

Developing a pencil grip

Definition

Pencil grip is only one component of handwriting. Most children naturally develop a pencil grip that is comfortable for them. In any kinder or school class a variety of pencil grips will be seen. Acceptable pencil grips include those shown in Figure 1.

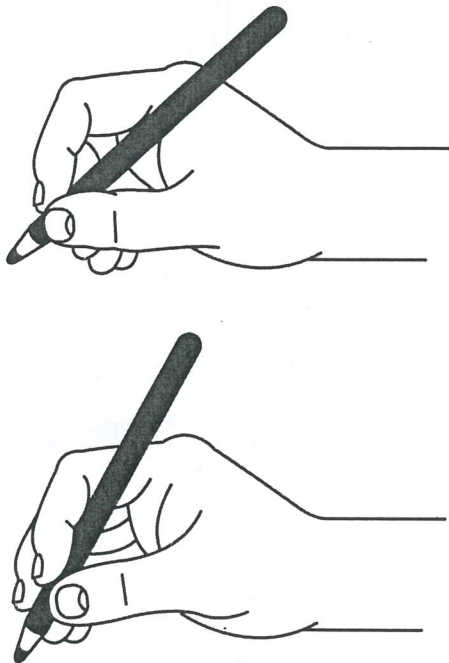


Figure 1: Acceptable pencil grips.

A pencil grip is only a problem if a child has difficulty writing legibly, at a reasonable speed, or complains of a sore or tired hand when writing.

If an awkward grip pattern becomes a habit it is more difficult to change later. Pencil grips are easier to change in kinder and the early school years.

Encourage your child to hold her pencil in a way that allows her hand and fingers to move freely and easily when writing or drawing. General guidelines for a good pencil grip, as shown in figure 2, include:

- ▶ the pencil is held in a stable position between the thumb, index and middle fingers
- ▶ the ring and little fingers are bent and rest comfortably on the table
- ▶ the index finger and thumb form an open space
- ▶ the wrist is bent back slightly, and the forearm is resting on the table
- ▶ the pencil is held about 1–2 cm from the tip.

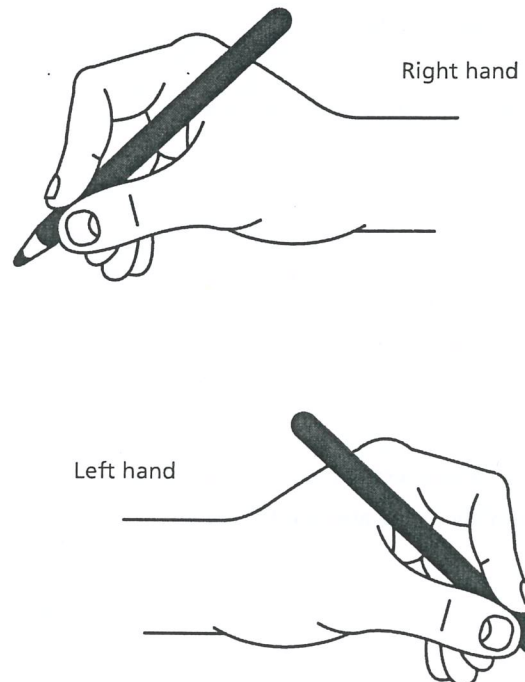


Figure 2: A good pencil grip.

Helpful strategies

- ▶ Show your child the correct finger and thumb positioning for holding the pencil and help him place his fingers and thumb in these positions.
- ▶ Try a commercially available pencil grip. Your child, however, will need to learn how to correctly and consistently hold the grip. Pencil grips are available from your occupational therapist.
- ▶ Encourage your child to practice for a few minutes each day until your child automatically and consistently uses a suitable pencil grip.
- ▶ Give feedback to your child to help him become aware of his finger and thumb positions and praise him whenever he demonstrates a suitable pencil grip.
- ▶ Encourage your child to do lots of fun and interesting drawing and writing activities using different types of texts, coloured pencils, crayons and chalks so he is motivated to practice.

Sitting and paper position

General guidelines for a good sitting position, as shown in figure 3, include:

- ▶ bottom back on the chair
- ▶ feet flat on the floor
- ▶ forearms rest comfortably on the table
- ▶ table and chair suitable for your child's size.

The paper position should be sloped at the same angle as the writing arm and steadied with the non-writing hand (Figure 4). This will help your child see what she is writing and make it easier for her writing hand to move across the page.

Please talk to your occupational therapist if you have any queries about the above information.



Figure 3: A good sitting position.

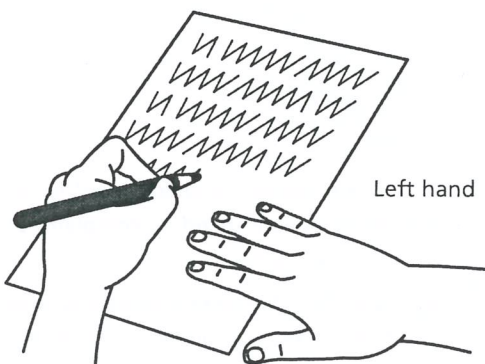
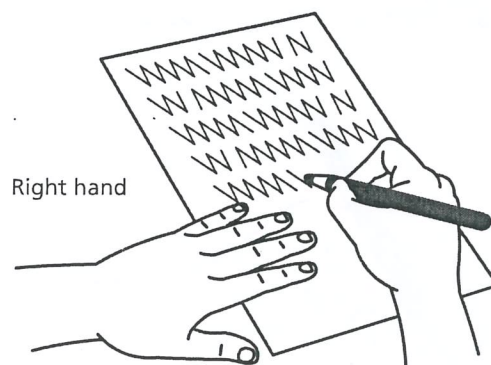


Figure 4: Correct paper position.