Have you ever wondered what purpose [board games](http://voices.yahoo.com/topic/13695/board_games.html) serve, especially to a young child? Sure, they are fun to play and they develop great social and cognitive skills, but have you ever thought that they could develop and strengthen a child's fine motor skills?

According to ***Wikipedia,*** fine motor skills are defined as follows:

*Fine motor skills can be defined as coordination of small muscle movements which occur e.g., in the fingers, usually in coordination with the eyes. In application to motor skills of hands (and fingers) the term dexterity is commonly used.*

*The abilities which involve the use of hands, develop over time, starting with primitive gestures such as grabbing at objects to more precise activities that involve precise hand-eye coordination. Fine motor skills are skills that involve a refined use of the small muscles controlling the hand, fingers, and thumb. The development of these skills allows one to be able to complete tasks such as writing, drawing, and buttoning.*

Developing and strengthening fine motor skills during early childhood development paves the way to future independence in areas such as self-help skills (*buttoning, zippering, dressing, feeding*), writing skills and drawing skills. That is why it is so important that children at an early age is exposed to play. Children learn through play whether you realize it or not.

Board games offer children the ability to develop and strengthen their hand and finger muscles. Whether it is grasping pegs, using finger isolation to move a small ball or object or manipulating shapes it is all learning disguised as fun. Even Occupational Therapist utilize board games as part of their therapy when working with young children.

**The next time you have playtime or family game night, consider one of these 10 classic board games that develop fine motor skills:**

**1. Operation,** [**Milton Bradley**](http://voices.yahoo.com/theme/2041/left_fielders_fantasy_baseball_draft.html) - Who wants to play doctor?   
Great classic game of skill. Work those fingers muscles as you use tweezers to remove body parts. Great for independent practice for working finger grasp.

**2. Lite-Brite,Hasboro -** Is there an artist in the family?   
Create designs using small pegs on designated areas of the sheet. Great game for working finger grasp, hand-eye coordination as well as color recognition.

**3. Connect Four, Hasboro** - What's your strategy... four down, across or diagonal?   
Although this is main a game of strategy, for someone just learning to grasp and release, this is a great game to work on hand-eye coordination. Young children can use this game to learn to pick up the checkers and place them in the slots.

**4. Pick-Up Sticks,Melissa & Doug** - You moved it!   
Classic game of skill and hand -eye control. Pick up thin sticks without moving any others. Adapt the game for young children and simply have them work their pincher grasp just by picking up these colorful sticks.

***5. Perfection,Hasboro -****How fast can you put all the shapes in before it pops?*   
A sorting game that works on hand eye coordination and pincher grasp. For younger children, great game to learn sorting, shapes and of course work on that pincher grasp.... without the timer of course.

***6. Don't Spill the Beans,Milton Bradley*** *-How fast can you get rid of your beans without making a mess*?   
Classic pre-school game that focuses on picking up small objects. Great game for the entire family to play or for individual practice.

***7. Don't Break the Ice,Milton Bradley*** *-Don't sink the bear*!   
Another classic pre-school game that works on hand-eye coordination as you hammer away at the ice.

***8. Ants in the Pants,Milton Bradley*** *-Do you have ants in your pants*?   
Strengthen your finger muscles as you learn to use finger isolation to make the ants jump into the pants. Pre-school game that can be enjoyed by the whole family.

***9. Hungry Hippos,Milton Bradley*** *-How hungry is your hippo*?   
This game uses continuous finger isolation or palming to get as marbles as you can.

***10. Mr. Mouth,Hasboro*** *-If you open your mouth to wide, a fly just might fly into it*!   
Great game for finger isolation and hand-eye coordination. Flip the flys into the mouth as the head spins around.

Learning can be fun, educational and therapeutic. These classic board games offer much more than just fun; they offer therapeutic elements, elements that help develop our fine motor skills that allow us to perform many of the functions that we take for granted today.