



# Complex Child E-Magazine

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## Holiday Craft Ideas for Your Child with Fine Motor Impairment by Susan Agrawal

Kids love crafts, and your child with fine motor impairment is no different. It is definitely possible to do crafts with your child, even if he has no use of his hands. All it takes is a little ingenuity!

### **FIRST: Get the right pair of scissors**

Some of you are thinking, “My child does not even have hands! How can she use scissors?” I can guarantee you that there is a pair of scissors that is right for every child.

For children with the most severe impairments, you need a little bit of equipment and some creativity. First off, consider a switch-adapted pair. Two styles are available, including an inexpensive one from AbleNet and another from Enabling Devices that is premounted. Simply attach any switch--including a headswitch or a twitch switch--to the jack and you are ready to cut!

- AbleNet Adapted Scissors:  
<http://www.ablenetinc.com/Home/Products/LeisureLearning/tabid/62/Default.aspx>
- Enabling Devices Adapted Scissors: <http://enablingdevices.com/catalog/useful-devices/household-products/battery-operated-scissors>

It is also possible to use a regular commercial pair of electric scissors. If you have a Powerlink or other environmental control device that allows you to plug something in to it, all you will need is a pair of electric scissors with a plug. These are unfortunately now very difficult to find, but you may be able to get an older one off of Ebay. We have an old Dritz pair from about the 1970s that works great as long as you tape the on-switch down. Simply plug the scissors into the environmental control unit, attach a switch, and you have switch-operated scissors!

It is also possible to use a battery interrupter, available at Radio Shack and similar stores, with a cordless pair of scissors, which are now widely available at craft stores for about \$10 or less. Hook your switch to the battery interrupter, place the battery interrupter between the battery and the battery contacts, and turn the scissors on. You may want to tape down the on trigger, which is easier to do on some models than others. The scissors

will then remain switch-operated. I cannot guarantee this will work with every pair...look for styles that are very simple (one speed) and have basic on/off switches.

For children with some fine motor abilities, there are many options available. Most special needs catalogs contain a wide variety of adapted scissors, the majority of which are made by Mecan aids UK. This page, for example, shows two push-down pairs that allow a child to simply push a lever in order to cut [<http://www.beyondplay.com/CATALOG/FIN5.HTM>]. And this page has a wide variety of styles that provide more support and easier cutting [<http://www.beyondplay.com/CATALOG/FIN4.HTM>]. For children who just need a little extra help, you can purchase tubular foam to build-up the handles of the scissors and make them easier to hold.

❑ Various Styles of Adapted Scissors:

[http://www.peta-uk.com/mecan aids/acatalog/Scissors\\_for\\_Children.html](http://www.peta-uk.com/mecan aids/acatalog/Scissors_for_Children.html)

## **SECOND: Find some paintbrushes, crayons, or stampers**

It is also possible for most children to use some sort of art tools, like paintbrushes or crayons, to draw on their own. The first thing to remember is that the hands are not the only parts of the body that can paint. Many children without use of their hands have learned to paint with their feet or with a paintbrush in their mouths. For some children, the only possibility may be to cover their hands or feet with paint and let them at a sheet of paper! Get creative, and you will likely find something that works.

If your child has some ability to use his or her hands but needs just a little bit of help to hold on to the item, there are now many options available. New lines of art supplies designed specifically for toddlers also work extremely well for children with special needs. The Crayola Beginnings line contains triangular crayons, easy grip markers called TaDoodles, and triangular markers. Crayola's Twistables Slick Stix, which write like lip stick, are also an easy product for many children to use.

❑ Crayola Beginnings:

<http://www.crayola.com/products/list.cfm?categories=BEGINNINGS>

❑ Twistable Slick Stix:

<http://www.crayola.com/products/list.cfm?categories=CRAYONS&categories=T WISTABLE>

Blick Art Materials has a page with many different adapted brushes and other tools, all available at reasonable prices. These range from very basic models to those suitable for a serious artist. Beyond Play also carries a wide assortment of items in their Fine Motor section, including finger brushes, finger crayons, chubby brushes, stampers and sponges with handles, pencil grips, and rollers with handles. Southpaw has a wide variety of items as well, including crayon holders and chubby chalk holders, and Integrations has many writing products, including a weighted writing glove and a wide variety of pencil

grips. Dot Markers are another easy-to-use product, and Do a Dot Art painters, along with Easy-hold Painters, which come with a built-in grip, are great choices.

- ❑ Blick Special Needs Brushes and Tools:
- ❑ <http://www.dickblick.com/categories/specialneeds/>
- ❑ Beyond Play art products: <http://www.beyondplay.com/CATALOG/FIN2.HTM> and <http://www.beyondplay.com/CATALOG/FIN3.HTM>
- ❑ Southpaw Art: <http://www.southpawenterprises.com/Fine-Motor-Skills-C2.aspx?p=0>
- ❑ Integrations: <http://www.integrationscatalog.com/>
- ❑ Do A Dot Art: <http://www.dotart.com/>
- ❑ Easy-hold Painters: [http://www.constplay.com/cgi-bin/constplay.cgi.sh/WService=constplay/constplay.com/family/product.htm?stateInfo=?&dept\\_id=27&pf\\_id=ALX-319L&utm\\_source=shopzilla.com&utm\\_medium=ppc&utm\\_term=ALX-319L&utm\\_campaign=WEB+20081114](http://www.constplay.com/cgi-bin/constplay.cgi.sh/WService=constplay/constplay.com/family/product.htm?stateInfo=?&dept_id=27&pf_id=ALX-319L&utm_source=shopzilla.com&utm_medium=ppc&utm_term=ALX-319L&utm_campaign=WEB+20081114)

If your child is unable to grasp, it is very simple to construct a glove or strap that will hold a brush or other art tool in her hand. Children who already have thumb splints or wrist splints may be able to have certain art tools placed inside the splint, securing it to the hand. Children who do not have splints or whose splints will not work in this way can use a simple strap of fabric and Velcro. Cut a piece of sturdy fabric that is large enough to wrap around your child's wrists and place sticky-back Velcro on each end. Simply place the strap around your child's wrist, Velcro, and add in a marker, paintbrush, or crayon. The same method can be applied to other parts of the body, such as the finger, ankle, or toe.

### **THIRD: Make some art!**

Now that you have some tools, it is time to make some art! Here are just a few projects we have made over the years:

**Holiday Picture Frame Ornaments:** This is the perfect teacher or therapist gift. Buy some craft foam in multiple colors. Using adapted scissors of any kind, have your child cut out a square for the background and four rectangles in another color to make a frame. Assist your child in gluing the pieces together (we usually use a glue gun) with a photograph of your child between the frame pieces and background. Then have your child pick various foam holiday stickers (snowmen, reindeer, snowflakes, etc.) and stick on to the frames. We used my daughter's augmentative communication device to make these choices. Use a hole punch to put a hole in the top and add a piece of ribbon to hang.



**Handprint or Footprint Tree:** Dip the child's hand or foot into green paint and stamp onto a sturdy piece of paper or cardboard. Make at least 10 hands or feet. Cut out each hand or foot using adapted scissors. Help the child to arrange the cutouts into a tree shape, with fingers/toes pointing downward. You should use one print in the top row, two in the second row, three in the third row, and four in the bottom row, overlapping them to make a tree shape. Add a brown rectangle for the trunk. Allow your child to select stickers in circle shapes or stars employing whatever type of communication your child uses. Then stick the stickers to the tree to finish up a lovely wall hanging.

**Snowflake Art:** Find a piece of white paper and have your child use adaptive scissors to cut it into a square shape. Then, using whatever brushes, stampers, crayons, or markers your child prefers, allow him to color or paint the paper using gold paint or glitter paint. Once dry, fold the square in half diagonally, making a triangle, and in half diagonally again, making another triangle. Using adaptive scissors, cut off all three corners of the triangle. Then cut various shapes along the three sides of the triangle. Open it up, and you have a gorgeous snowflake! These can be hung on a window or, using smaller sheets of paper and a piece of ribbon, made into ornaments. To make this project even more fun, pick really unique textures, such as crinkly tissue paper or even fabric.

