

## Developing pencil grasp

Your child should be interested in holding and using crayons, pencils and pens from a young age.

The way they hold the crayon or pencils affects the amount of control they have when drawing, colouring and writing.

A mature pencil grasp is not fully developed until the ages of 6 to 7 years old



**FISTED GRIP**  
1-2 years old

Children often hold their writing tool like a dagger, scribbling using their whole arm.



OR

**DIGITAL PRONATE GRIP**  
2-3 years old

All fingers are holding the writing tool but the wrist is turned so that the palm is facing down towards the page. Movement now comes mostly from the elbow. Children should start being able to copy a horizontal, vertical and circular line.



**4 FINGER GRIP**  
3-4 years old

4 fingers are held on the writing tool. Movement is mostly from the wrist and the hand and fingers move as one.



**STATIC TRIPOD GRIP**  
4-6 years old

This is a 3 finger grasp, where the thumb, index finger and middle finger work as one unit.



**DYNAMIC TRIPOD GRIP**  
By 6 or 7 years old

Using only 3 fingers to hold the writing tool. This is the ideal grip to help move the pencil efficiently, accurately.

To encourage your child to use a mature grasp (dynamic tripod) try the following techniques:

## Developing pencil grasp

Help your child place the pads of their index finger, middle finger and thumb on the pencil and then give them some hand-over-hand assistance to maintain it initially.



Encourage your child to rest their forearm on the table top which will help stabilise their arm to control the pencil.

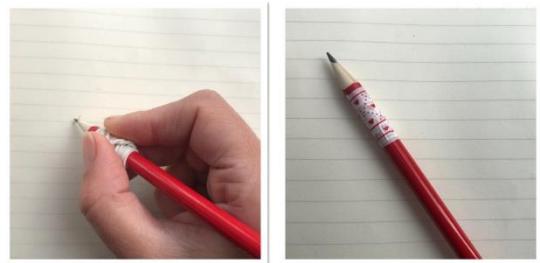
Watch them while they are drawing or writing and keep repositioning their fingers as they wander.

If your child doesn't like your physical help and reverts to holding the pencil in their fist, try to give them short chalks and wax crayons to hold because this limits how they can grip it and encourages them to use finger tips.

If your child holds the pencil high up on the barrel try placing a rubber band, binder clip or coloured tape near the tip as a prompt for where his fingers should be.

Experiment with pencils of different thicknesses and see which your child prefers.

Try using triangle-shaped pencils and/or pens with grooves on the barrel to prompt finger placement.



Try writing on an upright surface such as chalk board or painting easel, which will encourage your child to alter their finger grasp. Encourage your child to practice mark making on a vertical or inclined surface.