



OCCUPATIONAL AND PHYSICAL THERAPY TEAM

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Pencil Grasp

What is it?

Pencil grasp is the way your child holds and uses a writing tool, such as a marker, pencil, or crayon. There is a developmental progression to how children learn to hold the tool. Training the muscles and movements to work efficiently leads to lifelong ease and efficiency in tool use.

Typical developmental progression guide



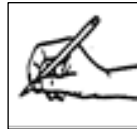
1. Palmar or fist grasp 0-2 yr

2. Digital pronate grasp 2-3yr



2. Static tripod grasp 3-4yr

3. Dynamic tripod grasp 4+yr



Other grasps that are functional:

Efficiency is key!

When the muscles are being used efficiently, your child will be able to draw and write more easily, and for a longer periods of time. He will derive pleasure from drawing and be more willing to engage in these activities.

Strength

Hand strength is how strong the little muscles in the hands are. It affects which pencil grasp your child will use, their motivation to draw or write, the length of time they will be able to hold the pencil, and the control with which they use their pencil.

Pincers are not for pinching!

Using the thumb with the index finger is the pincer grasp and is needed to be able to develop an efficient pencil grasp. A pincer grasp is also important for picking up small objects, playing, dressing and feeding.



Two sides of the hand

Each side of the hand has a different purpose when holding a pencil. The thumb side of the hand allows for skilled movement, like holding the pencil or zipper while the pinky side of the hand curls up to the palm, helping to stabilize it throughout the drawing activity.

Play to build skill!

There are many types of games that you can play with your child to help them develop the foundational skills to develop an efficient pencil grasp:

- Connect Four – games that involves moving items around in their palm is great for learning about the two sides of the hand.
- Any game that involves scooping, pouring, or digging, such as in a sand box, water table, or with them helping out in the kitchen!
- LEGO and block building
- Dress up – Playing dress up with costumes or dolls can help your child learn how to use fasteners and sequence getting dressed.
- Beading – Beading is a great activity for dexterity, as well as learning to use both sides of the body together.
- PlayDoh or clay
- Folding – Encourage your child to make homemade cards where they are folding paper in half which encourages them to use both hands together.
- Tweezer and tongs – play sorting games do craft activities or decorate cookies or cupcakes using tweezers and tongs to pick up small items
- Pencil Olympics
 - Cartwheels – Hold the pencil with a pincer grasp and rotate the pencil using the middle finger without dropping it!
 - 50m dash – hold the pencil with a pincer grasp and race up and down the pencil using your fingers
 - Balance beam – Hold the pencil between your index and middle fingers, between the 2nd and 3rd knuckle. Reach with your thumb to the eraser end and push the pencil through your fingers

Action Plan

Today's Activity: _____

Which activities would you like to try until next visit: _____

Children to Include: _____

When will you be able to do these activities: _____

How can we increase the complexity of this activity: _____

Reflection

On our next visit, we will reflect on how this plan went for you. Please be ready to share your thoughts and experience.