

Dear OT,

My preschooler, John, loves playing with Legos. Unfortunately he gets frustrated because his hands are weak and his fine motor skills aren't as good as his classmates. Any ideas? - Jane

Hi Jane,

Legos are great for working on many developmentally appropriate skills. Some strategies you can teach your child to make Lego play a little easier include:

LEGO STRATEGIES

(Note: Consider practicing on larger Legos first!)

PLACE LEGOS LOWER AND CLOSER TO BODY

Place the legos closer to his body and make sure they are lower than his arms. He can stand up and push down on the Legos for more strength (thanks to the physics of levers - this is true for staplers and similar items as well). That way his entire body is being used for the interlocking of the bricks, compensating for his hand weakness.

USE PALM, NOT FINGERS, TO FULLY INTERLOCK

For the bigger pieces, if interlocking bricks are in correct position, just not fully pushed together, first move the item closer and lower as noted above, then use the flattened palm of hand to press them down firmly. The palm has more force/easier than the fingers. If a tower, it may need to be stabilized with the other hand to prevent tipping over.

TEMPORARILY MOVE UNSTABLE AREAS TO A STABLE AREA TO ADD ON MORE PIECES

If there is empty space beneath part of a Lego due to the design, it can get difficult/frustrating to add onto that Lego area. Temporarily remove that part of the design so that it's fully on the flat/stable surface. Add on the necessary extra pieces. Then place the entire part back where it belongs.

Jane, I hope this helps. I imagine there are many sites on the Internet that can be explored to find even more ideas. Good luck with John! Therapeutically yours, OT :)

PS: There are plenty of OT skills that can be worked on using Legos! Fine motor, visual motor, problem-solving, social skills...let me know if you want more information!

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