

Using the Hands: Finger Plays and Clapping Games

The ones marked with an * are for the younger crowd, say 5 and under, the others for 5+. But always remember that if your child enjoys younger finger plays, then don't be embarrassed, do them! This especially holds true if your child has any fine motor issues and needs extra practice 'waking up' those fingers. Always do at least 10 minutes of finger plays in First and Second Grade before handwork. From about 8½ or 9 and up, do some cat's cradle or knot-tying as a waking up exercise before handwork.

Two little dicky birds sitting on a wall	[<i>fists closed, thumbs up</i>] *
One named Peter	[<i>bow one thumb</i>]
The other called Paul	[<i>bow the other thumb</i>]
Fly away Peter	[<i>Peter goes behind back</i>]
Fly away Paul	[<i>Paul goes behind back</i>]
Come back Peter	[<i>Peter returns</i>]
Come back Paul	[<i>Paul returns</i>]

It's wiggle Wiggle-worm come on top
To squirm and wiggle, he just won't stop.
See — first he's big and then he's small.
It's wiggly Wiggle-worm come to call.

[*This is not easy! Basically, you need to contract and expand your hand along with your forearm across a table, mimicking the movement of an earthworm. Most of the movement is the stretching and contracting of the hand with the arm following. Do one hand at a time. This is also an excellent whole-body exercise for a child to do across the floor — perhaps after watching some earthworms move!*]

Clap up and clap down *
Clap behind, clap before
Clap up and clap down
As we did before

[*You could do this one with your baby or toddler on your lap, either doing it yourself or gently guiding the child's hands. Vary the speed on this one!*]