

34 THINGS FOR "LITTLE HANDS" TO DO

We know it's usually easier to show children how to do something rather than just explaining it. Often when you're asked to help work with children and they have "nothing to do" or they're bored, you may have to provide the action. Here, to help you get through those days, are 34 fun and creative things to occupy their time.

A Few Energy -Users:

1. **"Simon says" exercises:** Play this follow-the-leader game using exercises such as: touch your toes, somersaults, running and/or jumping in place, hopping on one foot, knee-bends, sit-ups. See how fast you can do them.
2. **Let's Pretend:** Let your imagination go and pretend you are something or someone else. How would you look and act? Imagine you are: a typewriter, a chair, a fish on a line, popcorn popping, bubble gum, autumn leaves falling, percolating coffeepot, happy butterfly, weeping willow, spaghetti boiling, a jump rope, a pyramid.
3. **Statues:** Children may skip, gallop, tiptoe, walk (or whatever) around the room. When stop is called out they must stop immediately, holding whatever position they are in when the "stop" is called. Count slowly to 10, they can not move at all in a statue state. Then say "go" again. (Holding an unnatural pose is an excellent muscle-toning exercise.)
4. **Jump the River:** Lay two parallel lengths of string on the floor, making lines about two feet apart. Line the children on one side of the "river" and have them jump over so they don't get wet. (Adjust the distance between the "river banks" to fit the capabilities of the children.)
5. **Jack Be Nimble:** Ask each children to stand behind any small object (a book, small toy, etc.) placed on the floor. Pretend the book on the floor is a candlestick. Say the nursery rhyme, "Jack Be Nimble" together. One the last time, jump with both feet together over the candlestick. (To add variety, jump backward over the candlestick or sideways, or combination:

Jack (jump forward) be nimble (jump backward)
Jack (jump to one side) be quick (jump backward)
Jack (jump forward) jump over (jump backward)
The candle (jump to one side) stick (jump to other side)
6. **Ankle Race:** Line children up in a row facing the same way. Bend over and hold one ankle with each hand. On the starting word, GO, run to the tree (or mark) and back, holding your ankles all the way.

ANIMAL WALKS

7. **Kangaroo:** Squat down on your heels. Now spring up, jumping forward with both feet at once. Next, sink back into a squatting position.
8. **Duck:** Squat down on your heel. Tuck you hands under your arms to make wings. Stay down on your heels. Stay squatting down and swing one foot ahead, shifting your weight to that foot. Then swing the other foot forward, shifting weight to that foot and so on, to look just like a waddling duck.
9. **Dog:** Bend from your waist until your hands touch the floor. Keeping your knees as stiff as possible, run forward on "all fours".
10. **Crab:** Sit on the floor. Bend your knees and put your feet flat on the floor. Place your hands, palms down, on the floor behind you. Now raise yourself so only your hands and feet are touching the floor. You can walk forward, backward, or sideways like a crab in this position.
11. **Seal:** Lie face down on the floor. Raise yourself up on your hands and pull yourself forward with your hands, like a seal down with his flippers. Your legs and feet will drag along behind, like the seal's tail.
12. **Elephant:** Clasp your hands in front of you to make the elephant's long trunk. Bend forward from your waist. Now walk forward, taking big heavy steps like an elephant. Swing your trunk slowly back and forth as you walk.

DO WHAT I DO: Directions are given for a variety of big muscle building exercises. To maintain children's interest, use several different exercises, one after the other, for the exercise period.

13. **Run In Place:** Stand in one place, but move your legs up and down as if you were running. Lift your knees as high as you can.
14. **Stretch tall/Shrink small:** Stretch up your hands and stand on your tiptoes. Reach high and make yourself as tall as you possibly can. Now squat down on your heels. Tuck yourself into a tight little ball. Make yourself as small as you possibly can. Stretch tall, shrink small, shrink small, etc.
15. **Leaning:** How far can you lean? Put your feet slightly apart and put your hands on your waist. Leans forward as far as you possibly can without falling or taking a step. Now lean to one side. Lean way over. Now lean back as far as you possibly can. Next lean to the other side. Lean (front), lean (side), lean (back), lean (side), etc.
16. **Fat and Thin:** Put your feet as far apart as you possibly can. Put your arms straight out from your sides. Stretch out and make yourself as wide and fat as you possibly can. Now bring your feet tightly together and put your arms tightly to your sides. Make yourself as thin as you possibly can. Grow fat, grow thin, grow fat, grow thin, etc.
17. **One Legged Hop:** Bend on leg up behind you. Hold that ankle with your hand. Hop up and down on the other foot. You can hop all around the room if you wish. Now switch and hold the other ankle with your other hand and let's go hopping again.
18. **Tiptoe:** Stand tall on your tiptoes. Tiptoe around in a little circle. Tiptoe backward one, two, three steps. Tiptoe forward one, two, three steps. Pretend you are sneaking up on someone. Tiptoe as you sneak around your chair (or across the room, etc.).
19. **Leg Swing:** Stand on one foot and put your hands on your hips. Keep your knee stiff and swing your leg like a big, big swing backward, and forward. Keep your leg always moving in a smooth swing back and forth, and back and forth, etc.
20. **Rag Doll:** Pretend you are a floppy Rag Doll. Let's see you flop your big floppy arms. Bend over from your waist and angle your arms straight down. Now wiggle and flop your head, arms, and shoulders. Show me how you think a floppy Rag Doll would walk. How do you think a Rag Doll would skip? How do you think a Rag Doll would hop?
21. **Tin Soldier:** Make yourself stiff and straight. Put your hands down to your sides. Let's all march like stiff Tin Soldiers. Ready? One, two, three, four, etc. (You can combine Rag Doll and Tin Soldier using each in the same game.)

FINGER GAMES: Children enjoy finger games, correlating verses or songs with finger and hand motions. Not only are those games fun, but they also help children learn to direct and control their finger movements. Your public librarian can also help you locate books giving finger game directions.

22. **Open/Shut:** Put your hands up in front of you. Spread your fingers as far apart as you can and stretch your fingers to make them as long as you possibly can. Now shut your hands and make tight, tight fists. Let's try that several times. Open. Shut. Open.
23. **Play the Piano:** Let's pretend our tables are pianos. Hold your fingers on your table as if you were playing the piano. First we'll play some very soft music. (Demonstrate moving your fingers lightly, touching the finger tips gently to the table). Now let's play some very loud music. (Demonstrate moving your fingers, touching your finger tips to the table with a very heavy, firm touch). Now we'll play some very slow music. (Demonstrate moving fingers very slowly on the imaginary keyboard). Now we'll play some very fast music. (Demonstrate moving fingers quickly across the keyboard). In all exercises, stress moving the fingers up and down independently from each other. The object is to exercise individual finger muscles. If children keep their fingers in one constant curled position and merely raise and lower their entire hands, the desired exercise is not accomplished.

GAMES

24. **Butterfly Lady:** Draw an hourglass shape along your nose with eyeliner or eyebrow pencil; that's the butterfly body. Draw wings on your cheeks with blusher and eyeshadow shades. Make antennas, from the bridge of your nose to your forehead, with eyebrow pencil.
25. **Hideaway House:** Set four chairs back to back, a short distance apart, to form a square. Drape a large blanket or sheet over the whole works and you've produced a house. Another way to make a house is to drape a blanket over a table.

Several children may enjoy playing in the house together, but you should honor the request of the child who wants "solitary confinement". This works well for teaching about a tent and the lesson being taught inside the tent.
26. **ABC Memory Game:** The first player starts by saying, "I'm going to market and I'm going to buy _____," filling the blank with something that starts with an "A" like apples or apricots. Second player repeats that and adds something beginning with a "B". Each time, you must repeat all of the previous items in order and add the next letter in the alphabet. If you forget a word or get any in the wrong order, you're out of the game.
27. **The Marble Game:** Tape a piece of cardboard (about the size of typing paper) to the long edge of an egg carton, making a ramp up to the egg cups. Assign point values to each egg cup according to its positions. Roll marble up the ramp into the cups; points are scored by the number of marbles that go into each cup.
28. **My Visit to Earth:** Pretend you're from outer space. You just landed in your house on earth. Explore it the way a space creature would, depending on what world you come from, what seems funny or unnecessary. What would you think different objects were for?
29. **Tape A Tale:** Imagine you're having a conversation with an animal, real or imagined (your dog or a fire-eating dragon) and record your conversation on a tape recorder. Do both voices. Then play it back and see how the two of you sound.
30. **Write Your Own Book:** From old magazines, cut out pictures of cats, dogs, jungle animals, flowers, birds, whatever you want, and paste randomly on sheets of plain paper. Staple sheets together to form a book. Then make up a funny story using the pictures as illustrations. Write parts of the story on each page under the picture, the way a real book is made.
31. **Pasta Pizzazz:** You can make a necklace or bracelet with pasta. You'll need: pasta (macaroni with holes, rigatoni, or any other that can be strung), string or yarn, paint or food coloring. All you have to do is string the uncooked pasta, alternating different shapes if you have them. For color, dip in food coloring. Or paint, using tempera paint; let dry thoroughly (about 2 hours) before stringing.
32. **Paper-sack Puppet:** Take a small paper lunch bag and pieces of scrap paper or materials. Design a face on the paper sack. Let the children's imaginations run wild.
33. **Paper Chains:** (Paper chains are trite but young children do enjoy making them and it provides good manipulative exercise.)
Children will need paste and a number of narrow paper strips. Take one strip of paper and bend it to make a circle and paste the ends together. Take a second strip and slip it through the circle you just made. Bend it to make another circle and paste the ends together. Keep going in this way until your chain is as long as you want it.
34. **Thumbkins:** Fingerprint an animal. Using a stamp pad, your thumb and paper, you can make people and animals. Press your thumb onto the stamp pad, then press thumb slowly onto paper. Add touches of personality like eyes, feet, ears, and tail with felt tip markers. Then draw in a background.