

Busy Fingers Garden Party

A hands-on lesson designed to strengthen the small muscles in the hands and fingers of Allegra, Viviana, and Florence through fun, garden-themed play.

Materials Needed:

- Play-Doh in various colors (green, brown, pink, etc.)
 - Child-safe tweezers or tongs
 - Small, soft items like colorful pompoms ("seeds")
 - An empty egg carton or small pots/bowls
 - Pipe cleaners
 - Large, colorful beads with wide holes and/or cut-up plastic straws
 - Green construction paper
 - Child-safe scissors
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Lesson Plan Details

Subject: Fine Motor Skills, Creative Arts

Students: Allegra, Viviana, and Florence (Age 3)

Time Allotment: 30-40 minutes

1. Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the children will be able to:

- Use a pincer grasp (thumb and forefinger) to pick up and place small objects.
- Manipulate play-doh by rolling it into "worms" and pinching it into shapes.
- Use both hands together to thread beads onto a pipe cleaner.
- Hold child-safe scissors properly and make small snips into paper.

2. Lesson Sequence and Activities

Part 1: Waking Up Our Garden Fingers (5 minutes)

- **Goal:** To warm up the hand muscles and introduce the theme.
- **Activity:** Gather the children and sing the "Open, Shut Them" fingerplay song together. Encourage them to stretch their fingers wide and squeeze them tight.
- **Teacher Talk:** "Great job! Our fingers are all awake and ready to play in our pretend garden. First, we need to plant some seeds!"

Part 2: Planting the Pom-Pom Seeds (10 minutes)

- **Goal:** To practice the pincer grasp and hand-eye coordination.
 - **Activity:**
 1. Set out the egg carton (the "garden plot") and a bowl of pompoms ("magic seeds").
 2. Show the children how to use the child-safe tweezers to pick up one pompom at a time and "plant" it into one of the egg carton cups.
 3. Let each child have a turn planting their seeds. They can also use just their thumb and
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forefinger if the tweezers are too challenging at first.

- **Teacher Talk:** "Allegra, can you plant a red seed? Viviana, let's see you use your strong fingers to pick up a blue one! Florence, look how carefully you placed that seed in its spot!"

Part 3: Making Wiggly Worms and Snails (10 minutes)

- **Goal:** To build hand and finger strength.
- **Activity:**
 1. Give each child a piece of brown or pink Play-Doh.
 2. Show them how to roll the dough on the table or between their palms to make a long "wiggly worm."
 3. Next, show them how to curl their worm up into a "snail" shape. Encourage pinching, squishing, and flattening.
- **Teacher Talk:** "Let's make some friends for our garden! Roll, roll, roll your dough. Look, a long worm! Now, let's curl him up into a tiny snail shell."

Part 4: Snipping the Grass & Making Flower Necklaces (10 minutes)

- **Goal:** To introduce scissor skills and practice bilateral coordination (using both hands together).
- **Activity:**
 1. **Snipping Grass:** Give each child a strip of green construction paper. While holding the paper for them, demonstrate how to hold the child-safe scissors and make small snips along the edge to create "grass."
 2. **Flower Necklaces:** Provide pipe cleaners and a bowl of large beads or cut straws. Show them how to hold the pipe cleaner in one hand and thread the "flowers" (beads) on with the other to create a beautiful necklace or bracelet.
- **Teacher Talk:** "Let's give the grass a little trim! Snip, snip, snip. Now, let's make some flowers for our garden. Can you push the bead all the way down the fuzzy stem?"

3. Assessment (Observational)

During the activities, observe and mentally note the following for each child:

- **Grasp:** Are they using a pincer grasp for small items or a whole-hand grasp?
- **Manipulation:** Can they successfully roll the play-doh and make snips with the scissors?
- **Coordination:** Are they able to use both hands to thread the beads?
- **Engagement:** How long do they stay focused on each task? Which activity do they enjoy most?

4. Differentiation and Inclusivity

- **For Extra Support:**
 - Use larger pompoms that are easier to grab.
 - Forget the tweezers and focus on just using fingers.
 - The parent/teacher can use a hand-over-hand technique to guide scissor use.
 - Use pipe cleaners, as their stiffness makes them easier to thread than string.
- **For an Extra Challenge:**
 - Use smaller beads or ask the child to create a color pattern with the beads (e.g., red, blue, red, blue).
 - Encourage them to try and cut a continuous line across the paper instead of just snips.
 - Ask them to sort the pom-poms by color before planting them.