

Snack Practice Ideas from QofA PreK Teachers

Milk cartons, yogurt cups, snack bags, bananas...all of them take some serious fine motor skills, motor planning, and strength to open!

Here are some quick things to practice with kids so they can become more independent with opening packages and containers in their lunches:

1 **Tearing paper:** The movement of pinching, moving one hand forward as the other moves back, and working against the resistance of paper are all excellent precursors to tearing open those packages and cartons!

2 **Breaking sticks:** Go for a little walk in the backyard and find some sticks! Have the child hold a stick upright and break off the tip, stabilizing with one hand and applying force with the other. A great precursor to peeling a banana!

3 **Stretching balloons:** Give kids a non-inflated balloon and let them stretch it. Not only is this a fantastic **fidgit toy** (great for keeping little hands busy at a restaurant), but it also requires the same motion as pulling open those bags of chips or pretzels!

4 **Peeling tape:** Stick several small pieces of tape to the table and have kids try to pinch, grasp, and pull them off!

5 **Plastic container match-up game:** Place several different plastic lunch containers on the table. Remove the lids of the containers and mix them up, placing them on the table near the containers. See if the child can find the matching lids and twist or snap them back on the correct containers.

6 **Lego or Duplo blocks** – Both awesome for developing grasp strength needed for pulling, twisting, and pinching those lunch and snack containers!

7 **Velcro** – Pulling against heavy duty **Velcro** is another great hand strengthener

8 **Rubber Bands** – As with balloons, kids can stretch and pull against the resistance of the bands to promote strength in their hands. Or try creating masterpieces on a geoboard.

After you've practiced these, see if your child can transfer the skill to actual food items. Make sure to refer back to the activities above as reminders of how to perform each motion. For example, if your child is opening a bag of chips, say "Pinch each side and pull apart just like stretching out the balloons!"