Although the hole punch is commonly used in office work and craft projects, it can also provide learning activities for 4- and 5-year-olds.

Hole punch activities can strengthen the muscles of the forearm, hand, and fingers as well as increase eye-hand coordination. These small-muscle and coordination skills are needed for important tasks, such as feeding and dressing oneself, holding a pencil to write, and using a computer keyboard.

### Types of hole punches

**Single hole punch.** This handheld tool has many applications, such as making a hole in a price tag, creating confetti, and punching a ticket for admission to an event. Typically, the hole is a circle, but in some hole punches, the hole is a star, heart, half moon, or other shape.

**Multiple hole punch.** Office workers use a hole punch that makes two, three, or four holes in a single punch. This type of hole punch enables workers to collect sheets of paper in a binder. The device can be adjusted to create desired space between the holes.

### Learning to use a hole punch

Learning to use a hole punch is similar to learning to use scissors. Children must be able to use thumb, pointer finger, and middle finger separately from the other two fingers of the hand. The hand and finger muscles must also be strong enough to grip the hole punch handle.

Unlike scissors, a hole punch requires only minimal safety precautions, such as keeping fingers out of the punching end. Remind children to use hole punches only on paper, not fabric or other materials. For quick cleanup, place shallow trays or newspaper on surfaces to catch the cuttings.

A bit of vocabulary: A hole punch creates two things. One is the hole, or *perforation*, left in the paper, and the other is the *chad*, or the dot, usually a circle, clipped out of the paper.

Help children build hand and finger skills with these activities:
At the water table, use a bulb syringe or turkey baster to squeeze air out and then allow water in.

Use kitchen tongs to move cotton balls or tiles from one basket to another.

Place clothespins or chip clips around the edge of a paper plate.

Use an eye dropper to move watercolor paint from a small bowl to a sheet of paper.

Practice punching holes in an index card or other stiff paper.

Incorporate hole punching activities into learning centers. The activities below work best in small groups of three to six children.

**Punch the letter**

**Here’s what you need:**
- hole punch
- marker
- construction paper, cut in 2- or 3-inch squares
- basket or box to store the chads

1. To prepare for the activity, draw an alphabet letter on each construction paper square.
2. Encourage children to choose a letter, perhaps the first letter of their names. Invite them to punch holes along the lines of the letter.
3. Scoop the chads into a basket and save for another activity.

**Variations:** Write the child’s name on a strip of paper to hole punch the entire name. Instead of letters, write numerals or draw geometric shapes.

**Letter bingo**

**Here’s what you need:**
- construction paper cut into 4-inch squares
- marker
- hole punch, one for each child
- alphabet blocks in a basket

1. To prepare for the activity, write five alphabet letters in random order along each edge of each paper square.
2. Encourage each child to choose a square and a hole punch.
3. Draw a block from the basket and say the letter aloud. When children find the letter on their cards, they punch a hole in the letter.
4. Continue drawing blocks until someone punches all the letters along one edge, vertical or horizontal, and yells “Bingo!”

**Variations:** Make color-recognition cards with two colors (red and green, yellow and blue, orange and purple, black and white, for example) along each edge. You call out the color, and each child punches a hole in that color.

**Match the chads to the numbers**

**Here’s what you need:**
- chads from a previous activity
- 9 index cards
- marker
- basket or envelope for storing chads and cards

1. To prepare for the activity, write a number from 1 to 9 on each index card.
2. Invite children to place the corresponding number of chads on each card. That is, one chad for 1, two for 2, and so forth.

**Extension:** As children gain an understanding of amounts, they can use chads to learn simple addition and subtraction.
Sprinkle the dots
Here’s what you need:
■ chads from a previous activity
■ construction paper
■ white glue sticks

1. Encourage children to use a glue stick to mark lines or a design on a sheet of paper. Then sprinkle chads on top, let dry, and shake off the excess.

Note: For most children, applying glue to the paper will be less frustrating than applying glue to chads and affixing them one-by-one on paper. As children develop pincer skill with thumb and pointer finger, however, they will be more able to glue the chads individually, perhaps in a mosaic design.

Polka-dotted strips
Here’s what you need:
■ construction paper, assorted colors, cut into 2-inch wide strips
■ hole punch
■ glue
■ tissue paper, assorted colors

1. Invite children to choose a construction paper strip and punch holes in it.
2. Have them glue a contrasting color piece of tissue on the bottom—for example, yellow tissue under a green perforated strip, for example.
3. Hang the strip in a sunny window, or use as a bookmark.

Variation: Instead of strips, cut paper into shapes. Some examples: A green tree shape can have red paper underneath for apples. A brown dog shape can have white paper underneath for spots. A circle with different colors underneath can be used as a holiday ornament.

Symmetrical squares
Here’s what you need:
■ construction paper, assorted colors, cut into 2-inch wide strips
■ single hole punch
■ multiple hole punch (optional)

1. Invite children to choose a sheet of construction paper, fold it in half, and then fold it in half again to make a square.
2. Have them punch holes through the four thicknesses in a pattern or at random. With an adjustable multiple hole punch, they may be able to more easily reach the center of the square.
3. Open the sheet to reveal the symmetrical squares.

Lace the yarn
Here’s what you need:
■ index cards, assorted colors
■ hole punch
■ yarn, assorted colors
■ tape

1. Invite children to choose an index card and punch holes around the edges, an inch or two apart.
2. Wrap a tiny piece of tape around the end of a length of yarn so that it will slip easily through the holes (rather than using a needle). Demonstrate how to lace the yarn up one hole and down into another, going around the edge.
3. After a child has finished lacing, tie a knot or bow with the two ends.

Variations: Cut the cards into animal shapes (dinosaur, rabbit, cat, dog, for example). Place two cards together, punch holes along one edge, and lace the two cards together. Instead of yarn, use narrow ribbon, string, or shoestrings. Instead of index cards, use paper plates.