



Pencil Grasp Skills for Children



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When children first start drawing the way they learn to hold a pencil follows a pattern.

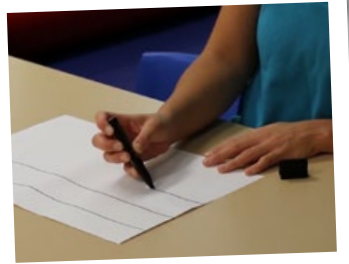


When children first pick up a pencil they may hold the pencil using their whole hand.

With practice the grip changes to a grasp. Your child will start holding a pencil with their fingers and their hand will face down towards the paper.



After this, your child's grasp will change to holding the pencil with four of their fingers.



When your child's hands are stronger, they should then be able to hold the pencil with three fingers - a "tripod grasp".



When your child has enough strength in their arms and hands they should begin to move through the stages of the grasping pattern.

Children should start to use the 'tripod grasp' at about 4-5 years of age. However it is important not to force your child to use a grasp that is too hard for their age and skill level.

Asking a child to use a tripod grip when their muscles aren't strong enough may result in them learning bad habits which can be hard to correct later.

Pencil Grasp can be achieved and improved by doing the following activities.

1. Use play dough

- Roll some play dough flat using a rolling pin.
- Place little coins or very small plastic toys in the play dough.
- Squash the play dough into a ball.
- Encourage the child to sort through the play dough using their fingers to find the little coins or the small plastic toys.

2. Make a pattern of pegs on the edge of a container and have the child copy the pattern of pegs. Help your child to pinch the pegs between the pads of their fingers.

3. Find pictures of your child's favourite things, e.g. stars, suns, rainbows, and decorate these pictures using crepe paper. Help your child to:

- tear the crepe paper using one hand to hold the paper and the other to tear down
- scrunch the crepe paper in the tips of their fingers
- glue the paper onto the craft piece



4. Play games or allow time for your child to play with toys or games that encourage a pinch and push motion in their fingers. Toys may include LEGO® and games such as Pick-up Sticks®, Pop-up Pirate® or cards.

5. Sort soft objects such as craft balls, dried pasta shells and small plastic toys into small or large sizes or colours using tongs.



These games are also useful if you are finding it hard to get your child to do drawing and hold a pencil.



Other ideas to teach a good pencil grasp include:

- Use chunky textas or crayons or thick pencils that are easy for young children to grasp.
- Provide hand over hand help to your child when learning how to grasp a pencil. To provide hand over hand help:
 - sit next to or behind your child
 - place your hand over their hand
 - guide fingers to pick up the pencil using their fingers.
- Older children may only require you to guide their fingers to the correct place on the pencil.
- Place stickers on the bottom of the pencil so they can see where they need to place their fingers on the pencil.
- Place a small piece of Blu Tack® under the child's ring and pinky fingers. Encourage them to try to hold onto the Blu Tack® whilst they grasp the pencil to draw or colour in. This will help them to hold the pencil using the thumb, pointer and middle fingers.
- A child who has shown that they are able to use a tripod or three finger grasp may only need you to remind them to hold the pencil using the correct grasp. You may say "Hold your pencil at the bottom using your three fingers".