


Welcome
to



Fine Motor Handbook

A guide to buttoning, zipping,
and in-hand manipulation activities

A vertical decorative bar on the left side of the page, featuring a blue geometric pattern of overlapping triangles and polygons in various shades of blue.

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Content compiled by Annie Elder, OTS
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About Blue Bird Day

Blue Bird Day's mission is to champion children to reach their full potential by providing individualized therapeutic care in the most natural setting.

Blue Bird Day is designed to foster socialization, sensory regulation and pre-academic learning in children ages 2–7 years in therapeutic rotations that simulate a preschool and kindergarten setting.

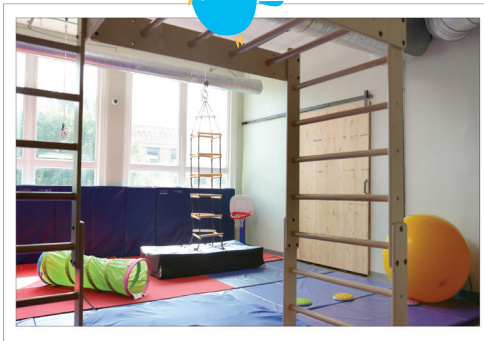
Blue Bird Day therapeutic programs are ideal for children with autism spectrum disorder, sensory processing disorders, articulation and phonological disorders, ADHD, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, feeding disorders and many other developmental disorders.



Dr. Laura Hawkesworth Mraz
Founder and CEO

Our Facility

Every detail of Blue Bird Day's facilities was designed with the child's needs in mind. The school-like environment promotes the child's participation and engagement in therapy outcomes.



- Themed Therapy Rooms
- Minimalist Classrooms
- Nut Free Kitchen Facilities
- Innovative Sensory Retreat Rooms
- Child Friendly Bathrooms
- Interactive Sensorimotor Gyms
- Quiet Rooms For Breaks
- Individual Cubbies

The Blue Bird Day Team



Blue Bird Day's therapists are among the most highly trained and experienced in Chicago. Our compassionate therapists practice a relationship-based and family centered approach, provide parent training, and work together on goals. They also collaborate with each other to create individualized intensive treatment plans and goals that matter to you and your child.

The team is comprised of

- Certified Early Childhood Development Specialists
- Speech-Language Pathologists
- Occupational Therapists
- Physical Therapists
- Licensed Clinical Social Workers
- Registered Behavior Technicians
- Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA)
- Registered Dietician Nutritionists

Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide fun, creative ideas to target the fine motor skills of buttoning, zippering and in-hand manipulation that are necessary for independence in everyday life activities. This handbook also includes information on typical development of these skills, as well as activity ideas to help your child prepare for these more complex, coordinated movements. Materials and instructions are also included!

Buttoning

Achieving independence with dressing typically takes four years of practice. Learning to undress typically comes before learning to dress. Dressing requires children to use a variety of performance skills and patterns to meet the unique demands of the activity. They need to know where their bodies are in space and how body parts relate while they use visual and kinesthetic systems to guide arm and leg movements.

Typical Developmental Sequence for Buttoning

Age (Yrs)	Buttoning Skills
2 1/2	Unbuttons large buttons
3	Buttons large front buttons
3 1/2	Buttons series of three or four buttons
6	Buttons back buttons

Pre-Buttoning Skills

- Functional range of motion in hands
- Hand, upper extremity, and core strength
- Pincer/grasping skills
- Visual motor skills
- Visual perceptual skills
- Bilateral coordination

Preparatory Activities

- Squeeze silly putty or a squishy ball to increase strength
- Pick out "treasures" hidden in Theraputty or Play-doh to increase hand strength
- String beads to increase visual motor skills, visual-perceptual, and grasping skills
- Pick up small items such as cheerios, raisins or puffs to increase pinching/grasping skills
- Have your client lay on his/her belly during activities to increase trunk strength
- Wheelbarrow walks to increase hand strength and movement in hands



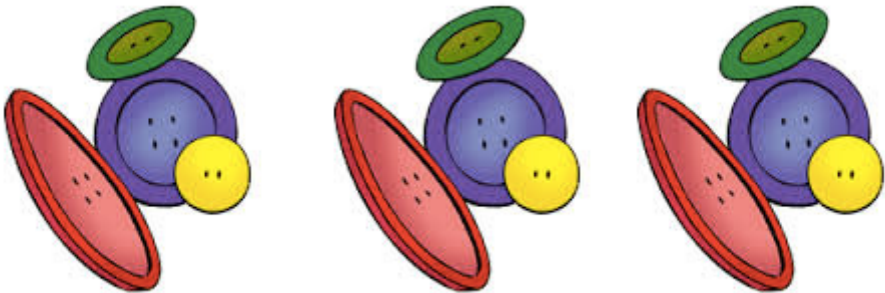
Buttoning

Pre-Buttoning Skills

- Flat, large buttons
- Buttons contrast in color with garment
- Buttons with shanks
- Buttons sewn on loosely
- Front buttons first, proceeding to side and back buttons

Learning to Button

- Practice putting things through slots, starting with a piggy bank and other narrow slots to push pennies or buttons through
- Push things through slots where your client can see and handle it, as it goes in one side and comes out the other
- Lace cards and string beads to build the concept of pushing through and pulling out
- To get extra fabric out of the way, create a strip of buttons and button holes, or cut off the panel of buttons, button holes and the collar off of an old shirt
- Try “backwards chaining” - this is when you model the steps in the process and the child does the last step, then the last 2 steps and so forth, until they have mastered it all
- When buttoning with the garment on the body, it is often easier to align the buttons at the bottom of the shirt and button from bottom to top
- Have your client button in front of a mirror (this is especially helpful for managing the top buttons)



Button Food

SANDWICH



Materials

- Felt pieces with button holes
 - 4 – light brown (bread)
 - 2 – dark brown (meat)
 - 2 – yellow (cheese)
 - 2 – red (tomato)
 - 2 – green (lettuce)
- Thread
- Ribbon/Elastic
- Button

Instructions

1. Create felt burger slices
2. Make a small snip across the center of the felt slices (make sure it's wide enough for your button to pass through)
3. Sew the ribbon to the bottom bread slice
4. Sew a button to the end of a ribbon or piece of elastic
5. Button on the food pieces and have fun

Resource: <http://therapyfunzone.net/blog/i-have-button-food-and-im-ready-to-play/>

Button Food

SANDWICH COOKIES



Materials

- Felt circles with button holes
 - 4 – black (cookies)
 - 8 – white (Thread)
- Thread
- Ribbon
- Button

Instructions

1. Create sandwich cookie felt pieces
2. Make a small snip across the center of the felt slices (make sure it's wide enough for your button to pass through)
3. Sew the ribbon to the bottom sandwich cookie
4. Sew a button to the end of a ribbon or piece of elastic
5. Button on the food pieces and have fun

Button Food

PIZZA



Materials

- Felt pieces with button holes:
 - 2 large circles – light brown (pizza crust), red (pizza sauce)
 - Various colors cut into pizza topping shapes (mushrooms, cheese, pepperoni)
- Thread
- Button

Instructions

1. Create felt pizza pieces
2. Make a small snip across the center of the felt slices (make sure it's wide enough for your button to pass through)
3. Sew the buttons loosely to the pizza crust
4. Button on the food pieces and have fun

Button Pouch



Materials

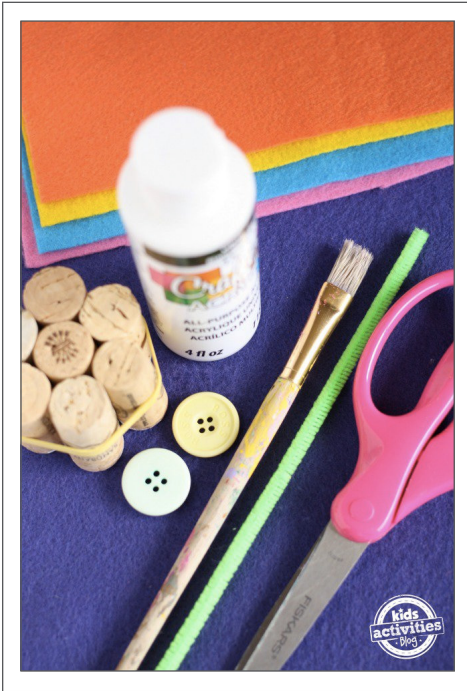
- Felt sheets of multiple colors (the thicker, the better)
- Colored buttons
- Colored embroidery thread

Instructions

1. Sew the buttons of your choice to one piece of felt
2. Sew a second piece of felt to the back, forming a single panel
3. Sew a third piece of felt to the back of the panel on three sides, forming a pocket
4. Cut out simple shapes (e.g., circles and rectangles)
5. Fold each shape in half and cut a small slit into the center of each

Resource: <http://alittlelearningfortwo.blogspot.com/2010/10/button-up.html>

Felt Flower Button Snake



Materials

- Colorful felt (a stiffer felt holds its shape better and is easier to cut)
- Pipe cleaner (1)
- Large buttons (2)
- Sewing scissors
- Corks (7)
- Rubber band

Flowers can be easily substituted for different shapes and objects to help increase motivation!

Instructions

1. Create felt flowers (at least 10)
 - a. Secure 7 corks together with a rubber band (pictured at right)
 - b. Trace around corks to create a flower
 - c. Repeat 9 times
 - d. Cut out flowers with a sharp pair of fabric scissors
2. Fold each flower in half and make a small snip across the center of the flower (make sure it's wide enough for your button to pass through)
3. Poke the piper cleaner through a hole in the button and back down through a second hole, then fold over the loose end
4. Repeat step 3 at the other end of the pipe cleaner

Resource: <http://kidsactivitiesblog.com/53044/felt-flower-button-snake>

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Button Chains



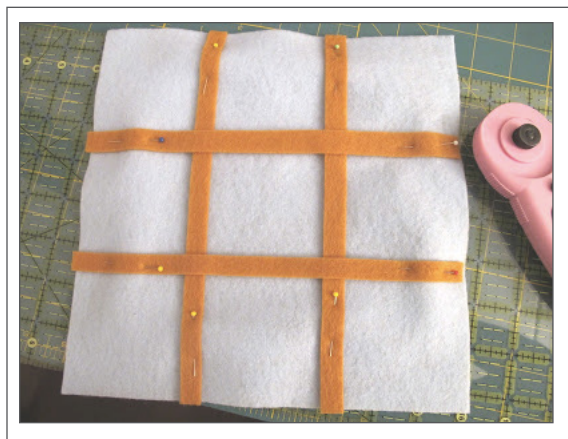
Materials

- 3 sheets of different colored felt (a stiffer felt holds its shape better and is easier to cut)
- Large buttons (15)
- Sewing scissors
- Thread

Instructions

1. Cut out 15 felt rectangles (3 colors, 5 rectangles per color)
2. Sew a button to one end of the felt rectangle
3. Fold the opposite end up about an inch and make a small snip across the center of the fold (make sure it's wide enough for your button to pass through)
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 for each felt rectangle

Button Tic Tac Toe



Materials

- Felt in various colors
- Large buttons (9)
- Yarn
- Needle
- Glue

Instructions

1. Start out with a square piece of felt, size 9" x 9"
2. Cut four strips of contrast felt for the lines, about 1/4" wide and the length of the board
3. Use a ruler to help place the lines so that your board has nine equal squares, then pin the lines and hand sew, machine sew, or glue the lines onto the board
4. Sew or glue a button to the center of each square on the board
5. Think of a theme for your board and create two different shapes for the pieces (you will need five of each shape)
6. Use scissors to cut the felt into each shape (double up the felt for a sturdier piece)
7. Fold each shape in half and make a small snip across the center of the fold

Resource: <http://thenewnew.blogspot.com/2011/03/tutorial-felt-tic-tac-toe-boards.html#sthash.rkIOzeAj.dpuf>

Zippering



Typical Developmental Sequence for Zippering

Age (Yrs)	Zippering Skills
3	Zips and unzips jacket once on track
3 1/2	Unzips zipper on jacket, separating zipper
4	Zips jacket zipper
6	Closes back zipper

Pre-Zippering Skills

- Functional range of motion in hands
- Hand, upper extremity, and core strength
- Pinching/grasping skills
- Visual motor skills (eye-hand coordination)
- Visual perceptual skills
- Bilateral coordination
- Initiation, sequencing, motor planning, and execution

Preparatory Activities

- Pick out “treasures” hidden in Theraputty or Play-doh to increase hand strength
- String beads to increase visual motor skills, visual-perceptual, and grasping skills
- Pick up small items such as cheerios, raisins or puffs to increase pinching/grasping skills
- Have your client lay on his/her belly during activities to increase trunk strength
- Wheelbarrow walks to increase hand strength and movement in hands
- 2 or 3-step obstacle course to develop ability to initiate, sequence, and execute
- Trace figure 8s with index finger to improve ability to cross midline

Zippering



Learning to Zipper

- Practice zipping/unzipping attached zippers first, such as those that are on backpacks, purses and pants
- For “separated” zippers, such as those on jackets, show child that there is a slot under the zipper by passing a pipe cleaner through it, then have the child practice pushing and pulling the pipe cleaner through that narrow slot
- Contrasting color sides may be helpful for some: get 2 sets of zippers in different colors (make sure they are the same length and material) and switch the sides for color contrast
- Try “backwards chaining” - this is when you model the steps in the process and the child does the last step, then the last 2 steps and so forth, until they have mastered it all

Design Features for Easier Zippering

- Nylon zippers (easier than metal)
- Zipper pulls
- Zipper tabs or rings
- Hook and loop tape instead of zipper while pull up zipper tab with other hand
- Longer zippers
- Front zippers first, proceeding to side and back zippers

Adaptations for Zippering

- Sit to gain stability
- Stand to keep jacket zipper flat
- Hold zipper taut with one hand at bottom of zipper
- For side zipper, lean against wall to hold bottom of zipper

Zippering



Materials

- Piece of cardboard
- 10 zippers (different sizes and colors)
- Hot glue gun (or strong glue)
- Scissors

Instructions

1. Cut out a piece of cardboard in your desired size and shape (this will be used as the base for the zipper board)
2. Align zippers on the board in desired positions, incorporating a variety of directions
3. You may need to snip the tail ends of each zipper to ensure it lies flat (see picture in upper left-hand corner)
4. Using a hot glue gun (or strong glue), run a length of glue on either side of the zipper (avoid the middle area as this will be separated when the zipper is opened)

Helpful Hints

- Use as little glue as possible
- Work quickly, but carefully – the glue will dry fast!
- Stick to the plan – know where the zipper should go prior to adding glue

Other Zippering Activities and Ideas

- Practice zippering with dress up clothes
- Practice zippering clothing on dolls or other toys
- Practice zippering on Ziploc bags
- Make a video so your client can practice at home

Resource: <http://laughingkidslearn.com/diy-zipper-board-for-kids>

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In-Hand Manipulation

In-hand manipulation is the ability to move small objects around in your hand without help from the other hand. In-hand manipulation is a skill that is important for many school-based and self-care activities, including moving a pencil, erasing, and fine motor tasks like managing buttons and zippers, coins, and other small items that fit in the hand.

In-hand manipulation typically begins to develop at 18 months, with the most significant skill development occurring between 2 and 2½ years.

There are three major components to in-hand manipulation: translation, shift, and rotation.



Skills	Definition	Functional Example
Finger-to-Palm Translation	Movement of an object from the fingers to the palm	Picking up a coin and moving it to the palm
Palm-to-Finger Translation	Movement of an object from the palm to the fingertips	Moving a coin from the palm to the fingertips to insert it into a vending machine
Shift	Slight adjustment of an object on or by the finger pads	Adjusting a pencil up and down in your hand
Simple Rotation	Turning or rolling an object 90 degrees or less with the fingers moving as a unit	Unscrewing a toothpaste lid
Complex Rotation	Turning an object more than 90 degrees using isolated finger and thumb movements	Turning a paper clip

In-Hand Manipulation



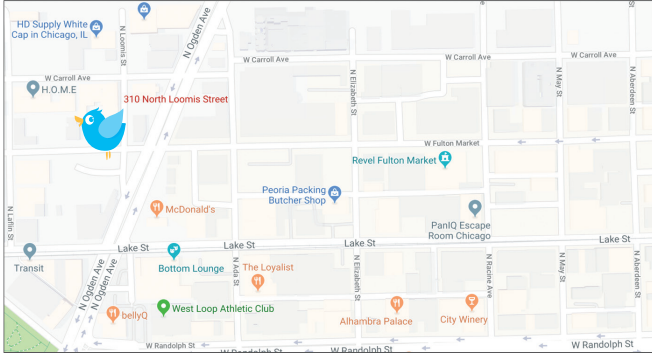
In-Hand Manipulation Activities

- Lite Brite
- Spinning tops
- Roll play dough into small balls using only your fingertips
- Tear newspaper into strips, crumble it, and stuff an art project
- Use tweezers to pick up small items - this works on the intrinsic muscles of the hands
- Lacing activities
- Coin or button matching, sorting, and stacking
- Small pegboards, tucking extra pegs into the palm of the hand (you can use cut up straws and play dough, too)
- Drop small items into bottles with a small opening
- Pick up beads from the floor and drop into ice cube or letter trays
- Push coins into a piggy bank
- Press buttons into a slit cut in the lid of a plastic tub
- Pick-up sticks
- Twist lids on/off water bottles
- Beading

Our Locations

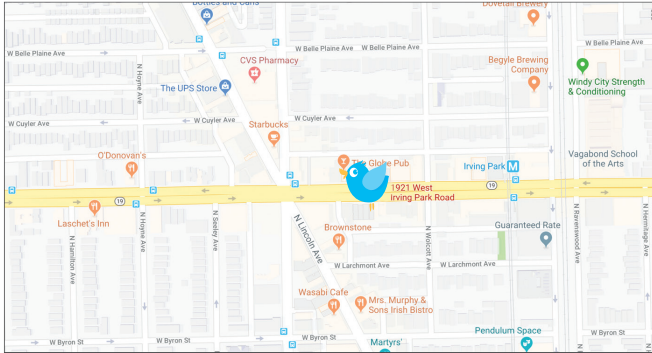
West Loop

310 N Loomis St, Chicago, IL 60607



Northcenter

1921 W Irving Park Rd, Chicago, IL 60613



Wheaton

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