



## Hand and Finger Skills: 1 Year Olds

Given all the large motor skills your one-year-old is mastering, it's easy to overlook the more subtle changes in her ability to use her hands, both alone and in coordination with her eyes. These developments will allow her much more control and precision as she examines objects and tries new movements. They also will greatly expand her ability to explore and learn about the world around her.

At twelve months, it's still a challenge for her to pick up very small objects between her thumb and forefinger, but by the middle of her second year, this task will be simple. Watch how she'll manipulate small objects at will, exploring all the ways they can be combined and changed. Some of her favorite games might include:



- Building towers of up to four blocks, then knocking them down
- Covering and uncovering boxes or other containers
- Picking up balls or other objects in motion
- Turning knobs and pages
- Putting round pegs into holes
- Scribbling and painting

These activities not only will help her develop hand skills but also will teach her spatial concepts, such as "in," "on," "under," and "around." As she nears two years and her physical coordination improves, she'll be able to try more complex games, such as:

- Folding paper (if you show her how)
- Putting large square pegs into matching holes (which is more difficult than it is with round pegs, because it involves matching angles)
- Stacking up to five or six blocks
- Taking toys apart and putting them back together
- Making shapes from clay

By her second birthday, your toddler may demonstrate a clear tendency toward right- or left-handedness. However, many children don't show this preference for several years. Other children are ambidextrous, being able to use both hands equally well. They may never establish a clear preference. There's no reason to pressure your toddler to use one hand over the other or to rush the natural process that leads her to this preference.

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**Source** Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5 (Copyright © 2009 American Academy of Pediatrics)

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