

Information

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Correcting Pencil Grip

Learning the proper pencil grip can be a little tricky for kids—and it's so important for handwriting! If they learn how to grip the pencil incorrectly and are allowed to continue without correction, it is a hard habit to break. Thankfully, there are methods to correcting pencil grip in kids. It will take some work and reminders, but it can be done. Here are a few of my favourite tricks for correcting proper pencil grip.

Fine Motor Play

Before kids even pick up a pencil they should be immersed in fine motor play. Babies start working on the fine motor skills needed for writing when they start picking up small snacks off their highchair tray. There are lots of basic play activities for developing fine motor skills that can be set up easily with things around the house.

Use Smaller Writing Tools

Try giving your child a golf pencil, broken crayon/chalk, or crayon rocks for a twist on the traditional. The smaller size of these items naturally requires children to use the correct pencil grip because there is less surface area.



The Sock Method

It may look silly, but the sock trick is really easy. Just take an old sock and cut two holes. Have your child put the sock on their hand, putting their thumb and index finger through the holes. The rest of the hand can curl up together and take a nap inside.

The Pom Pom Method

Place a pom pom or another small item in between the last two fingers and your child's palm. This will force your child to keep those extra fingers under and out of the way while they hold their pencil.

The "OK" Method

Tell your child to make the OK sign with their fingers. Tell them to open the circle a little and place the pencil in between their fingers. Then, tell them to curl their other fingers under.



The Pinch & Flip Method

Tell your child to lay the pencil in front of them with the point of the pencil pointing away from them. Tell them to pick up their pencil with their thumb and index finger—this is the pinch part. Then, have them gently push the pencil so it flips around and rests properly. Easy!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhtdJ4D0OtQ&noredirect=1>

The shorter pencil

A shorter pencil means less space for cramming in unnecessary fingers. It basically forces kids to pinch with thumb and index finger. Break crayon in half or buy short pencils.

Activities

Many fine motor skills activities naturally encourage the proper tripod grip.

MONEY BOX

Use a regular money box or a recycled container and encourage your child to hold 2 or 3 coins in the hand and push them through one at a time without dropping the others. Upgrade to using more coins as your child gets better at this task. Putting coins in a top slot is easier than pushing them through a side slot. If your child uses a side slot, make sure the thumb is under the fingers to get the most out of the exercise. **NB be aware of the choking hazard with little kids!**

EGG CARTON AND BEANS

Another inexpensive activity with household materials! This is the same concept as the moneybox idea above, but using dried beans and an egg carton. In this example, we are reinforcing number concept by writing a number inside each hole, and the child has to add the correct number of beans. Have your child hold a few beans in his hand, and place them into the container one by one by moving a single bean up to the fingertips each time. It is harder than it sounds, especially for kids with poor fine motor skills! **NB be aware of the choking hazard with little kids!**

PLAY DOUGH

Don't underestimate the potential of this age-old activity! Leave out the paraphernalia and get your child to squash, squeeze, roll and pound the playdough to get those hand muscles moving.

SCISSOR CUTTING

Scissor cutting is by far one of the best kindergarten hand exercises as it is a great way to getting the tripod fingers to work together well. Make sure your child uses the tripod fingers in the holes, and give lots of practice cutting out on straight lines before moving on to shapes and pictures.

TRIPOD COLOURING

Ok, this activity does use a crayon, but it is used in such an undemanding way! Use the tripod fingers to hold a crayon down flat and rub color all over a large area, like this circle which is about to be cut out. Although square and triangular crayons are great, they can be expensive, but regular crayons do the trick just as well.



TEARING PAPER

Tearing paper can be fun! First, check which way the grain of the magazine paper runs – the strips may run better horizontally or vertically. Either you or your child can tear the strips from the page. Once strips have been torn, then tear the strips into small squares across the grain. Use the tripod fingers to grasp the paper and tear. For best results, place the thumbs together on the top, and then pull one hand towards the body.

CLOTHES PEG ACTIVITIES

Draw a single dot on one side of a clothes peg, and two dots on the other side. This shows your child where to place the fingers. Your child should grip the pegs with the pads at the tops of the fingers. Use the clothes pegs to pick up and transfer items, or have your child pick up and place a number of clothes pegs, making sure the tripod fingers are used correctly.



Maybe build a cage of dinosaurs and with the pegs pick up 'food' and transfer to the cage.

SQUIRT TOYS

Available from some toy shops and therapy product suppliers, these little plastic toys that squirt water can be used effectively with the tripod fingers. Add a couple to your stock of bath toys to add a fine motor boost to bath time!



FINGER BALL WALK (strengthening)

Introduce your child to this activity without using the tripod fingers, until they get the hang of walking the ball up and down their legs. (Or up one leg, across the tummy, and down the other leg!) Look out for kids making grabbing movements with their hands instead of getting a WALKING movement with their fingers.



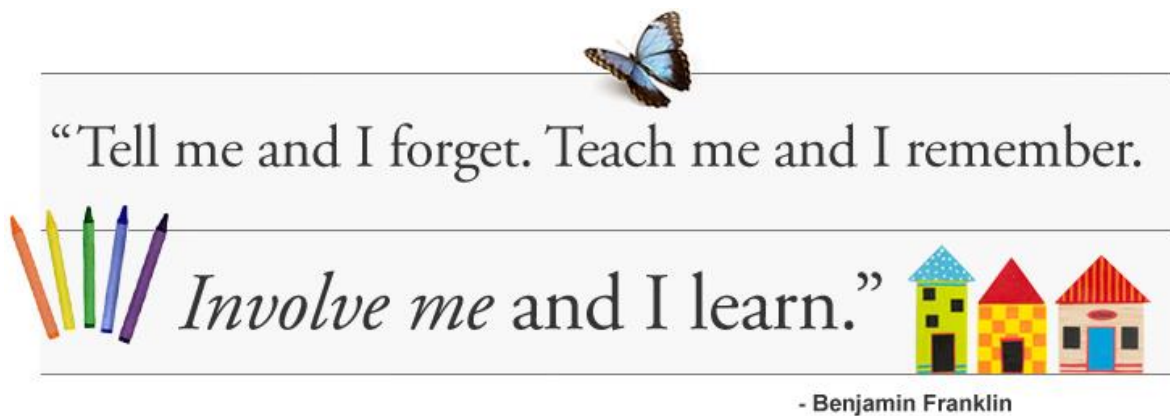
BUBBLE WRAP

Simple and cheap have your child pop the bubbles with tripod fingers.

TWEEZERS

Use tweezers to pick up a variety of things – fun games can be designed.

Above are some ideas and exercises to help your child develop better pencil grip, watch your child and should none of these exercises help, should he not improve at all then you may need to consider some assistance from an OT.



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Play Therapy * Counselling * Trauma Counselling

Please note that this information must not be used for diagnostic purposes. Please visit a medical professional for a correct diagnosis.