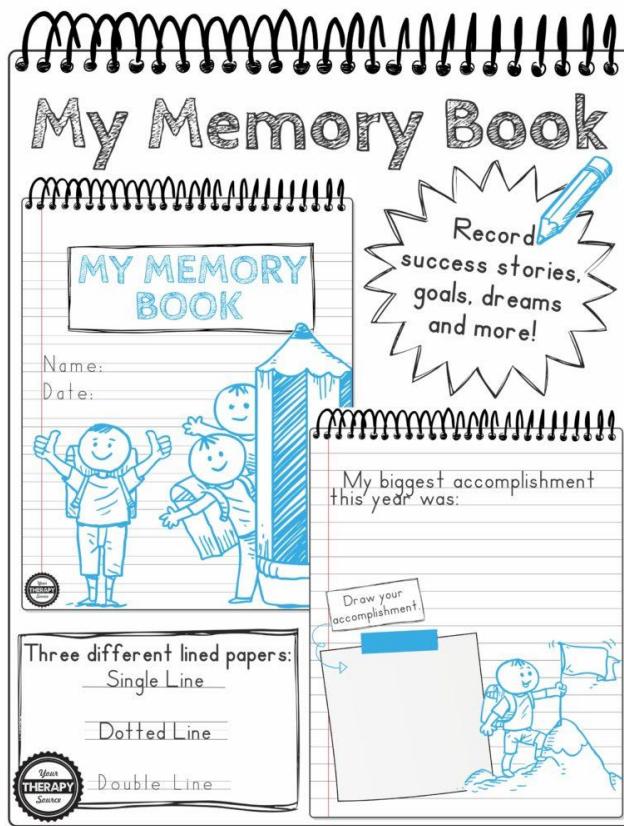
6. Is there a staircase that is easier to navigate than others?
7. Is there a bathroom at the school that is easier to use than others?

You don't even need to suggest these questions. Maybe just throw it out there to the students from now until the end of the school year. Set up an easel in the therapy room or carry a note pad. When a student thinks of a tip write it down. Once all the suggestions have been gathered, organize them into categories. Then next school year hand out your tip sheet to all the students on your caseload.

Here is a practice sheet from the [My Memory Book](#) complete packet. You can download below for free. It is available in single line, dotted line (Zaner-Bloser type format) and double line (Handwriting Without Tears type format).

[DOWNLOAD MY BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT THIS YEAR WORKSHEET](#)

Want to take it one step further? Ask parents for their tips and suggestions to complete functional skills for a successful school year. Make this information available to parents the following school year.



## CLASSROOM TRANSITION IDEAS – 10 TIPS TO IMPROVE TRANSITION TIME

Do you have students who have difficulty transitioning from one activity to another? Maybe they have a hard time transitioning from the classroom to the therapy room or special class.

There are many reasons why a student may have trouble with transitions. Think about all the skills needed for successful transitions:

- listening skills: students need to listen to the directions.
- follow directions: students need to be able to follow multi-step motor commands.
- **self-regulation skills**: students need to be able to control their emotions, thinking, behavior and motor actions in different situations
- body awareness: students need to maintain appropriate space between themselves, their peers and classroom furniture. Check out [Personal Space Journey](#) for students who need help with body awareness.
- **motor planning**: students need to be able to plan and execute the motor action of moving their body from one activity to another.
- motor timing: students need to be able to move slowly, quickly, start and stop.



As you can see from the above, transitioning from one activity to the next does require an extensive amount of skills and perhaps that is why so many students can struggle in this area. Teachers and school staff need suggestions for classroom transition ideas.

### **10 classroom transition ideas and Tips**

Here are classroom transition ideas and tips to help the school day go smoothly.

1. Establish a consistent schedule or routine for the student to follow. Provide visual picture symbols if necessary for the student to follow. [Visual activity schedules](#) are pictures, photographs, words or symbols that are arranged in a specific order to represent the step by step sequence required to complete a task. The purpose of visual activity schedules is to increase independence, engagement, and acquisition of new skills during classroom, recreational, transition, and play activities. They help to provide clear expectations for academic, motor, social and behavioral skills.
2. Allow the student enough time to experience the activity before moving on to the next activity. Use a timer if necessary.
3. Make sure the student understands what the directions are or what is expected of him/her. Some

students will need to be taught how to follow the routine. This takes practice and time.

4. Provide verbal and physical cues that a transition is approaching. There are plenty of visual timers that can be used to provide warnings for transitions.
  5. Modify schedules to have the least amount of transitions possible. For example, if a student is already out of class to go to the nurse or another related service it may be a good time to schedule therapy to reduce the number of transitions in and out of the classroom. Another option would be to provide push in therapy services to avoid transitioning in and out of the room.
  6. Sing songs or chants to signal transitions. Use the same songs each time so children can anticipate what is to happen next.
  7. Provide feedback about transitions. If a student does a good job transitioning explain to him/her what they did correctly. If changes need to be made offer suggestions of how to improve the transition the next time.
  8. As the student's skills improve during transitions, encourage the student to transition independently.
  9. Keep it simple with directions for the transition. One or two step motor commands should be effective and concise.
  10. Provide positive reinforcement for other students who complete transitions successfully. Students will learn from each other and model other behaviors.

**Want to add in movement break to your transitions?**

Sometimes adding in physical activity during transition time can be an excellent way to increase movement and have a brain break without interrupting class time. There are many different ways students can move around the classroom or from class to class. Here are a few suggestions for physically active classroom transition ideas.

Try walking at different speeds. Instruct the child to walk slowly, then increase the pace, then slow again constantly changing. The goal is to keep walking quietly without bumping into any peers when you change speeds.

Transition using different locomotor skills such as tip toes, walk sideways, or gallop slowly.

Get creative and be silly. Transition walking with your hands on your head, then your hips, then your knees.

Check out [Monster Movement Transitions](#). This digital download is a collection of 56 quick sensory motor movement cards. Just grab a card and perform the action when transitioning in the classroom (ie desk to circle time), in the hallway (ie classroom to therapy room) and at home (ie wake up activities, during TV commercial breaks, etc). Just print them out, cut apart and you are set to go, no equipment required! There are 30 cards with various movement activities and 26 cards that are animal actions for the letters A to Z.



## FREE BLENDS WORKSHEETS – MULTISENSORY LEARNING



Consonant blends have two or three letters whose sounds are pronounced individually and said quickly so they blend together. Here are 5 free blends worksheets with a multisensory approach. Students can practice scissor skills, pasting, drawing, handwriting, and sentence structure to learn new blends with these 5 free blends worksheets. You can download them for free at the bottom of this post.

### **Worksheet #1 – My Dr Blends**

The student has to draw a line connecting the picture to the correct word that starts with the dr blend.

### **Worksheet #2 – Cut and Sort**

Practicing scissor skills and pasting, the student has to sort dr and br blends.

### **Worksheet #3 – Say It, Trace It, Write It**

The student will practice saying the words, tracing the words, and writing the words. At the bottom of the page, the student will use scissors to cut words, build a sentence, and write the sentence.

### **Worksheet #4 – Draw and Write It**

Add in drawing practice. The student has to draw and write the dr blends. Again, at the bottom of the page, the student cuts, builds, and write a sentence.

### **Worksheet #5 – Early Finishers**

For early finishers, the student can pick three of the pictures, and write at least one sentence about each.

### **Get the Complete Initial Consonant Blends – Multisensory Worksheet Package**

The [Initial Consonant Blends – Multisensory Worksheet Package](#) created by school-based Occupational Therapist, Thia Triggs, includes fun worksheet tasks such as cut & paste, sorting, drawing, sentence construction, and writing to help students work on handwriting while improving reading, spelling and phonemic awareness.

Each Unit has 5 extra pages with fun writing prompts. Includes practice with 6 words for each two-letter blend and three words for each three-letter blend. That's 138 blend words, all with initial picture clues.

Details: The 119 page PDF digital document [Initial Consonant Blends – Multisensory Worksheet Package](#) will be delivered electronically immediately following payment.

[Download your FREE Blends Worksheets for Multi-sensory Learning](#)

## 10 COMMON MISTAKES PEDIATRIC THERAPY MENTORS MAKE



Pediatric therapy mentors have an exciting opportunity to become a leader in their field and to hone their clinical skills. However, this experience requires the investment of their time, energy, and resources, so it should not be taken lightly. To make mentorship a positive experience for both you and your mentee, here are 10 common mistakes to avoid that therapists from *Chicago Speech and Occupational Therapy* have found that mentors make in the field.

### **Mistake #1 – Trying to be your mentee's friend**

As a new mentor, you may feel the need to be friends with your mentee since you want your mentee to like you and relate to you. But keep in mind that this is a professional relationship.

You are a role model and mentor to this person. Keep the relationship professional to create mutual respect between you and your mentee.

### **Mistake #2 – Not providing clear expectations**

Be sure to provide clear expectations throughout the mentorship. This way your mentee knows what is expected of them at all times and this will allow for the mentorship to run smoothly.

### **Mistake #3 – Not setting weekly/monthly goals**

Provide your mentee with weekly and monthly goals. You can also collaborate with your mentee to have [them create their own goals](#). Having goals creates motivation and the feeling of success when those goals are met.

#### **Mistake #4 – Not making time to meet with your mentee**

Be sure to block off time for a meeting in your schedule and your mentee's schedule. It is important to have a set time to meet so you can go over the agenda, goals, growth, and competencies for the next week. It is also important for your mentee to have the time to reflect and ask any questions that they have had. If an in-person meeting is not possible, find a time you are both available to meet by phone.

#### **Mistake #5 – Being a poor role model**

As a mentor, you are the person your mentee looks up to and wants to be like. Be a role model and demonstrate how to be a professional clinician at your practice. Your mentee is learning from you, so set a good example for them.



#### **Mistake #6 – Not allowing mistakes**

Allowing and accepting mistakes is important for learning. Your mentee will make mistakes just as you did when you were a new clinician. Be supportive and coach your mentee through their mistakes and how to correct it for the next time.

#### **Mistake #7 – Not building a trusting relationship**

You should trust your mentee and your mentee should trust you. Maintain confidentiality with what your mentee shares with you. Be an active listener and provide support. By building trust, your mentee will be more open and vulnerable which will allow them to ask more questions and come to you with any issues that arise.

#### **Mistake #8 – You're too eager to provide solutions**

As a new mentor you may be excited to help your new mentee in any way you can and jump right in to giving them solutions to every issue that arises. Yes, you are there to guide your mentee, but they also have to learn to problem solve for themselves. You can ask them what they think an appropriate solution would be and provide assistance from there if needed.

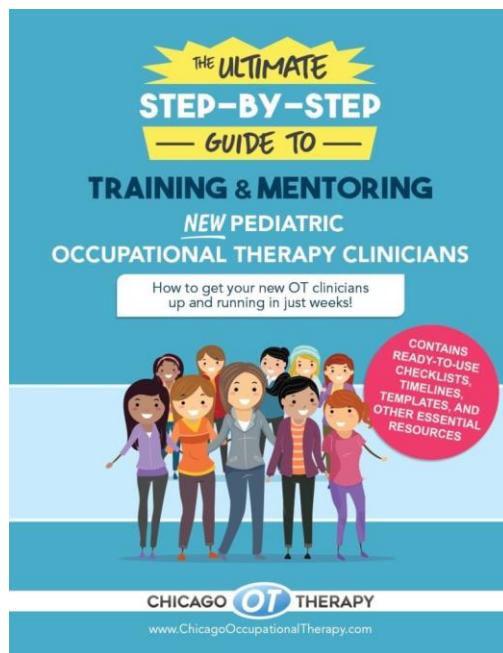
#### **Mistake #9 – Not tailoring to your mentee's learning style**

As a mentor, you will need to learn to tailor your guidance and teaching style to your mentee. Every person learns and takes criticism differently. People also learn at different paces. You need to get to know your mentee and how their mind works. Ask your mentee to share how they learn best so you can tailor your teaching methods to help them be a successful clinician.

### Mistake #10 – Not accepting feedback from the mentee

Yes, you are there to guide and provide feedback to your mentee, BUT it is as equally important for you ask for and accept feedback from your mentee. As a mentor, you are growing into a leader and a teacher. There is always room for growth, so be sure to listen to feedback from your mentee. This will help you learn how you can better support your mentee's specific learning needs. Having your mentee give you feedback also gives the mentee a sense of empowerment and allows them to have a voice in the process.

### Get Help with the Pediatric Occupational Therapy Training and Mentoring Guide



The [Pediatric Occupational Therapy Training and Mentoring Step By Step Guide](#) will help you expand your leadership skills, develop a new professional role, and make an impact on the future of the field.

Successful mentors will tell you there is significant work required for this role, but with the right tools, you can avoid feeling overwhelmed by the experience. This [Pediatric Occupational Therapy Training and Mentoring Guide](#) offers strategies and outlines action items to help you become the best effective mentor possible.

The goal is for you to feel adequately prepared to support your mentee throughout their journey as a new clinician.

This post was written by occupational therapists from [Chicago Occupational Therapy](#).

## HAND MOTOR FUNCTION IN UNILATERAL CEREBRAL PALSY – BENEFITS OF PEER INTERACTION



Therapeutic activities for children with unilateral cerebral palsy are often suggested to help improve hand motor function in children with unilateral cerebral palsy. A recent study indicated that there are benefits to child-to-child interaction when it comes to hand motor function in children with unilateral cerebral palsy.

### **What did the study investigate?**

This study was published in *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology*. The researchers evaluated the feasibility and effectiveness of a home-based, action observation treatment (AOT) that encouraged child-to-child interaction to improve hand motor function in 20 children (average age 6 years, 7 months) with unilateral cerebral palsy.

The children participated in 20 sessions where they observed and imitated a wizard performing magic tricks that involved dexterity followed by a child-to-child live video session to practice the same exercise.

Data was collected one month before, at baseline and at the end of treatment on hand motor skills, spasticity, muscle strength, visual analogue scale, and global impression of change.

### **What did the results say on hand motor function?**

After data analysis, the researchers reported the following:

- improvements in global hand-motor and bimanual skills from the time between baseline and the end of treatment.

- significant correlation between motor improvement and difference in hand motor skills relative to the peer.

It was concluded that action observation treatment associated with child-to-child interaction effectively improved hand motor function in unilateral cerebral palsy. Interaction with a more capable peer increased the chances of a positive outcome in hand motor function.

#### **Resource for Bimanual Skills for Children with Unilateral Cerebral Palsy**



### **Therapeutic PLAY Activities for Children**

*Available for immediate download at [YourTherapySource.com](http://YourTherapySource.com)*

Are you a therapist, teacher, or parent in search of creative, easy to set up, therapeutic activities for children with unilateral cerebral palsy? [Therapeutic PLAY Activities for Children](#) includes 100 play activity pages and 12 tip sheets to encourage the development of fine motor skills, bimanual skills, rolling, crawling, tall kneeling, standing balance and cruising. [FIND OUT MORE](#).

#### **Reference:**

Nuara, A., Avanzini, P., Rizzolatti, G., & Fabbri-Destro, M. (2019). Efficacy of a home-based platform for child-to-child interaction on hand motor function in unilateral cerebral palsy. *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology*.

#### **Read more on this topic**

[BENEFITS OF STRUCTURED BIMANUAL SKILL PRACTICE](#)

[BIMANUAL DAILY ACTIVITIES – INTERESTS INFLUENCE OUTCOME IN CHILDREN](#)

[CIMT, BIMANUAL THERAPY AND OT HOME PROGRAMS](#)