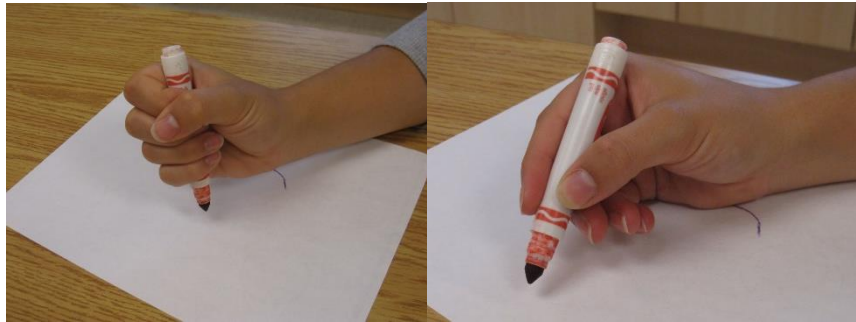


HOLDING AND USING A PENCIL

Why is this important?

Young children use their whole hand to hold a marker or crayon and their whole arm to move it and make marks on a page.



As children develop, grasp and control of marking tools moves to their fingers. This allows ease of movement and precise control, which leads to detailed drawing and neat printing.

An efficient pencil grasp develops by using the hands and fingers for many different activities and through practice using a pencil.

Remember that some 'awkward' grasps are also functional. If the child is comfortable and their printing is neat and efficient there is no need to change how they hold a pencil.

How can I build hand skills for good pencil grasp?

These activities will develop the hand and finger muscles that are used in a mature, efficient pencil grasp (dynamic tripod).

- Activities with small pegs such as Lite-Brite®
- Finger games and songs e.g. Itsy-Bitsy Spider, cat's cradle
- Using play dough, clay or Plasticine: Roll, squeeze, poke. Find small objects hidden in the clay.

- Beading and lacing activities
- Clothespin games
- Marble games
- Stickers
- Spinning tops
- Stampers
- Wind up toys
- Games with pennies or tokens
- Use tweezers or tongs to pick up small beads or toys
- Tear up paper for pasting or collage activities



Also refer to the Tip Sheet, *Using One Hand with Skill*

How can I encourage an efficient pencil grasp?

- Draw, print or colour on a vertical surface such as a wall mounted blackboard or whiteboard, an easel, or paper taped to a wall.
- Use small stubby tools: broken crayons, chalk pieces, or short pencils.
- Teach children how and where to place their fingers on a pencil.
- Mark the pencil with masking tape, an elastic or spot of nail polish to show (and feel) where fingers should be.
- Older children (age 6 and up) may benefit from using a purchased pencil grip. Be sure that it is placed correctly on the pencil and that the child is taught how to use it.

These are general suggestions that may or may not be appropriate for your child's age and stage.

If you have questions and are waiting for Occupational Therapy service, consider booking a Consultation Clinic appointment.