

How to Hold a Pencil

How to help your child at home

Having a correct pencil grasp is very important. Show children how to hold a pencil in the **tripod position**, and check to see that they use this grip while they draw and write with you. The first few days may be challenging, but you will see improvement.

The Tripod Grip

The pencil should be positioned so that there is equal pressure between the thumb, the side of the middle finger and the tip of the index finger. All fingers are bent slightly. This is called a "tripod grip" or "tripod pencil grasp."

Your child may need a pencil grip to use at home while doing homework. A pencil grip positions the fingers correctly and helps the fingers stay in the position as they write. Pencil grips come in several styles and are available at teacher supply stores.

Explain the Reason

Some children respond well when they are given the reason for using the tripod grip:

- The tripod grip allows a person to write more quickly and easily, while a tight or awkward grip can slow writing.
- The tripod grip avoids physical problems to the hand and wrist. The continual aggravation of clenching a pencil can lead to problems later in life.

Tension in Fingers and Hands

Is the first knuckle of the pointer finger hyper-extended? Is the index finger red and the knuckle white from too much pressure? There should be no sign of pressure in the knuckle or the finger tip. The index finger rests on top of the pencil.

Is the tripod grip too tight? The three fingers should gently grip the pencil and keep the pencil stable while writing. Is the hand a tight fist? Have the child pretend they have a round ball inside their hand as they write, or have them hold a wadded paper towel as they write.

Tension indicates weak fine-motor skills. Work with manipulatives to improve these skills: cut with scissors, play with finger puppets, play with modeling clay, stretch Silly Putty, play games that require a pinching motion (Pick-Up-Sticks), and string beads.

Position of the Wrist

The eraser end of the pencil should point toward the shoulder. Some children prefer to position the pencil vertically, so that the eraser end is pointing up. It is not the classic grip, but it is fine as long as the hand is relaxed.

The underside of the forearm to the thumb should be a straight line. The hand does not hook back toward the body