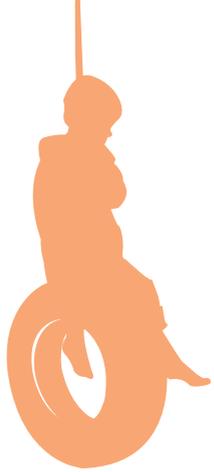


ARE YOU HOLDING YOUR PENCIL or PEN CORRECTLY?



HOT TIP:
Make your fingers stronger and more flexible by playing with play dough or construction toys/ games.

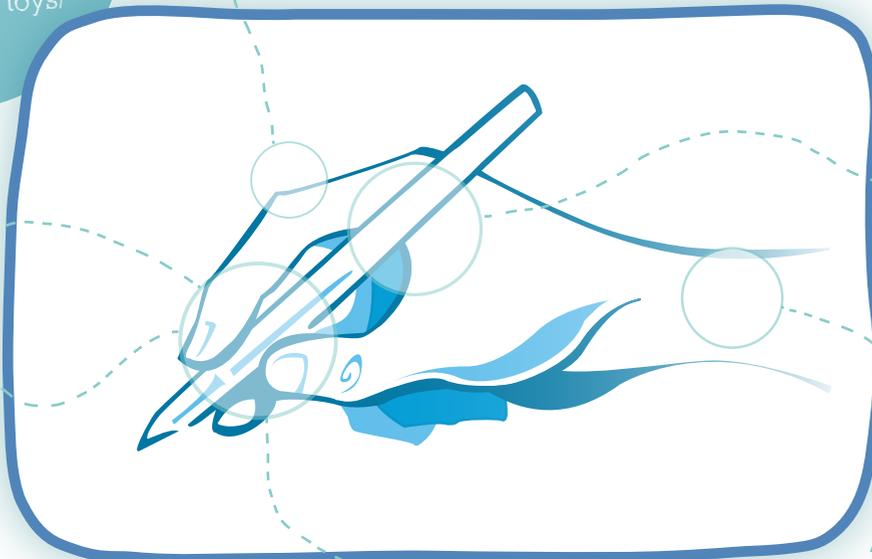
Curved fingers allow finger movement.

HOT TIP:
A good posture (feet flat on the floor, back straight, arms resting on the desk) will greatly improve the way you can move the pencil.

The third finger supports the pencil/pen from the side.

HOT TIP:
Try putting texta dots on the pads of the fingers where they touch the pencil/pen to remind you where to put your fingers.

The shaft of the pencil/pen rests in webbing of the hand.



HOT TIP:
Practice 'finger push ups' by extending and flexing the index finger and thumb, this slides the pencil along the web space of the hand.

The thumb and index finger control the movement of the pencil/pen. (NB. Some children with "floppy fingers" may need to put the index and middle finger on top of the pencil/pen to provide increased stability.

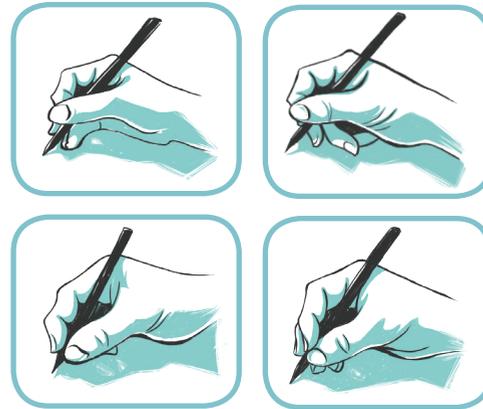
The thumb and index finger are approximately 1.5- 2cm from the tip of the pencil/pen (near the sharpened section of a pencil).

Slight extension of the wrist allows movement of the hand.

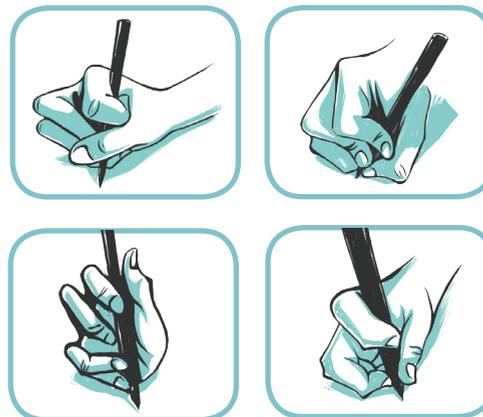
IS THERE A RIGHT WAY TO HOLD A PENCIL?

In some cases children do not hold their pencil correctly but have developed their own unique grasp. The following diagram shows different grasps that will produce efficient handwriting and those which will not assist speed, legibility or comfort.

ACCEPTABLE



DYSFUNCTIONAL

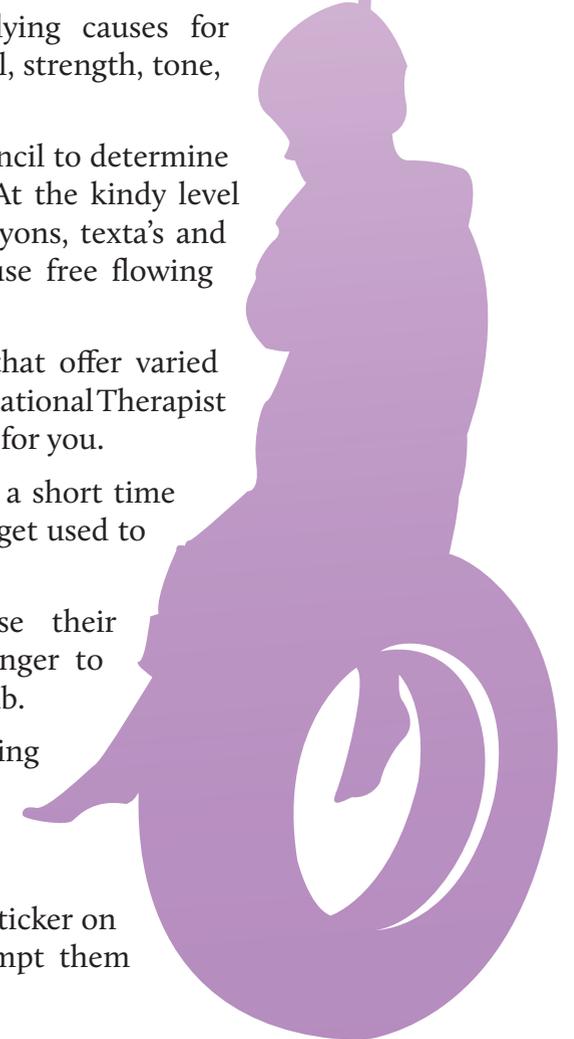


Children need to 'develop' rather than 'learn' the correct way to hold their pencil. A child's ability to use the muscles in their fingers and hands increases as they grow. They need to develop both strength and coordination of these small muscles to hold and manipulate a pencil well. Before they can do this, children need to be able to control their posture, use the muscles of the shoulder well and process all the information from their sensory systems adequately (touch and movement).

The tripod pencil grasp describes the position of grasping a pencil between the thumb and the index finger whilst the pencil rests on the side of the middle finger. The pencil should be held about 1.5 → 2cm from the tip (slightly more for left handed children). Children should be moving the pencil from their fingertips and thumb rather than wrist, forearm and shoulder.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Ensure there are no underlying causes for difficulties e.g. postural control, strength, tone, in hand manipulation.
- Trial a number of pens and pencil to determine the best type for your child. At the kindy level use short, thicker, pencils, crayons, texta's and markers. To develop speed use free flowing pens to reduce resistance.
- There are a variety of grips that offer varied support. Speak with your Occupational Therapist about which pencil grip is best for you.
- If using a grip, only use it for a short time each day to allow the child to get used to the feeling of the new grasp.
- Encourage the child to use their 'caterpillar finger' or index finger to move the pencil with the thumb.
- A sticker, rubber band or masking tape can be placed on the pencil to demonstrate correct distance and placement.
- Draw a smiley face or place a sticker on the child's web space to prompt them where to place the pencil.



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