



Chromosome 18 has collected these occupational therapy exercises for our member's benefit. These exercises are not created by or endorsed by Chromosome 18, and were collected from organizations that offer occupational therapy resources. These are suggestions of general exercises that you can do with your child at home and not an individual plan of care.

Occupational Therapy Exercises

10 Suggestions for Warming Up

1. Chair Push Ups: Sitting with upright posture in a classroom chair, the child put his/her hands on the side of the seat. The child lifts and holds his/her bottom up off the seat for 3-5 seconds and then slowly lowers back down into the chair.
2. Bear hugs – Wrap your arms around your chest or knees and give yourself a big, firm hug.
3. Squeezing putty or play dough
4. Yoga Poses:

Tree Pose

Begin with your arms at your sides. Distribute your weight evenly across both feet.

Shift your weight to your left foot. Bend your right knee, then reach down and clasp your right inner ankle. Use your hand to draw your right foot alongside your inner left thigh. Do not rest your foot against your knee, only above or below it. Adjust your position so the center of your pelvis is directly over your left foot. Then, adjust your hips so your right hip and left hip are aligned.

Rest your hands on your hips and lengthen your tailbone toward the floor. Then, press your palms together in prayer position at your chest, with your thumbs resting on your sternum.

Draw down through your left foot. Press your right foot into your left thigh, while pressing your thigh equally against your foot.

¹ [50 Fine Motor Exercises to do at Home](#)

Inhale as you extend your arms overhead, reaching your fingertips to the sky. Rotate your palms inward to face each other.

Hold for up to one minute. To release the pose, step back into Mountain Pose. Repeat for the same amount of time on the opposite side.

Cat Pose

Come onto your hands and knees in a tabletop position.

Align your shoulders directly above your elbows and wrists; and set your hips directly above your knees. Spread your fingers, gaze between your palms, and bring your head to a neutral position.

Inhale and lengthen your spine, creating a flat back that is parallel to the floor.

As you exhale, press through the ground and engage the abdominals. Round your back toward the sky, tuck the tailbone, and release your head toward the floor.

Hold for one breath and return to a neutral, tabletop position.

Child's Pose

Kneel on the floor with your toes together and your knees hip-width apart. Rest your palms on top of your thighs.

On an exhale, lower your torso between your knees. Extend your arms alongside your torso with your palms facing down. Relax your shoulders toward the ground. Rest in the pose for as long as needed.

5. Pulling resistance bands with hands – if you do not have resistance bands play tug of war with a bath towel.
6. Playing passing games like Hot Potato with heavy stuffed animals.
7. Weighted sensory bottles (make your own with colorful water)
8. Animal walks:

²Crab walk - Start on your bottom and push up on to arms and legs and walk forward or backward maintaining bottom off of the ground.

Bear walk - Walking on all fours, but trying to keep your bottom up in the air and arms/legs fairly straight.

Inch worm - Start by reaching down to the floor then walk your hands out as close to a push up position as possible, then walk your feet in trying to maintain straight arms and legs.

² [Walk Like an Animal](#)

Modification: have hands and feet on a slidable surface such as a plastic dot on carpet (or laminated piece of paper), which will make the movement a little easier.

Elephant - Bending over at the waist, have your hands clasped together for the trunk and swing back and forth.

9. Wall Push Ups: Put both hands on the wall with the feet a little farther than arm's length back from the wall. Lean your body towards the wall and back out. Another option is to just push both hands against the wall for 5-10 seconds with arms extended.

10. Carry Heavy Books: Give the child a job to organize or hand out heavy books.

³Lower Case Letter B

Letter b – Big line down, climb up halfway, little curve to the bottom. Typically, children try to start these letters at the bottom which slows writing and results in wide, messy writing. For these letters we recommend writers “go down, climb up, and over”. The letters that go below the bottom line “dive down, climb up, and over” to help learn placement on the line.

⁴Snowflake Sisters

Skills: Bilateral Hand Use, Cutting, Eye-Hand Coordination, Fine Motor Control, Grasp, Motor Planning, Pre-Writing, Visual Motor

This activity promotes fine motor skills and addresses sensory play through interaction with glue, salt, and watercolor textures.

Inspired by our kiddo's favorite movie involving a strong sisterly bond, a talking snowman, and the journey to discovering their strengths.

Blue Snowflake

Step 1: Fold construction paper in half.

Step 2: Fold it in half, again.

Step 3: Cut small snips off the corners & edges of your folded paper.

Step 4: Unfold & enjoy your magical snowflake!

Step 5: Try a new cutting & folding pattern to see which you like best.

Purple Snowflake

Step 1: Outline the shape of a snowflake with a marker.

Step 2: Trace the outline with glue from a glue bottle.

Step 3: Sprinkle salt on the glue & discard the extra salt that landed elsewhere on the paper.

³ [Physiotech](#)

⁴ [Occupational therapy plans](#)

Step 4: Let dry.

Step 5: Use watercolor paint to dab the salted lines & watch the magic travel through the snowflake!

Ice Cream Scooper

Skills: Activities of daily living (ADL), Bilateral Hand Use, Cutting, Eye-Hand Coordination, Fine Motor Control, Finger Strength, Forearm Pronation, Grasp, Pincer Grasp, Visual Motor

Use brown, yellow, or white construction paper. Draw a 1/4 of a circle with a six-inch radius, and ask the child to cut the shape out. If needed, make the line bolder to increase accuracy. If using white paper, you can let the child color/paint it in any color he wishes to.

Assist the child as needed to fold the 1/4 circle into a cone shape. Secure with tape.

Provide the child with tissue paper sheets that are at least 5" x 7" in size. Instruct the child to crumble each sheet into a ball (scoop), and place it in the container.

Have the child hold the ice cream scoop in his dominant hand and the cone in his other hand. Instruct the child to scoop the paper balls one at a time, using the ice cream scoop, and put it into the cone.

Using strips of construction paper in different colors, ask the child to tear small pieces to use as sprinkles. Promote pincer grasp by having the child pick up one piece at a time to sprinkle on his ice cream.

To grade the activity, use different ice cream scoops (i.e. with the thumb lever, spring-loaded handle, etc.) or other materials for ice cream, such as pom-poms or play-dough.

Midline Passing

Skills: Core Strength, Crossing Midline, Motor Planning, Upper Body Strength

This ball passing game can be done in groups or during a 1×1 session.

Sit back to back with the child. Make sure the child is sitting cross-legged or on their knees. While seated, pass a ball or any other object around to each other.

Make sure to switch directions after a few times.

Make sure the child is crossing the midline while passing the ball without rotating the trunk.

Cherry Grasp

Skills: Cutting, Finger Strength, Hand Arches/Separation, Intrinsic Muscle Development, Motor Planning, Social Interaction, Visual Perception

For this activity, you can use small game pieces like the cherry pieces from *Hi Ho Cherry O*, Monopoly pieces, and other small objects.

The objective of the board game is to be the first to put all of your cherries in the bucket.

Provide each player with tweezers.

Following the rules of the game, instruct each player to pick up the cherries using their tweezers and placing them into their bucket.

Depending upon the tweezers (or small tongs) used, you may instruct the child to reach for the stem rather than the cherry itself.

This game can be played by up to 4 children and social skills can be addressed while playing.

⁵Strategies to reduce tactile defensiveness or over-sensitivity to touch

In general, begin by encouraging play in dry, non-messy media rather than in gooey or sticky textures. If the child still won't touch anything, have him/her use containers to scoop and pour the materials.

- When touching the tactile-defensive child, always approach from the front (no surprises) and use a firm touch, never a light touch.
- For the least offensive sensory play, try dry, clean media: use both hands to locate small toys hidden in a bucket filled with bird seed, sand, beans, pasta, rice, etc. Practice pouring from one container to another.
- Progress to water play and later add soap for sudsy water: use lots of containers for pouring
- Progress to handling Play-Doh and other non-gooey media such as Crayola Model Magic, Sculpey clay, Play Foam or Moon Sand
- Gradually explore different messy media: start with finger paint bath bubbles in the bath tub
- Progress to real finger paints, smear shaving cream on a mirror or smooth surface, finger paint with pudding, whipped cream and other mushy foods
- Child can brush their own arms and legs with a soft hair brush, surgical brush or corn silk brush, then progress to letting you brush them.

Self Help Skills

Dressing

- Look for garments at home or at yard sales that have large buttons, zippers, snaps and velcro closures to practice on. You might also find purses and backpacks that have lots of interesting closures to practice on.

⁵ [Therapy Street for Kids](#)

- Undressing is usually easier than dressing so work on undressing skills first
- Practice garment closures in front of child first, rather than on the body. Once that is mastered, practice with the garment on.
- To model the task, sit behind the child with your hands out in front of them while holding the garment or materials
- Play dress up with some of Mom's or Dad's clothing
- Play dressing games like this one: Throw all different types of clothing in a laundry basket (hats, gloves, shirts, jackets, shorts, pants, shoes, socks, jewelry, backpack, fanny pack, etc.). Make up 6 cards, each with a drawing or picture of a body part on it as follow: a head, a neck, 2 hands, 2 feet, shirt or upper part of a body, pants or lower half of body. Each person picks a card on their turn and has to find a garment in the basket that dresses that body part. Then they have to put it on.

In Hand Manipulation

- Pick up a small object with fingers (bead, coin, M&M candy, popcorn, etc.) and "hide" it in your hand. Then pick up another and another.
- Move one item from your palm to your fingertips and place it down on the table (or put it in your mouth if it's food)
- Practice removing small objects from a change purse, baggie or container one at a time and hiding each within the palm. Then placing them back, one at a time.
- Connect 4 game: hold several chips at a time within the palm while placing chips in the slots
- Place coins in a Piggy Bank starting with several coins in the palm.
- Place items in slots (Bingo chips, coins, pegs) while holding several within the palm
- String beads holding 2 or 3 beads within the palm
- Pegboard games holding 2 or 3 pegs within the hand
- Twist open or closed lids on small bottles or toothpaste tube held within the palm of the hand
- Flip a coin from head to tail within the fingers of one hand
- Cut with scissors and practice adjusting the grip on the paper with the helping hand
- Practice buttoning, zipping and snapping snaps.
- Turn dice within the fingertips to see different sides.
- Hold a small cup filled with water. Practice turning it with the fingertips without spilling
- Connect linking chains
- Place clothespins around an index card or paper plate: encourage using only one hand to position/reposition the card or plate

- Craft activities that require using bottles to squeeze: glue, glitter glue, puffy paint, fabric paint, etc.

⁶Guess the Toy

Skills: Ideation, Stereognosis, Tactile Perception, Visual Perception

Step 1: Take an empty cardboard box & glue construction paper around it. This simplifies the exterior to eliminate distractions.

Step 2: Use any toy or item in the house, so long as it is safe, to put in the box. Make sure the toy or item has an identical partner (i.e. use 2 identical markers, 2 identical stuffed animals, etc.).

Step 3: Place each toy or item inside the box (3-6 toys/items at a time), and keep the toy's/item's identical partners right next to you, so the child does not see them.

Step 4: Lay the box on a horizontal surface.

Step 5: Take any of the toys/items right next to you, and place 1 of them on top of the box.

Step 6: Ask, *"Which one of these (the toys/items inside the box) feels like what this (the toy/item on top of the box) looks like?"*

Step 7: Have the child reach into the box to feel all items, making sure they do not see.

Step 8: Have them place their answer on top of the box in order to see if they got it right.

Step 9: Repeat until they have correctly identified all items.

Mac and Shake

Skills: Bilateral Hand Use, Finger Translation, Hand Arches/Separation, Intrinsic Muscle Development, Pincer Control, Tripod Grasp

Poke a hole in the container's lid.

The hole should provide enough resistance to make it challenging for the child to insert the macaroni inside.

Have the child insert large macaroni one at a time through the hole in lid into the container.

To work on finger translation, ask the child to collect two macaroni pieces at a time and store one in his/her palm while inserting the other into the container.

⁶ [Occupational therapy plans](#)

The child should use one hand to hold the container and the other one to insert the items.

Children enjoy listening to the sound the container makes when they shake it.

This activity can be done using other items such as coins, beans, or smaller macaroni.

Secret Message

Skills: Core Strength, Motor Planning, Pre-Writing

Challenge your child's core muscles by having them maintain a tabletop positioning (on their hands and knees).

Place a hand towel under their hands (or have them hold onto it), then have the child write out letters and words with their arm movements.

Guess their message by watching what they spell out with their towel.

Increase the challenge by:

- Using their non-dominant hand.
- Using their feet.

More Resources:

[Occupational therapy plans](#)

search engine that helps you find pediatric occupational therapy activity ideas by skills to promote using common household materials.

[OT Mom](#)

Occupational therapy activities designed by a homeschooling mom of 3 with a background in pediatric occupational therapy.

[Therapy Street for Kids](#)

[Walk Like an Animal](#)

[The OT Toolbox](#)

Occupational therapy information and activities

[50 Fine Motor Exercises to do at Home](#)