

Fine Motor Skills Checklist - Milestones 2 to 6 years

This checklist may be used as a guideline to establish when important fine motor skills are developed in children between two and six years of age. If a child's fine motor skills are delayed for their age then it is very important to intervene as early as possible.

2-3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prior to three years holds the pencil with their whole hand e.g.  <i>Palmar Supinate Grasp</i> <i>Radial Cross Palmar Grasp</i>• At two years can snip paper with scissors• It is common for the child to alternate hands, some children have a preferred hand at three years• By three years holds the pencil with the thumb and all fingers e.g.  <i>Digital Pronate Grasp</i> <i>Brush Grasp</i>• Basic scribbling using the whole arm• Not yet able to draw a person• At three years is able to copy — ○ symbols from examples• By three years can use a fork and fasten large buttons
3-4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Holds the pencil between the pads of the first three fingers and learns to hold it closer to the tip• Greater awareness of the boundaries when colouring in, colours up and down using wrist movements• Draws a person with three body parts e.g. head, eyes, mouth• Cuts across a sheet of paper, progressing to keeping on the line• By four years can copy + from examples• Most children have developed a preferred hand by four years

<p>4-5 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holds the pencil in a tripod grasp with the pads of the thumb and pointer finger, pencil rests on the side of the end of the middle finger, last two fingers are tucked into the palm  <p><i>Static Tripod Grasp</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From ages four to six years begins to manipulate the pencil using tiny bending and stretching movements of the finger joints known as the dynamic tripod grasp • Can also copy / □ \ ✕ from examples • Cuts out a circle and later a square, cutting strokes become smoother and more accurate • By five years can draw a picture of a person with eight or more parts e.g. head, hair, eyes, nose, mouth, arms, body, legs • By five years can touch the tip of the thumb to each fingertip, in sequence within the same hand • By the end of five years (if not formally taught to form letters) can print own first name without a model, letters may not be correctly formed
<p>5-6 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colouring becomes neater, within the boundaries with smoother more consistent strokes • Manipulates objects within the same hand e.g. picks up and adjusts the pencil with only the preferred hand prior to drawing or colouring without using the other hand to assist • Can copy △ and ✕ closer to six years (from examples) • Drawing of a person becomes more detailed with 12 parts • Cutting with scissors becomes proficient at about six years • Can cut with a knife and tie shoe laces with a simple knot • If instruction is provided, develops consistent letter formations with increasing awareness of the correct starting points

Note: Children's brains and bodies are very complex and many factors play a part in influencing the development of their fine motor skills. For example in the Fine Motor Skills Checklist above, the ability to draw a person is also dependent on a child's cognitive (thinking) skills, and their ability to copy shapes is also related to their vision and visual processing skills.