



Occupational therapy home resource pack

This pack was designed by the Occupational Therapist based at Haymerle school to help school staff and families improve the engagement and participation both in activities at school and home.

This pack provides ideas to address a range of common difficulties. We understand that every child and their needs are very different so not every idea in this pack will be effective for every child.

About this advice pack

This resource pack should be used to help children with everyday tasks they might find tricky.

How OT helps

The role of a children's Occupational Therapist (OT) is to work with children, young people and the adults that know them best. Our aim is to help children and young people be able to do everyday tasks that they need to do to take part in, and enjoy, everyday life. This includes being able to participate in activities such as:

- Self-care - getting washed and dressed, using cutlery, use the toilet, brushing teeth etc
- School work – following instructions, follow routines, be organised, use tools to write, draw, cut etc.
- Play – knowing how to play and engage in play.

We help come up with ideas to help by:

- Seeing what your child can do or might find tricky.
- Where are they doing the everyday task and what is around them.
- What the task involves.

How to use the pack

1. Practice a task for 10 minutes, 5-7 days per week.
2. Make the practice **fun** so your child wants to practice again the next day!
3. Be there to help your child while they do the task.

Please see the contents page for the area you are looking to focus on.

Remember to make the practice enjoyable and have fun!

Disclaimer:

1. Please note not every idea in this pack will be helpful for your child and you will need to pick which ideas.
2. Do not use ideas that you will place your child at a safety risk. This could involve but is not limited to:
 - a. Using chewy toys, fiddle toys, foods or drinks that could risk in choking, swallowing difficulties or allergies.
 - b. Doing certain movement activities if there is not enough space).

Contents

Getting ready to do things together

Calmness and Focus

Dressing

Cutlery use

Toileting

Have fun together

Looking after yourself /
Coronavirus

Getting ready to do things together

When your child is doing a task, think about:

- **Where your child is** - is there distractions?
- **How hard the task is** - can you make it easier (e.g. bring something closer, or lay it out)?
- **What can your child do and what do they find tricky?**

1. **Make sure your child is calm and ready to**

engage. Are they moving, fiddling or chewing too much and not able to follow instructions? Please see the 'Calmness and focus' section for some ideas.

2. **Help your child to want to do a task:**

- **Make it fun:** Use a nice or funny voice, make it playful and don't be afraid to be silly.
- **Use your child's interests:** it could be practicing dressing with their favourite piece of clothing, using their favourite pencil, putting a sticker of their favourite character on cutlery to promote them using it.
- **Use rewards:** set up a visual reward system like a marble jar or a tick chart so your child can see the progress they are making.

3. **Make sure their surroundings are helpful:**

- What room do you do it in?
- Can you get rid of any distractions such as lights, sounds, smells, radio, TV, iPads, toys or away from siblings?

4. **Create a consistent practice routine.** Make it part of your daily schedule, practicing at the same time each day.

5. **Teach them the steps for the activity:**
 - **Break the task into steps:** Go through a tasks step by step and maybe focus on 1-2 steps at a time.
 - **Use visuals:** Use pictures or cartoons to show the steps for a task.
 - **Modelling:** Showing your child how to do the task and the movements involved.
 - **Provide hand over hand support:** Help guide your child's hand to teach them how the movements feel (e.g. pulling trousers up/down). **NOTE:** This might not be effective for children who are sensitive to touch. You should give less support as your child gets better at the task.
 - **Use simple language and calm tone:** Use small words and not many words when talking through the steps, speaking in a calm voice.
 - **Specific praise:** Tell your child exactly what they have done well so they understand and can repeat that behaviour. Instead of saying 'good eating' try saying 'good holding your fork' or 'good slow eating'.

Calmness and focus

You might notice that your child moves around a lot, fiddles, chews or struggles to follow instructions.

Try these ideas to help:

- Movement breaks.
- Set up things around your child to be calm and less distracting.
- Fiddle toys (if your child likes to fiddle).
- Mouth strategies (if your child likes to chew).

PLEASE NOTE not all ideas will work for every child.

Movement breaks

How often: every 30 minutes or more often if your child is moving around, fiddling or chewing a lot.

The following activities will help to keep your child more calm and able to follow instructions. Please choose the activities that will work for your child:

- Play familiar, enjoyable activities.
- A big bear hug from Mum and Dad.
- Play tug of war with a towel.
- Help Mum or Dad push the furniture.
- Do a wall push up or push the 'walls out'.
- Help move heavier items around the house such as books or bags.
- Playing in sand – digging, pushing and moving sand.
- Playdough or putty – hide items and have your child scrunch pull or pinch their way through.
- Help clean the table with a cloth.
- Squeezy or vibrating toys.
- Make a Kid Burrito – roll them in a blanket firmly and give them a big hug. Get them to do it to Mum or Dad.
- Make Kid Sandwich – get them to lie between two pillows and then give them a firm squeeze between the two pieces of 'bread'. Get them to do it to Mum or Dad.
- Make a Kid Pizza – use a yoga ball (football-size or bigger) and roll it over their back, arms and legs firmly to 'knead the dough' (see picture).
- Have them sit in a bean bag or a pile of blankets whilst they are reading or doing another seated activity.



Set up things around your child:

- Turn down the lights and avoid fluorescent lights if these are too bright for your child.
- Speak in a slow, calm voice. Sometimes you may find whispering helps to calm.
- Try using slow, rhythmical music (either with flat sounding vocals or just instruments). Music which isn't too fast or change pitch too much is best for calming. Have the music at a low volume. **CAUTION:** avoid using music if your child continues to be over-sensitive to this.
- Try and do activities in a less busy part of the house, away from siblings or other distractions.

Fiddle toy

Objects can also be used to help give your child some fiddle input to help them feel more calm and able to focus. Some ideas of toys to fiddle with are:

- A squeeze ball.
- A small square of fabric.
- A piece of blue tac.
- A paper clip.
- A straw.
- A piece of Playdough or Putty.



CAUTION: Do not use a fiddle toy if your child is at a risk of eating the object, swallowing or chewing – supervision while using the fiddle toy is advised.

Chewing strategies

Try giving your child:

- Crunchy food – carrots, celery, crunchy cereal, biscuits.
- A hard-to-suck waterbottle.
- Drink a smoothy through a straw.
- Chewy foods – croissant.
- Straw.



CAUTION: Do not give toys, food or liquids that may cause allergies, swallowing difficulties or are a potential choking hazard.

Dressing

Please use the **Getting ready to do things together** tips as well as the tips below.

Please see the following tips to try for dressing:

Knowing the steps and practicing:

- Allow lots of time to practice (don't rush).
- Practice often (e.g. each day).
- Have a routine – do the steps in the same order each day. For example pants first, then t-shirt, then socks; and follow this, the same way each time.
- Use pictures (e.g. a visual checklist) to show the different steps.
- Talk your child through the steps slowly. For example 'Now are putting your right foot in, now I'm putting your left leg in'.
- Lay the clothes out in the order they are put on (the same way each time). For example, lay jumpers out face down with the bottom part closest to your child and the neck furthest away.
- Use the label to help your child tell which way around it has to go.



Difficulty with the clothes:

- Choose easy clothing for your child to practice with - larger sizes, bigger buttons and button holes are usually easier than smaller.
- Practice taking clothes off first, as this is easier than putting clothes on.
- If a child still finds dressing tricky, think about using different clothing to make it easier - For example shoes with Velcro[®], Velcro[®] on top buttons of shirts, elastic on shirt cuffs, elastic laces, toggles on coats or elastic waistbands.
- If your child doesn't like the feeling of some clothes – think about cutting out labels, not using itchy fabrics and using looser clothes with less seams.

Feel comfortable with dressing:

- Let your child complete as many steps as they can by themselves and give them help with the steps they find tricky. Reduce the amount of help you give as they get better at doing a step by themselves.
- Let your child do the last step so they feel good about doing the task and will want to do it again.

Using cutlery

Please use the **Getting ready to do things together** tips as well as the tips below.

Please see the following tips to try for using cutlery:

- **Make sure the cutlery is the right size** and easy to hold for your child. Junior Caring Cutlery (available from online) has coloured and shaped handles to help with hand and finger placement.
- **Practice using soft foods** first to get the movements right before moving to harder foods.
- **Try practice using cutlery to play games**, away from mealtimes – this can be scooping, digging, cutting playdough or to eat a soft snack (e.g. banana).
- **Practice at the table.**
- **Use hand over hand support** to hold and guide your child's hands to show them how to do the movements.
- **Make sure your child's feet and back are supported when sitting.** If their feet can't touch the ground, use a box or some books under their chair so their feet can be supported and aren't dangling.



Steps to using a knife and fork

		Tick when achieved
Practice holding a knife and fork. Their hands should be pointing down towards the plate.		
While holding the pretend food in one hand, practice stabbing it with a fork with the other hand.		
While holding the pretend food in one hand, practice sawing it with a knife in the other hand.		
Practice using a knife and fork together. You may wish to talk through the movements with your child. You may need to place your hands over theirs to help them learn.		
Practice turning the fork over to scoop pretend food onto it using the knife.		

Toileting



Please use the **Getting ready to do things together** tips as well as the tips below.

The www.ERIC.org.uk website has several ideas and tools you can use.

Please see the following tips for toileting:

Knowing when to go:

- Help your child to know when they need to go to the toilet – you can do this by saying: “You are pulling at your nappy, time for toilet” or by pointing to a picture or symbol (e.g. nappy).
- Try go to the toilet or change your child at the same times each day to develop a routine.
- Do toileting or changing in the bathroom to help build routine.

Knowing the steps:

- Use a **picture** or a **visual checklist** to show the steps for toileting.
- Use of social story or video to help show the importance of going to the toilet and the steps – there are some good videos on www.ERIC.org.uk.
- Talk your child through the steps slowly from start to finish as you do them.
- Try and let your child do the last step so they feel good about practicing and will then want to practice again.
- Give hand over hand help to guide their hands for wiping or washing hands.

Feeling comfortable with toileting:

- When practicing wiping, use a large wrap of toilet paper around your child's hand so your child does not get poo on their hand.
- Have a comfort toy in the toilet to help your child to be calm while toileting.
- Give them a piece of toilet paper to hold on to while you wipe them to get used to the feeling of the paper.
- Get them to help with throwing away the toilet paper and flushing – if they feel comfortable – remember the noise and splashing of the flush might be too much for your child.

Have fun together – Play!



It is important for children to have time to play and with lots of families at home, this is a great time to be able to play together with other family members.

Here are some tips when playing:

- Join in games that your child enjoys.
- Be playful and don't be afraid to be silly!
- When teaching your child how to play a new game, keep it simple and use the same ideas as if you were teaching them another skill. For example, show them how to do it, talk through each step as you do it slowly, use pictures to help them understand the steps etc.
- Show your child how to engage in pretend play. For example, using a wooden spoon as a wand, pretend drinking at a 'tea party', build buildings with the blocks.

Some good games to play while you are at home:

- Games with sharing and turn taking.
- Freeze dance – dance while the music is on, freeze when it is stopped.
- Blowing bubbles.
- Keeping a balloon in the air.
- Building with blocks.
- Digging, moving and building with sand.
- Messy play – shaving cream, dishwashing detergent, sand, playdough.

Please see the following link to the National Autistic Society website for some other suggestions:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life/toys-books-play.aspx>

Looking after yourself as the parent

Here are some tips and resources which may help during the COVID-19 lockdown:

- Try and speak to family and friends regularly.
- Try and keep the same routine each day.
- Where possible, try and have some time to yourself each day, even if it is only a small amount of time, to gather your thoughts.
- Call the **National Autistic Society helpline**: 0808 800 4104
- Listen to the experience of other parents of children with ASD:
<https://healthtalk.org/parents-children-autism-spectrum/overview>
- Speak to other parents of children with ASD to see if they have any ideas to help with something that might be tricky – the NAS has an online community which can be accessed here:
<https://community.autism.org.uk/?Redirected=true>

Coronavirus related material

Please see some helpful resources below:

- Hand washing tips for people with sensory difficulties:
<https://www.sensoryintegration.org.uk/News/8821506>
- National Autistic Society (NAS) - How to support your family and child with ASD:
<https://www.autism.org.uk/services/helplines/coronavirus/resources/tips.aspx>
- NHS – Guidance for parents and carers on supporting children and young people's mental health and well-being during the coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>