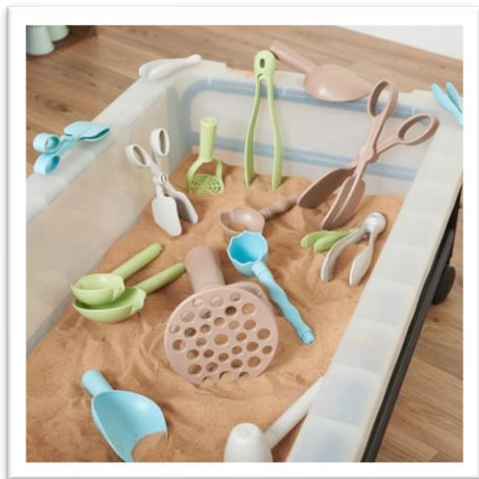


Eco Motor Skills Utensils (EL10977)



Ideas and skills developed



Eco Motor Skills Utensils Checklist

1 large masher ☐

2 small tongs ☐

1 small masher ☐

2 large tweezers ☐

1 large scoop ☐

4 small tweezers ☐

1 small scoop ☐

4 adaptable cup ladles ☐

1 large tongs ☐

4 rolling pin handles ☐



Making the most of the Eco Motor Skills Utensils

Children develop the foundations for writing long before they ever pick up a pencil. Every squeeze, scoop, twist, roll and grasp strengthens the small muscles of the hands while simultaneously developing the shoulders, core and postural stability needed for successful mark making and later writing.

The Eco Motor Skills Utensils provide endless opportunities for purposeful play, allowing children to explore a range of movements that develop hand strength, bilateral coordination, finger isolation and dexterity through rich sensory experiences. Suitable for toddlers through to Reception, these versatile tools encourage children to manipulate, investigate and create using sand, clay, dough, water, mud, loose parts and other sensory materials.

The set includes mashers, tongs, tweezers, and adaptable cup ladles and scoops with detachable handles that become rolling pins. These have all been designed to promote children's exploration of motor movements.

In this download, we will look at each tool and the skills developed during play.



Rolling Pins

(Can be used as handles for the scoops and cups)

The detachable handles become fantastic rolling pins for sensory play.

Try:

- Rolling through sand to make patterns.
- Rolling over clay or dough to flatten surfaces.
- Pressing and stamping the ends of the rolling pin into kinetic sand to create textures and patterns.
- Rolling in paint and then over leaves or bubble wrap to create prints.
- Creating roads and rivers in play dough.

Did you know:

The pushing and rolling action activates the shoulders, upper body and core muscles that provide the stable foundation needed for handwriting. As children push forwards using both hands, every finger works together to stabilise and manipulate the rolling action.

Skills Developed:

- Rolling
- Pushing
- Bilateral coordination
- Core stability
- Shoulder strength
- Wrist stability
- Finger flexion and extension
- Crossing the midline
- Hand strength



Scoops

(Attach rolling pin for a handle)

Scooping is one of the earliest functional hand movements children develop.

Fill with:

- | | |
|---------------------|------------|
| • Natural Treasures | • Rice |
| • Pasta | • Water |
| • Leaves | • Pebbles |
| • Gloop | • Sand |
| • Soil | • Pom poms |

Encourage children to:

- Scoop
- Pour
- Transfer
- Fill
- Empty
- Measure
- Sort
- Collect

Skills Developed:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Hand-eye coordination | • Bilateral coordination |
| • Grasp strength | • Spatial awareness |
| • Wrist rotation | • Temporal awareness |
| • Motor planning | |



Mashers

Mashing is a great action for developing the proprioceptive sense and managing regulation.

Use the mashers with:

- Mud
- Cooked vegetables
- Sand
- Paint (may discolour tools)
- Clay
- Potatoes
- Playdough
- Foam

Encourage children to:

- Mash
- Squash
- Press
- Flatten
- Push repeatedly
- Stamp

Some of the mashers include textured stamping ends, allowing children to press patterns into dough, clay or sand whilst developing upper limb strength and hand control. Perfect for making pies!

Skills Developed:

- Controlled pressure
- Hand endurance
- Shoulder manipulation
- Palm strength
- Shoulder stability
- Core activation



Tweezers

Tweezers provide one of the best opportunities for developing precision. The set offers larger and smaller versions. The larger tools may require collaboration to activate the grabbing action.

Great for collecting:

- Natural objects
- Ice cubes
- Pom poms
- Buttons
- Shells
- Bottle tops
- Cotton balls
- Stones in mud

Encourage:

- Pincer grip
- Precision grip
- Picking up
- Sorting
- Transferring
- Releasing
- Squeezing
- Use of different sizes



Skills Developed:

- Precision
- Dexterity
- Hand dominance
- Pincer grip
- Finger isolation
- Thumb opposition



Tongs

Tongs require children to coordinate both strength and control. The kit offers a variety of sizes to explore more levels of dexterity.

Challenge children to collect:

- Natural objects
- Building blocks
- Ice cubes
- Loose parts
- Pinecones
- Items in cooking and for food preparation
- Leaves

Encourage:

- Grasping
- Transporting
- Carrying
- Releasing
- Collecting
- Sorting
- Use of different sizes

Skills Developed:

- Grip strength
- Shoulder stability
- Dexterity
- Hand control
- Bilateral coordination
- Crossing the midline



Cup Ladles

(Attach rolling pin for a handle)

Perfect for sensory investigation. These have detachable handles (rolling pins) with stampers on the end. The wrist pivot action is excellent in preparing the arm, elbow and wrist for writing.

Explore:

- Water play
- Mud kitchens
- Coloured rice
- Sand
- Oats
- Lentils
- Shaving foam
- Snow

Practise skills such as:

- Scooping
- Pouring
- Stirring
- Mixing
- Filling
- Measuring
- Emptying



Skills Developed:

- Wrist rotation
- Hand stability
- Controlled pouring
- Hand eye coordination
- Motor planning
- Grasp strength



Movement Vocabulary

As children play, model rich language. You may also wish to provide visual cues alongside the printed words.

- Scoop
- Pour
- Twist
- Turn
- Roll
- Push
- Pull
- Squash
- Mash
- Press
- Squeeze
- Pinch
- Pick up
- Grip
- Grasp
- Stamp

Top Tip

There is no "right" way to use these tools. Children learn best when they are given time to explore, experiment and discover their own ways of manipulating materials. Encourage curiosity, celebrate effort and remember that every scoop, squeeze and squish is helping to build the strong, coordinated bodies and hands that will later support drawing, writing and everyday independence.



Many thanks to Helen Battelley for writing this for us. Helen is an internationally respected Early Years consultant, trainer and author. She was a member of the physical development group for the second edition of Birth to 5 Matters.



Physical Development Glossary of Terms

Bilateral Coordination – Being able to use both sides of the body together in a coordinated way.

Core Stability – The strength and control of the muscles around the tummy, back and hips that keep the body steady during movement.

Shoulder Strength – The strength of the muscles around the shoulders that support arm movements. Strong shoulders provide a stable base for fine motor skills, helping children control their hands during activities such as writing, painting and using tools etc.

Wrist Stability – The ability to keep the wrist steady while the fingers and hand move. Wrist stability allows children to grip pencils, scissors and other tools with greater control.

Finger Flexion and Extension – The ability to bend (flex) and straighten (extend) the fingers smoothly and with control. Movements needed for picking up small objects, fastening buttons and using tools such as pencils.

Hand Strength – The strength of the muscles in the hands that allows children to grip, squeeze, press and hold objects securely.

Crossing the Midline – Moving a hand, foot or eye across the imaginary line that divides the body into left and right sides.

Hand-Eye Coordination – The ability to use information from the eyes to guide movements of the hands.



Physical Development Glossary of Terms Continued:

Grasp Strength – Being able to hold objects firmly enough without using too much force.

Motor Planning – Thinking about, organising and carrying out a movement or sequence of movements.

Spatial Awareness – The understanding of where the body is in relation to people, objects and the surrounding environment.

Temporal Awareness – The understanding of timing and rhythm during movement. It allows children to judge when to start, stop or change a movement.

Palm Strength – The strength of the muscles in the palm of the hand that help support gripping and manipulating objects.

Core Activation – Being able to switch on and use the core muscles when moving or maintaining position. Effective core activation helps children stay balanced, maintain posture and produce controlled movements without unnecessary effort.

Hand Endurance – The ability of the hand muscles to work for a sustained period without becoming tired.

Shoulder Manipulation – Moving and controlling the shoulder through a wide range of movements with strength and stability.

Pincer Grip – The ability to pick up and hold small objects using the thumb and index finger.



Physical Development Glossary of Terms Continued:

Finger Isolation – Moving one finger independently from the others. This movement allows children to grip, pinch and manipulate objects with greater precision.

Thumb Opposition - Being able to touch the thumb to each fingertip.

Dexterity - Moving the hands and fingers, smoothly and accurately.

Hand Dominance - The consistent preference for using one hand over the other for skilled tasks.

Wrist Rotation - The ability to turn the wrist smoothly in different directions, such as turning a doorknob, pouring from a jug or using a screwdriver.

Proprioceptive System - The body's awareness of where its muscles and joints are and how they are moving, without needing to look. This sense helps children judge how much force to use, coordinate their movements and control their bodies during everyday activities.

Vestibular System - The sensory system in the inner ear that helps us maintain balance and understand how our body moves in space. It allows children to stay upright, coordinate their movements, and stabilise their vision while moving.

Interoceptive System – Helps us recognise and understand what is happening inside our body. It allows children to notice signals such as hunger, thirst, tiredness, temperature, pain and the need to use the toilet.

