Pencil grasp and grips

Pencil skills are a significant way in which we communicate. Of course, there are many ways children hold their pencils, and this can be a result of poor finger and hand strength.

The best way to ensure your child is off to a good start is to build the strength of the fingers. Then they will be more ready to sustain an appropriate pencil grasp and persist with pencil tasks for an age appropriate duration. In some cases, a pencil grip is a good way to reinforce this ideal grasp, so that bad habits don’t form or can be broken.

Holding the pencil inappropriately can have an impact on a child’s ability to demonstrate age appropriate neatness of pencil tasks, to sustain age appropriate speed of pencil skills, avoid rapid fatigue due to excessive pencil pressure, to engage in pencil tasks as long as their peers and avoid unnecessary pain or fatigue due to poor pencil skill mechanics.

An ideal pencil grasp is dependent upon the child’s development.

By **3½ – 4 years** (static tripod grasp), the pencil is ideally held with four fingers with a slightly elongated (flattened) web-space. The wrist is held still while the hand moves as a unit, and the wrist straight not extended.

By **4½ – 5 years** (dynamic tripod grasp), the pencil is ideally held with three finger
with a rounded web-space that allows ideal isolated finger control for precise and refined pencil control, with the pencil movement generated in the fingers only. The wrist is held slightly extended to allow more isolated finger movement, and the forearm is slightly turned over towards the table.

By **school entry** (reception, 5 years+), ideal pencil skills involve a three fingered pencil grip with no overlapping of the fingers or thumb over the pencil or fingers, and no hyper-extension (bending backwards) of finger joints. All movement for writing is ideally generated in the isolated fingers (rather than the shoulder, elbow or wrist) which then allows good fluency of pencil movement for refined control and size. An upright posture at the desk with shoulders relaxed is also important in supporting appropriate pencil skills.

![Pencil Grip](image)

**Pencil Grips**

Pencil grips are often used as a temporary measure to promote an appropriate grasp on the pencil when the child does not have sufficient strength in the fingers and thumbs. They also provide additional sensory feedback to the fingers to aid with muscle memory which in turn promotes better long term success with pencil grasp once the grip is removed.

**Grotto Grip**

The Grotto grip is designed to help get fingers in the correct position. This grip is helpful in stopping the thumb from overlapping. The index and the thumb go ‘under the wings’ and the third finger sits right underneath as the ‘pilot of the
spaceship’. It can be used for both right and left handers.

THE Grip

“THE” Pencil grip has a small bulbous end that helps fill in the web space to develop ‘c’ shaped web. It provides moulded surfaces to help position the fingers. It can be used for both right and left handers. It is useful where heavy pressure is applied through the fingers to the pencil as the wide surface area diffuses the pressure.

Finger Strength

Fine motor skills involve the use of the smaller muscle of the hands, in tasks such as doing up buttons, opening lunch boxes, or using pencils or scissors (common table top tasks). This is why it is important to have sufficient strength in the hand and fingers. It also aids in appropriate pencil grasp and movement, which aids endurance for pencil tasks.

Activities that will assist with finger strength include:

- **PEGGING** encourages the use of isolated finger movement when the child uses only the 3 fingers used for pencil skills. Children can peg around a paper plate of which has a clown face on it. The pegs then became the clowns spikey hair.
- **CUT AND PASTE** activities will enable the child to develop finger strength from cutting, particularly if cutting cardboard. Have the child cut out geometric shapes and draw a picture using the shapes that they cut out and have them make the picture. This is a great project that you and your child can build over time.
- **PLAY DOH** offers the versatility to squish and roll as well as to build different models, using play doh plungers or to push golf tees into.
- **BLOCK BUILDING** where the child copies a model will assist with the development of finger strength and manipulation. There are a range of blocks and construction sets available. These sets may include Lego, Kid
Knex, Little Architect, Cube a link or even Duplo.

Contact us today to make an initial enquiry or book an assessment for your child on 1800 KID SENSE (1800 543 736)