

Occupational Therapy: Family Resource Pack

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“Achievement, Success & Potential, through Inspiration, Relationships & Education”

Introduction

The Occupational Therapy team based at The Walnuts School have curated a list of activities and websites which we hope you will find useful to support your child's learning at home. In this pack we have ideas to support:

- Emotional regulation/calming activities
- Guidance on deep pressure
- Sensory play
- Sensory circuits
- Gross motor activities
- Fine motor activities
- Self-care

If you have any general questions or queries please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at:

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Emotional Regulation

Here are some ideas to support your child's emotional regulation. Whilst we recognise it can be challenging it is important to remember that all behaviour serves a function and it is often helpful to try and decode what that might be.

Ask yourself, is their behaviour an attempt to ...

... self regulate one's emotional state?

... communicate a need for engagement or comfort?

... change the sensory experience?

If your child is struggling to regulate you might find it helpful to try some of the strategies/activities below:

- Use timers to support your child to understand how long an activity is going to last for - sand timers are great tool for our more visual students
- Offer breaks from interactions and activities as needed
- If your child uses symbols try incorporating a 'first and then' board to support engagement with more challenging tasks:



Note: if you don't have the symbols you can draw or use cut outs, photos or labels. Some pupils will use the terminology 'now & next'.

Calming Activities

Here are some links to sites that you may find useful in helping to calm the children while they are away from school. These are activities that could be used by the whole family in these stressful times. Explore some of these ideas and see what you can find to suit your child's likes.

Meditation/Mindfulness

Here are some examples of calming meditations to follow which have simple arm movements that can be copied. You might wish to investigate other meditations that may be available on the web.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWOHcGF1Tmc>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtapT_dp5NQ

Yoga

Yoga and simple movement routines can help to reduce stress and anxiety while being kept inside, try some of these or look for alternatives for your child, there is a whole wealth of these available. Even if sat, you can rotate your wrists, raise and lower arms and legs. Your child could do this by themselves or you could help them to complete these routines.

- Bedtime Yoga https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xpE_3oT2t2U
- Yoga Moon Salutation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsJ2y3w3GoM>
- Yoga with Sponge Bob https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1Nt7-qZ_i0

These are calming to watch and listen to even if your child is unable to master the moves.

Musical Relaxation

- <https://soundcloud.com/relaxing-music-for-kids>

This is a good site to find music to play for relaxation time, you could offer it in the background or make a quiet, soft space for your child to relax in.

There are a wealth of sites and apps available from the app store and for those of you with iPads an app called Relax Melodies is particularly good for those children who have interest in creating their own relaxing music.

You could always try making your own musical instruments from everyday items. It's amazing the sounds you can create from pots and pans in the kitchen. Rice placed into a used plastic bottle and then sealed can make the most wonderful shaker that can be turned up and down to create a smooth relaxing sound or shaken to give a more upbeat rhythm.

Deep Breathing Activities

Remembering to breathe is key to calming our bodies and preventing our mind and bodies from being overwhelmed. Simple deep breathing will help with this; you can practise by holding a feather, or piece of cloth in front of the mouth and watching it move with each breath. Breathing into a mirror and watching it fog is also fun.

- Breath and Movement <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O29e4rRMv4>
- Story and Massage:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9CdPQ7X1MzU>
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCf--6HoMSnQNp-IdaN56CnQ>

These are some examples of how you can combine telling your child a story while using massage. This can be used by all the family and is great for siblings too. Depending on your child's preference a hand, foot or head massage may also help to reduce anxieties at this time. Watch for reactions or ask for a preference to see if they prefer this gentle or deeper, fast or slow. Everyone is different. We have provided some guidance on giving deep pressure on the next.

Note on relaxation activities: If you try an activity with your child and they find it calming, have visuals readily available so that they are able to request this spontaneously (this might be in the form of a photo or symbol).

Deep Pressure

What is deep pressure?

Deep pressure is firm but gentle squeezing, hugs, or holding that relaxes the nervous system. This pressure can be applied with the hands, special massage tools, or products such as weighted blankets.

When to use it

The children and young people at The Walnuts and Slated Row often have a need for proprioceptive input; they crave deep pressure (e.g. jogging, jumping, bumping, pulling and pushing). To get this pressure some children might go under cushions, or climb into small spaces. Here are some other ways to help them get what they need.

- Body sock
- Stretching
- Squeezing/massaging: hands, toes, feet, legs, arms
- Steamroller- rolling a gym ball back and forth whilst they are lying down on their tummy.

These activities can have a calming effect on the child or young person when they are feeling sad, cross or over excited.

Important

When giving deep pressure please be aware of the amount of pressure you exert over the chest. Focus more on the back, arms, hands, legs and feet.

Remember: Every person responds differently, pressure that is comfortable for one person can cause pain and distress to another. If you notice that your child or young person is pulling away or becoming upset, **honour their communication and do not persist.**

Sensory Play

Sensory play or messy play is important for our children. It gives them a chance to develop their play skills as well as their fine motor and gross motor skills. Here are a few ideas for you to try at home:

Kinetic sand; this can be bought on Amazon:

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Rainbow-Colours-Kinetic-Sand-Tools/dp/B081BC2QJ3/ref=sr_1_6?crid=UTXG0CWVWNNQ&dchild=1&keywords=kinetic+sand&qid=1585745209&srefix=kinet%2Caps%2C176&sr=8-6

A tray or bowl with dried pasta/rice. They can sprinkle it and move it around. You can also put items in there that they have to find.

Cornflour and water. Encourage your children to write, draw shapes within the mixture.

'Squishy bags'. Grab some sealable sandwich bags and you can add in: flour water & food colouring, alternatively you can put in child friendly paint, but be careful!



Water play is always popular, add in some washing up liquid to make bubbles. Also add items in that sink or float and encourage the children to fish them out. Pouring with cups is good fun too.

If you have any dried lentils or peas in the house put them in a tub or bowl. You can encourage **sorting, pouring or sifting using bottles or funnels.**

Cloud Dough; this can be an alternative to kinetic sand. All you need is four cups of flour, half a cup of baby oil and a large bowl and wooden spoon for mixing. The consistency is powdery but also mouldable.

Crazy Soap; very popular messy play activity. This can be bought from supermarkets normally or alternatively on Amazon

These are just some simple activities for you to try at home. If you fancy getting even more creative and want to use up some things around the house. There are always plenty of ideas on Pinterest!

Sensory Circuits

A sensory circuit comprises of a sequence of movements and activities to provide a child with the right type and level of sensory input in order to calm and focus their senses for the day ahead.

Sensory circuits consist of moves from 3 different categories; alerting, organisational and calming, and are typically performed in this order, to help the child reach a calmed state.

Part 1 of the circuit: Alerting activities

This section provides vestibular (movement and balance) and proprioceptive (body awareness) stimulation, and prepares the brain for learning.

- Bouncing 10 times on a trampette
- 10 bunny hops
- Skipping
- 10 star jumps/jumps
- 10 touch your toes
- Bouncing 10 times whilst sat on an exercise ball or space hopper
- Hula Hoop



bouncing on a trampette



bouncing on an exercise ball



star jumps



touch your toes

Part 2 of the circuit: Organisational activities

These activities involve timing, balance and coordination. These activities aim to increase a child's focus, performance and attention span.

- Hopscotch
- Walk on a straight line
- Throw bean bags/small balls at a target
- Log roll
- Stepping stones
- Stretch and pull material with a partner
- Wall push ups
- Superman roll on an exercise ball
- Bear walk
- Crab walk
- Yoga



stretch and pull material



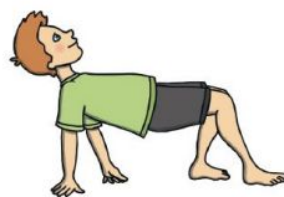
wall push ups



superman roll



hopscotch



crab walk



bear walk

Part 3 of the circuit: Calming activities

These activities provide the child with the input needed to ensure that they finish the sensory circuit calm and ready for tasks and activities throughout the day.

- Steam roller squash – child lies on their stomach and an exercise ball is rolled up and down their body with pressure. Do not roll the ball over their head.
- Pillow squash – child lies on their stomach, and a pillow is used to apply pressure onto the body. A good alternative to the steamroller. Do not place the pillow over their head.
- Deep pressure squeezes - please see guidance.
- Weighted blanket - please refer to the guidance issued with the blanket.
- Body sock
- Yoga



weighted blanket



steam roller squash

Sensory circuit example

Choose 1 or 2 activities or exercises from each section, for example:

1. Bouncing 10 times on exercise ball
2. 10 star jumps
3. Walk on a straight line
3. Bear walk
4. Yoga
5. Deep pressure squeezes

Yoga examples



lion pose



cobra pose



warrior pose



cow pose



tree pose



camel pose

Gross motor activities

- **Dance along videos**
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwT5oX_mqS0 Shake your sillies out
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4n6E45UNxmE> Superman dance along
 - "Kids just dance"
 - "Go noodle"
- **Ball games**
- Throwing and catching, football, throw the ball into a bucket (or basketball)
- **Bike or scooter rides**
- **Yoga** We have shared some examples but there are many more on Youtube if you type in 'yoga for kids' or 'Childrens Yoga'.
- **Activities with tape** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76mgTjInf-Y>

Fine motor activities

- Threading beads onto a shoelace or pipe cleaner
- Putting pasta onto straw



- Putting money into a money box/piggy bank
- Picking up objects with tweezers
- Playdough – using playdough tools or pressing/rolling into shapes



- Follow the maze or line worksheets (see appendix)

Developing self-care skills

Here are some tips which we have collated for teaching self-care skills, if you would like any specific guidance for your child please do not hesitate to get in touch:

Feeding

- Use a non slip mat under bowl or plate
- Spoon- give your child food that is easy to scoop and sticks to the spoon
- Spoon- put food in a bowl with a high edge
- Fork- use a child sized fork with bite sized foods that are easy to pierce e.g. cooked carrots, soft meats and fruit

Dressing

- Forward or backward chaining- one small step at a time
- Start the zip and let your child finish it
- Adapt the zip to make it easier for your child to grasp (see picture)



- Use slip-on shoes whilst your child is learning
- Practice dressing whilst sitting on a stool or sat on the floor in a corner of the room
- Try clothing with an elastic waistband
- For pull over clothing, start with a sleeveless garment and then progress to t-shirts before attempting long sleeves
- Try seamless clothing for those with sensory difficulties

Shoelaces

- Consider using stickers, or nail varnish as a prompt to remind them which foot belongs to which shoe
- 'zubits' magnetic shoe locks:



- Velcro or slip on shoes
- Always practise using thicker “fluffier” laces as opposed to thin elastic type laces that you may find in some shoes. The thinner laces tend to come undone much more quickly.
- Lace a shoe using two different coloured laces, to enable easier breakdown of each step

Brushing teeth

- If your child gags easily, avoid touching the centre and back of the tongue
- Toothbrushes with a thicker handle maybe easier to grasp
- Electric toothbrushes provide more sensory feedback
- Try soft toothbrushes and/or flavourless toothpaste for those with hypersensitive mouths

General tips

- Small parts of activities: Practise doing a small part of a task each day as it is easier to learn new skills in smaller sections.
- Allow the child to brush your hair or teeth first, before brushing their own.
- Use timers to indicate how long they must tolerate an activity they may not enjoy, such as teeth cleaning.
- Use visual supports (objects, symbols written word schedules)
- Reward chart for independent completion of tasks (or attempt at, in the early stages).
- Routine: Use the same routine or strategy each time you complete the same task to help them learn it faster.
- Be consistent with the words & signs used to assist the child, and keep instructions short and simple.
- Allow enough time: Ensure that there is enough time available for the child to participate in self care activities without feeling rushed.

Free OT Applications

Visual motor skills

App	Description	Students it might be useful for
Visual Memory	Google Play. The game is designed to develop visual memory and improve attention. Users can find the image that has just appeared at each level.	Language/Conversation partners
Memory Game	Google Play. The game is just like the classic concentration game, helping users to build visual memory skills.	Language/Conversation partners
Sorting and Learning Game 4 Kids	Google Play Challenges users to categorise and match themed objects while helping to build visual attention, visual memory, and focus with a concentration on visual perception.	Language/Conversation partners
Sensory Baby Toddler Learning	Google Play This app works on cause and effect and develops hand eye coordination skills. <i>NB: Advertises with free version</i>	Social/Language partners
Alphabet Puzzles For Toddlers	Google Play This app helps work on letter identification and letter recognition. The visual perceptual app	Language/Conversation partners

	allows children to address form constancy, visual discrimination, figure ground, and other visual perceptual skills.	
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Handwriting

App	Description
Writing Wizard	This app is available on Google Play and allows users to trace letters along a visual guide. There are various fonts available and size can be adjusted for different ages.
Writing Wizard-Cursive	This handwriting app is created by the makers of the regular, print version of Writing Wizard. Users can practice letter formation in cursive.
Write ABC Learn Alphabets Games for Kids-	This handwriting app is available on Google Play. The app helps children work on letter formation using visual cues for starting points and ending points.
Sand Draw	This free Google Play app provides a sandy beach for kids to practice writing letters, words, or phrases in. Use it to practice spelling words for a fun twist.

Fine motor

App	Description
Dot to dot game	Connect the dots ABC Kids Games- This free app is great for children working on precision, dexterity, and fine motor work. The app addresses letter and number formation.
Tiny Roads	This free app allows children to connect objects while working on precision and finger isolation.

Montessori Fine Motor Skills Game School Numbers/alphabet	This fine motor app helps users work on eye- hand coordination, precision, and finger isolation while working on numbers, letters, and shapes.
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Free apps for executive functioning

App	Description	Level
CogniFit Brain Fitness - parent to make account if child is under 16, google account needed	This Google Play app uses memory games, puzzles, reasoning games, educational games, and learning games to train memory, attention, concentration, executive functions, reasoning, planning, mental agility, coordination and many other essential mental skills.	Conversation partners
Lumosity: Brain Training- parent to make account if child is under 16, google account needed	This free executive functioning skills app uses games to exercise memory, attention, speed, flexibility and problem-solving.	Conversation partners
Memory Games: Brain Training- parent to make account if child is under 16, google account needed	This executive functioning skills app uses memory and logic games to improve memory, attention and concentration.	Conversation partners

Self-regulation

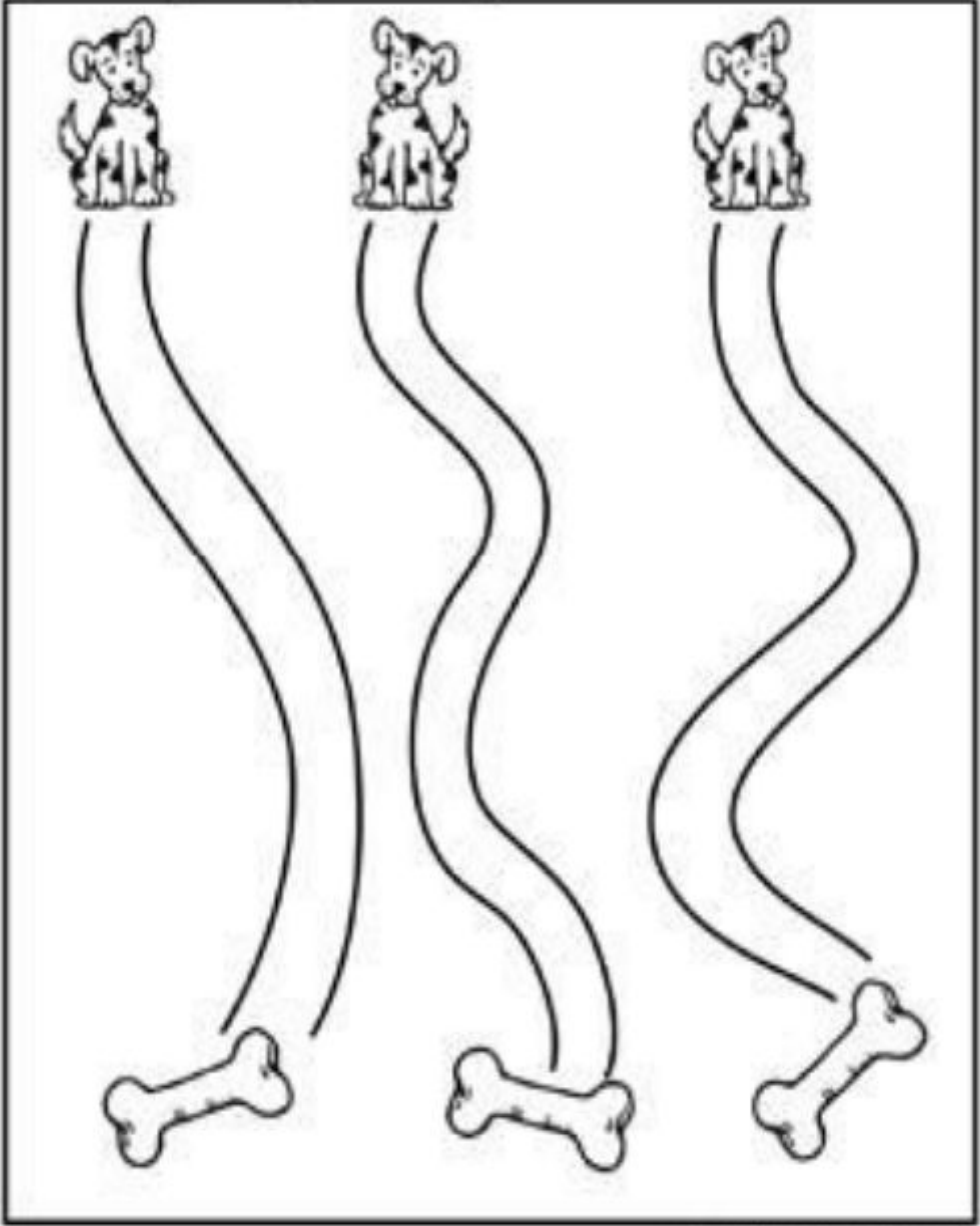
App	Description	Students it might be useful for
Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame	This self-regulation app uses a Sesame Street monster to help children calm down and solve everyday challenges. The	Conversation partners

	<p>coping tools app helps your child learn Sesame's "Breathe, Think, Do" strategy for problem-solving.</p>	
<p>Trigger Stop: Sensory and Emotional Check-In</p>	<p>This free self-regulation app is available on Google Play so they can identify and communicate sensations and emotions or feelings in the body so they can express them in a healthy way.</p>	<p>Conversation partners</p>
<p>EmoPaint</p>	<p>Paint your emotions! Is a free self-regulation app available for IOS in the Apple Store or Google Play. The paint app allows users to represent emotions or bodily sensations through art, by painting them interactively on the screen.</p>	<p>Conversation partners</p>

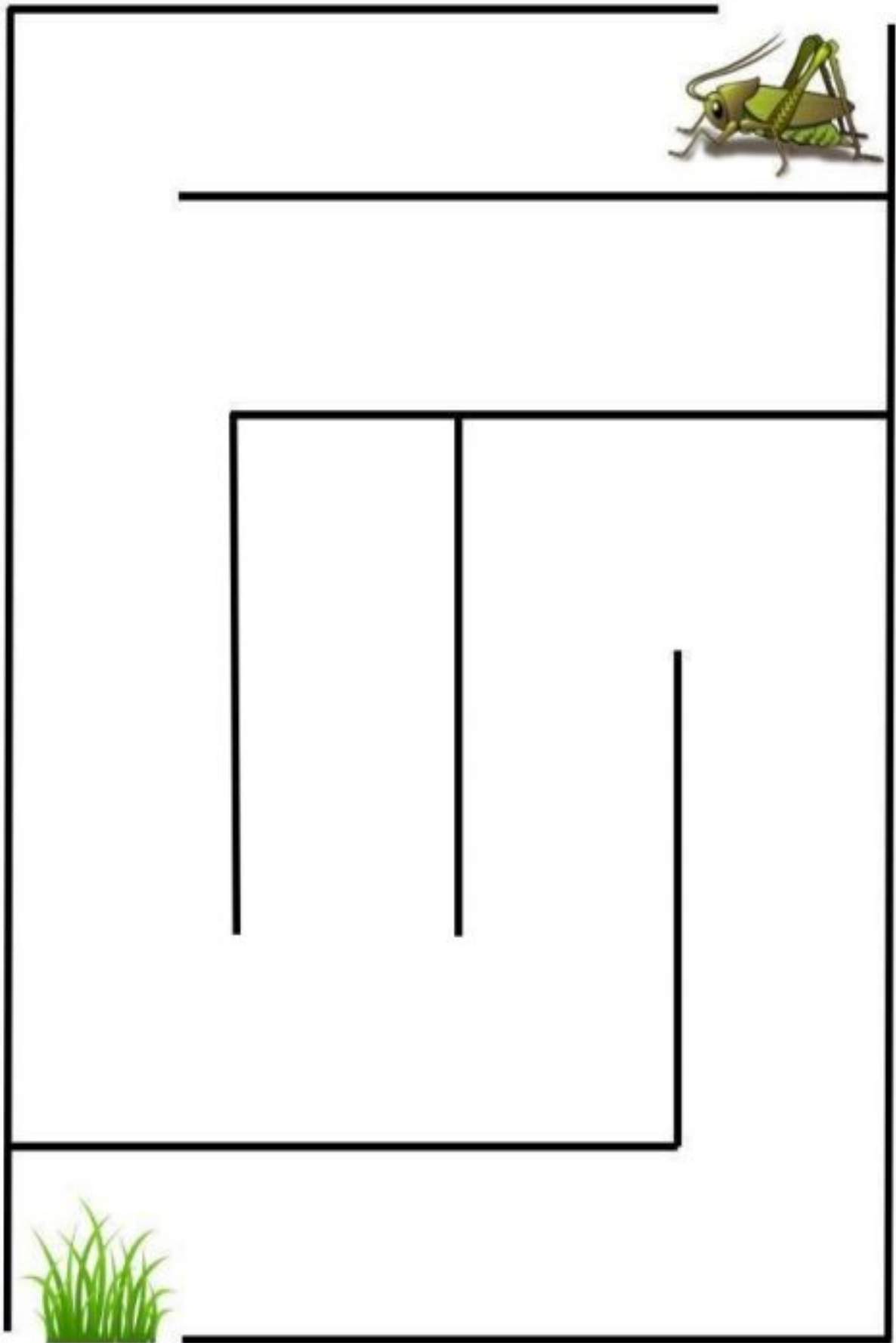
Appendix: Fine Motor Activities

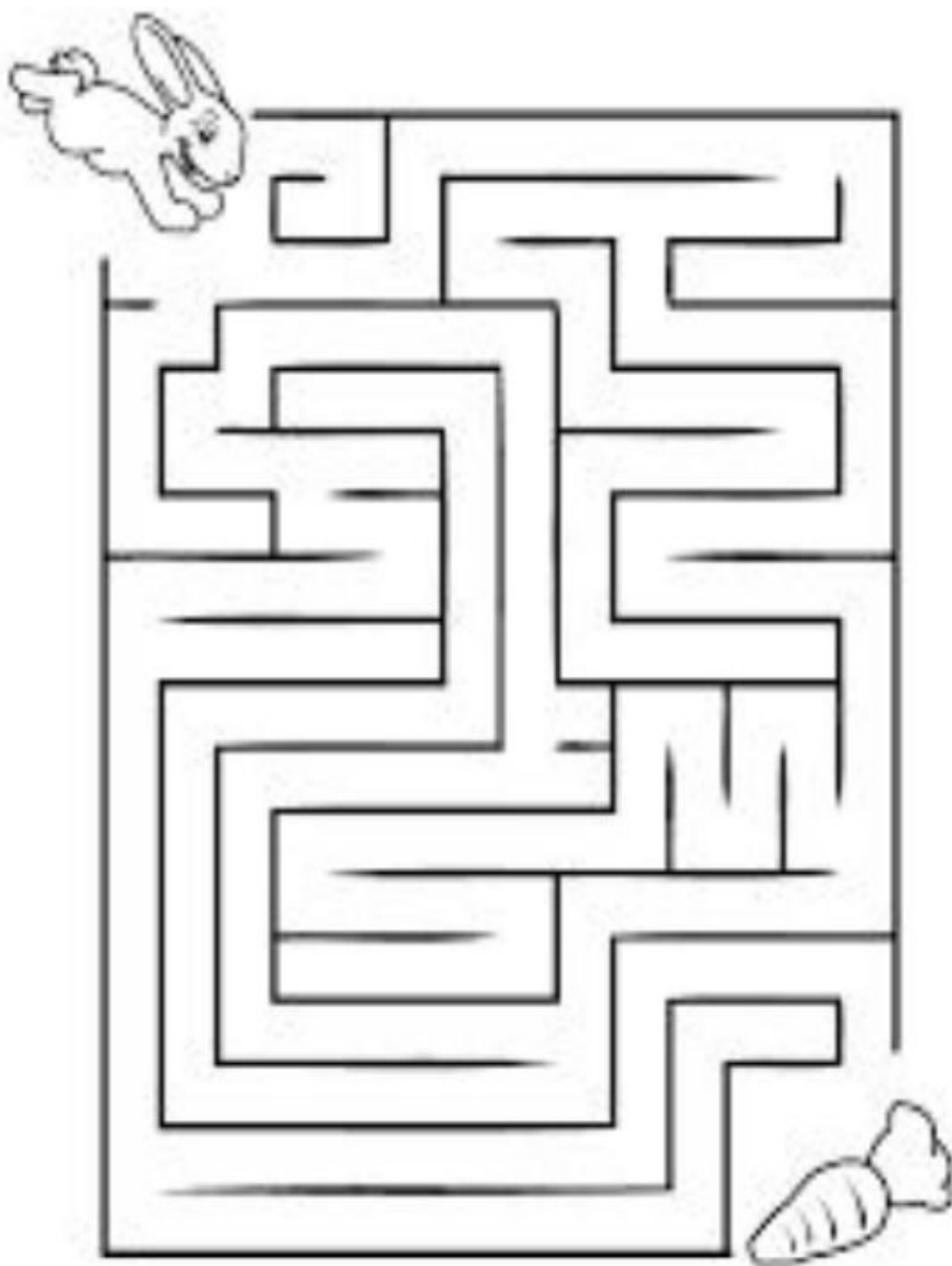
Name _____ Skill: Fine-motor skills

Follow the path to get each dog to its bone.



Preceptor Book Skills: Fine Motor & Gross Motor Skills
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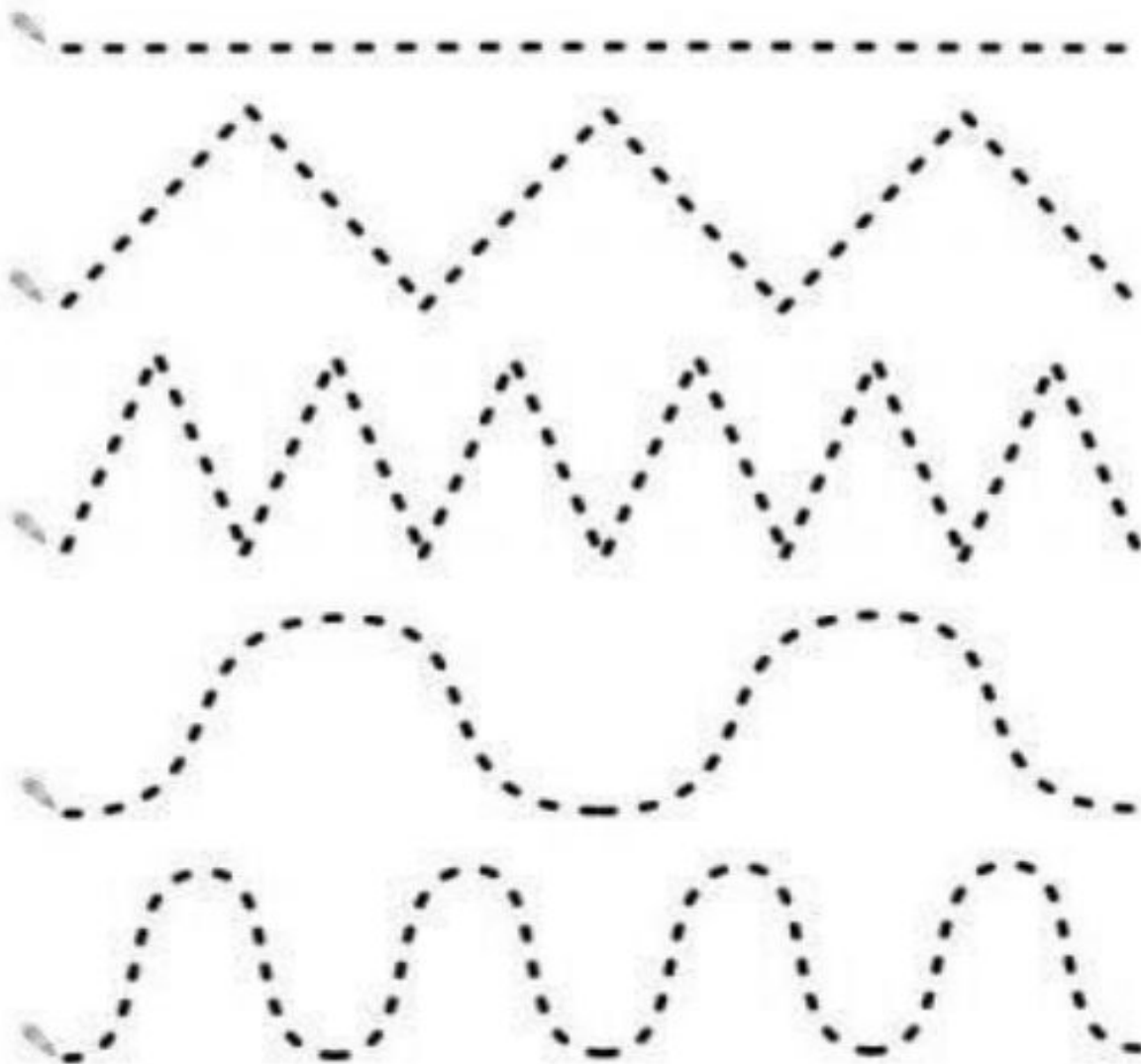




Name _____

Tracing Patterns

Follow the lines with your pencil



www.ActivityVillage.co.uk - Keeping Kids Busy