

FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Strategy: Pencil Grasp

Audience: Kindergarten to Grade 4

What:

- A good pencil grasp is one that allows fingers to move the pencil easily, precisely, and is pain-free
- The most common pencil grasp is the tripod grasp (thumb, index, and middle fingers hold the pencil)
- A child may modify this grasp quite functionally
- Pencil control rather than appearance of the grasp should be the priority
- Some children develop a pencil grasp that is inefficient and can make printing difficult
- It can be challenging to change a poor pencil grasp once it has been established

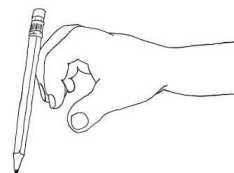
How:

- Positioning the pencil: The pencil is grasped between the tips of the thumb and index finger and is supported against the side of the middle finger. The last two fingers are curved and rested against the table surface. This pencil grasp is often called a tripod grasp
- Strategies to promote proper pencil grasp:
 - demonstrate correct pencil grasp and assist the child in placement of fingers on the pencil
 - remind the child of correct placement with visual and tactile cues such as tape/sticker/rubber band one inch from tip, or by marking the pencil where fingers should be placed
 - pencil grips can be helpful for reinforcing finger placement
 - teach the pinch and flip method (see video for details)
 - practice and reinforce pencil grasp often

Materials:

- A shorter writing utensil (e.g., broken crayon, pencil, or piece of chalk) encourages a tripod grasp
- Work on a vertical surface (e.g., chalkboard, whiteboard, paper on a wall or an easel). This encourages wrist extension, strengthens wrist and shoulder muscles, and promotes a more mature grasp
- Pencil grips can help with finger placement (consult divisional Occupational Therapist prior to selecting a grip)

Example: click image to play the video



Inclusive Practices to Consider:

- Providing a visual picture of a tripod grasp to reference on the child's desk
- Give the child a small piece of crumpled tissue or small pom-pom to hold with the ring and little fingers as a reminder to keep them tucked in
- When correct grasp is achieved, have the child place a paper over a rough surface such as sandpaper and then make scribbling movements. This will help the child feel the correct finger placement
- There are a variety of different pencil grips/pencil types available that may assist a child to maintain a proper pencil grasp (consult divisional OT for guidance)

Reference and Links:

How to Correctly Hold a Pencil

<https://www.lwtears.com/blog/how-to-hold-pencil-grip>

Pencil Grasp - An Overview

<https://www.ot-mom-learning-activities.com/pencil-grasp.html>