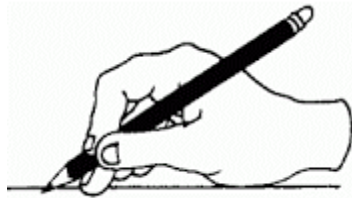


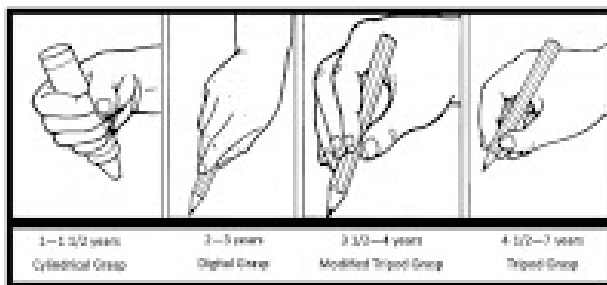
The Siesta Hut Blog

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I forgot to mention during the first OT session with all of my students I also documented whether or not they were using an age appropriate pencil grip. I am not a nun in a catholic school however as long as we are all still writing the old fashioned way, a good pencil grip is important.

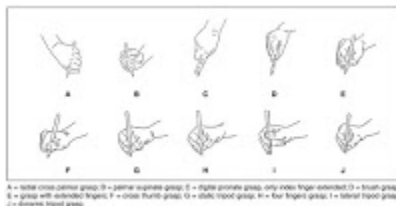
At the beginning of every school year I have Kindergarten teachers ask me how to teach students how to use an appropriate pencil grip. The truth is, learning how to hold a pencil like an adult is a long developmental process. It actually goes way back to infancy. Do children crawl? If not there's a chance their arches of the hand are not fully developed. Did the children develop a pincer grasp while eating cheerios from their tray? These are things we can't fix now but will help teachers and parents understand the process. Carefully look at the way you grip a pencil and notice the strength and dexterity it takes to maintain that grasp while you are quickly writing!



In infancy we all develop more hand strength on the side our pinky and ring finger. We are able to grasp larger items/toys with that side of the hand before we can pick up cheerio's/beads/buttons with our finger tips. This outside edge of our hands is used for strength and the thumb and pointer finger is used for dexterity. Appropriate wrist rotation and movement will also assist with a good grasp while handwriting.

Cylindrical Grasp (1-1.5 years): Young toddler's will grasp writing utensils with a fist and when they scribble they have very limited wrist rotation, instead they are using their whole forearm to make the marks. This is when the strokes are larger. About 2-3 years they will begin to use a digital grasp which provides even more refined movements.

Modified Tripod Grasp (3.5-4 years): As they are shown how to hold a writing utensil and want to begin making more detailed pictures, they begin to grasp the writing utensils with 3 or 4 fingertips. This is naturally increasing strength and dexterity in their fingertips and also encouraging more refined wrist movements. At this stage it is a good idea to give children positions that encourage wrist movement while they are drawing, coloring or writing. Some of these positions include lying on the tummy while resting elbows on the floor and coloring/drawing or drawing on a vertical plane (wall/white board/easel/chalk board).



It's a good idea to explain to children the thumb, index finger and middle finger are the "Go" fingers and the ring finger and pinky are the "stop" fingers. The go fingers make the writing utensil move and the stop fingers rest towards the palm of the hand.

Also during this stage, it is also important to continue increasing dexterity and strength in the fingers. Picking up small pegs, beads, coins, buttons with the thumb and index finger. Using the thumb/index finger/middle finger to push small pop beads together, open clips and use tongs/tweezers to pick up items are good



exercises. They are also fun! One of the schools I work with are allowing Kindergartners to work on these exercises for about 30 minutes a couple of times a week and there have been improvements with how children are grasping pencils. Shortened markers/pencils or broken crayons are also beneficial.



Tripod Grasp (4.5-7 years): Eventually children should develop a tripod grasp which provides the strength and coordination to grasp a writing utensil and provide refined movements for writing. I really like the idea of showing kids a picture of how they should be holding their pencils. It would even be good to place a pom-pom or cotton ball inside of the ring and pinky finger for them to hold onto while using a writing utensil. I like trying all of these ideas before just trying to use the various types of pencil grips that are on the market.

If the nuns only would have known having fun with small toys is much more effective than a ruler!