

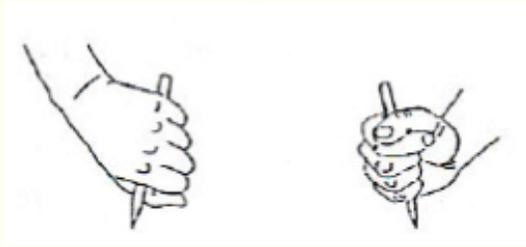
HANDWRITING

Natural Progression of a Child's Pencil Grasp

The natural progression of a child's pencil grasp can follow a predictable progression. Pencil grasp patterns may develop from a least mature grasp (fisted grasp/palmar supinate grasp) to a more mature grasp (dynamic tripod grasp) which can be seen below.

1. FISTED GRASP/PALMAR SUPINATE GRASP

-A fisted grasp is when a child grasps a pencil with their entire fist wrapped around it.

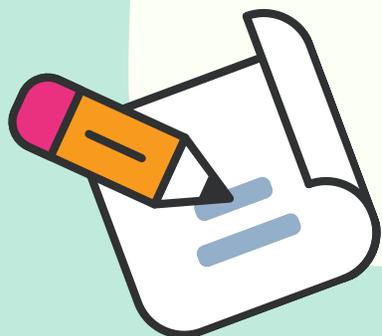


A palmar supinate grasp is when the child has a fisted grasp with the child's thumb wrapped around the top of the pencil.



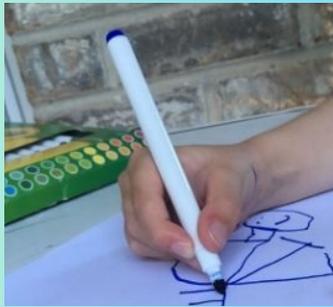
2. DIGITAL PRONATE GRASP

-A digital pronate grasp is used when the child's fingers are pointing downwards and the child is still using all their fingers to hold the pencil.



3. STATIC TRIPOD GRASP AND QUADRUPOD GRASP

-A static tripod grasp is when a child holds a pencil with their thumb, index finger and middle finger. The pencil is usually held between their thumb and index finger with the pencil resting on their middle finger. In this grasp the fingers do not yet move the pencil; strokes initiate from the wrist and forearm.



A quadrupod grasp is a four-finger grasp where the child is using their thumb, index finger and middle finger to hold the pencil with the pencil resting on their ring finger.



4. DYNAMIC TRIPOD GRASP

-A dynamic tripod grasp is when a child holds the pencil between their thumb and index finger with the pencil resting on their middle finger. They move the pencil using finger movements and not their wrist and forearm like in a static tripod grasp. This is considered the most mature grasp a child can have.



Functional Pencil Grasp

Although the natural progression of a child's pencil grasp pattern has been outlined above it is crucial to remember that the most important aspect of a child's pencil grasp is that it is functional. An occupational therapist will be looking for a functional pencil grasp, which means that your child may not be using the most mature pencil grasp (dynamic tripod grasp) but is still able to write efficiently and effectively. This means their writing is clear, legible, and time efficient. As long as your child has no major concerns (e.g., pain, unclear writing) when writing, then a functional pencil grasp is all that is needed.



Handwriting Activities

There are different activities you can do at home with your child to help improve their handwriting skills.

1. Have your child hold a cotton pad or pom pom in the palm of their hand using only their ring and pinky fingers to hold it down when they are doing writing tasks, colouring or doing other fine motor activities (e.g., picking up blocks or coins). This will allow your child to work on developing the separation of their fingers and practice using three fingers (thumb, index finger and middle finger) to hold a pencil which is seen in more mature pencil grasps (e.g., dynamic tripod grasp).

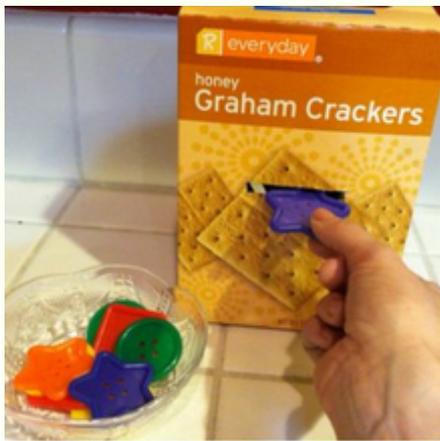


More Handwriting Activities

2. You could have your child play the game Connect Four. This game allows them to hold the plastic coins using their thumb, index finger and middle finger usually seen in the mature pencil grasp patterns. You could also pair this activity with the previous one by having your child hold a cotton pad in the palm of their hand using their pinky and ring fingers. This will encourage them to use only three fingers that are typically used for holding a pencil.



You can also take a cereal box (or other food item containers) and cut slits in the box that are big enough for coins to fit through to simulate the same activity for younger children.



3. Another fun activity that can help promote your child to use three fingers (thumb, middle finger and index finger) is making necklaces. This can be done with beads and string or even pieces of a straw and a pipe cleaner. This activity can also be paired with the cotton pad under their pinky and ring fingers to help further promote the use of only using their thumb, index finger and middle finger when doing fine motor activities.

