

## Paediatric Occupational Therapy Pre- Pencil Skills- Developing pencil grip

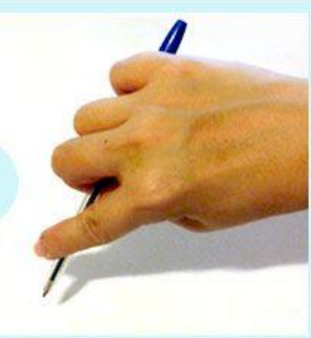


### **Holding a Pencil**

When your child stops putting things into their mouth try to provide them with small pieces of crayon/chalk and large sheets of paper to scribble on. Encouraging a good pencil grip from the start is important, children typically progress from a fisted grip to tripod over time, though they do not necessarily show each of the stages below and will not all reach dynamic tripod grip.

It can help with developing grip for your child to learn the names of their thumb, pointer finger and middle finger (see below for Tommy Thumb Song) so they can start to use them together.

### **Typical development of pencil grip**

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|  <p><b>FISTED GRIP</b><br/>1-2 years old</p> <p>Children often hold their writing tool like a dagger, scribbling using their whole arm.</p>                           |  <p><b>DIGITAL PRONATE GRIP</b><br/>2-3 years old</p> <p>All fingers are holding the writing tool but the wrist is turned so that the palm is facing down towards the page. Movement now comes mostly from the elbow. Children should start being able to copy a horizontal, vertical and circular line.</p> | <p>OR</p>                                                                                                                                                                                |
|  <p><b>4 FINGER GRIP</b><br/>3-4 years old</p> <p>4 fingers are held on the writing tool. Movement is mostly from the wrist and the hand and fingers move as one.</p> |  <p><b>STATIC TRIPOD GRIP</b><br/>4-6 years old</p> <p>This is a 3 finger grasp, where the thumb, index finger and middle finger work as one unit.</p>                                                                                                                                                       |  <p><b>DYNAMIC TRIPOD GRIP</b><br/>By 6 or 7 years old</p> <p>Using only 3 fingers to hold the writing tool. This is the ideal grip to help move the pencil efficiently, accurately.</p> |

## Activity Ideas

- Sing the Tommy Thumb song



- Encourage your child to colour in pictures and try a variety of different mark making tools such as felt pens, crayons, chalk – short and chunky versions of these are best for early stages.



- Finger paint with your child, and encourage them to use a different colour for each finger (thumb, pointer and middle fingers only).
- See if they can pick up marbles using the thumb, pointer and middle fingers only, can they move them between sections of a old egg box?
- Encourage supervised practice of scissor skills (see scissor skills information on Universal Support website)



- Offer lots of playdough activities to include pinching, poking and squishing
- Tear paper into small pieces and stick them onto paper/card to make a collage
- Peg board, lego, inset jigsaws and pick up sticks games

- Support them in threading games with pasta, beads, buttons, or try cheerios on dry spaghetti.
- Musical instruments, clapping games and finger rhymes
- Encourage them to sort groups of small/tiny objects into shapes and sizes, and into containers with screw or clip lids to try opening/closing too
- Tweezer activities to pick up small objects such as pasta, beads, cotton wool are great too – they can start with chunky tweezers and then move to smaller ones as their skill improves

Extra Tip:

It can be helpful to encourage your child to hold a small cotton wool ball (or another small object) in the palm of their hand using their ring finger (ring finger) and baby small (pinkie finger) whilst doing fine motor activities - this ensures these fingers do not become part of pencil grasp.

