Clothespin Rescue

Category: Motor skills | Ages: 3–4 | Time: 10 min | Prep: 2 min | Mess: None | Indoor

Why it matters

Holding a pencil or crayon comfortably requires strength in the thumb and index finger—the same muscles used to squeeze open a clothespin. Clipping pins around a rim also trains both hands to work as a team: one hand holds the bowl steady while the other pinches and places.

Materials checklist

[ ] 6–10 spring-loaded wooden or plastic clothespins
[ ] 1 plastic mixing bowl or a sturdy cardboard circle (like a cereal-box lid)
Substitutes: Clip clothespins onto a thick ruler, a colander rim, or a paper plate.

Step-by-step instructions

1. Show your child how to pinch the flat ends of a clothespin using only their thumb and pointer finger (“crab pinchers”).
2. Hold the mixing bowl steady and let your child clip one clothespin onto the rim.
3. Continue clipping pins around the edge together to turn the bowl into a “spiky hedgehog” or “sunshine.”
4. Pause to count how many pins are clipped around the rim.
5. Have your child unclip each pin one by one and drop it back inside the bowl.

What to say

- “Pinch with your thumb and pointer finger like a little crab—squeeze, open, clip!”
- “Use your helper hand to hold the bowl steady while your pinching hand clips.”
- “Can you rescue all eight pins and drop them safely into the bowl?”

Safety note: Supervise closely so little fingers do not get pinched in tight metal springs, and keep pins away from mouths.

Notes & observations: