

***Handy Hints for Building the Two Sides of the Hand
(The Skill Side and The Power Side)
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What is the “skill side of the hand?”

In order to accomplish fast and efficient handwriting movements, a child needs to develop the “Radial Side” of her hand: the thumb, index and middle fingers.” This allows for dexterity, which is needed for efficient fine motor control and thumb opposition with handwriting.

What is the “power side of the hand?” The “Ulnar Side” of the hand includes the ring and little fingers and is necessary for stability and grip. These two fingers provide stability for the other three during handwriting, allowing for fluid movements across the page.

What are some fun activities that can help a child develop “separation of the two sides of the hand?”

1. **Thread-A-Way.** Designing works of art can be as easy as gathering up a shoelace and a box of Cheerios or Fruit Loops! Of course, plastic or wooden beads work well, too!
2. **Tuck Them Under.** Coloring projects can be enhanced to work on the two sides of the hand by having your child tuck a piece of tissue or a cotton ball in the palm of her hand, keeping it there with her ring and little finger. To add to the challenge, tape a piece of paper to the wall and have her create her artwork standing up! Either way, she is strengthening the Ulnar Side!
3. **Saving For A Rainy Day.** Gather up plastic containers and cut a slit in the tops that will allow your child to drop in coins, checkers or other small objects. Remind him to use just his thumb and first two fingers as he picks them up and drops them in. Tweezers are a great way to add a fun challenge!
4. **You Tear Me Up!** Ripping up construction paper into small pieces is an excellent way to separate the two sides of the hand. Just be sure that your child is tucking those last two fingers into his palm. Use the pieces to make a collage or a “stained glass window.” For the latter, you can add an eyedropper to sprinkle water over the paper to create the “glass.”
5. **What a Cut-Up!** Using scissors serves a dual purpose...separation of the two sides of the hand and the development of scissoring skills! Be sure to offer your child age-appropriate scissors so that she will be able to manipulate them efficiently in order to develop good fine motor skill habits. Bad habits are hard to break!
6. **Rolling In The Dough.** The grand old staple of hand separation is clay or play dough. Design people or fun objects by rolling the dough into small balls using the fingers. Again, be sure that those last two fingers are tucked in!
7. **Let Your Fingers Do The Talking.** In lieu of finger puppets, orchestrate a playful conversation with your child using your thumb and first two fingers (with the other two tucked in) as the characters in your story. You can make up your own or reenact your child’s favorite book.
8. **Pick-Up Straws.** Little hands need bigger Pick-Up Sticks – and straws are the perfect size. Try using straws that are different colors to help her to focus on her hand skills; and remember to model the “Three Fingers out – Two Fingers In” hand skill!
9. **That’s A Sticky Situation.** Stickers are always a fun way to develop hand separation skills. Precise games that require the stickers to be placed over a picture or ones that are performed on a vertical surface enhance the benefits of sticker fun.
10. **Sponge Fun.** Cut sponges into small squares about an inch wide and have your child draw on a blackboard using the first three fingers...and of course, tucking the other two in!