

Pencil Grasp Development

The Development of Pencil Grasp

Introduction

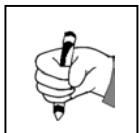
Pencil grasp refers to the manner in which your child holds a pencil or crayon. The development of a mature or efficient pencil grasp is very important. Your child's pencil grasp will greatly affect their ability to learn to print, colour, & handwrite.

As a your child grows & develops, they will move from using an inefficient pencil grasp to an efficient pencil grasp. Initially your child will hold a pencil or crayon with a closed fist, which is called a power grasp. When using a power grasp, the pencil is controlled by moving the shoulder. This type of grasp expends a lot of energy & cannot perform small precise movements. As a result, it is considered to be an inefficient grasp.

By the age of 4 years, your child should have progressed through a number of different grasps & an efficient grasp should be emerging. The most efficient grasp is called a tripod grasp. This is how most adults hold a pen or pencil. It involves holding the pencil with 3 fingers. The pencil is resting on the knuckle of your middle finger while being pinched between your thumb & index finger. This type of grasp allows the greatest amount of pencil movement & precision while fatiguing the hand muscles the least. As a result, it is called an efficient pencil grasp.

Most children develop an efficient pencil grasp in the following order.

1. Power Grasp.
2. Pronated Grasp
3. Static Quadripod Grasp
4. Static Tripod Grasp
5. Dynamic Quadripod Grasp
6. Dynamic Tripod Grasp.



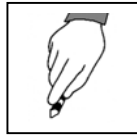
Power Grasp

A power grasp is characterized by holding the crayon or pencil with a closed fist & the wrist is often bent slightly. This is usually the first manner in which a child will grasp a crayon.

The emergence of a power grasp is typically seen between the ages of 1 to 1 1/2 years. With this type of grasp the child will use their whole arm for colouring, drawing & scribbling.

What to Do Next?

Moving to the next grasp requires developing the small muscles & arches of the hand, increasing wrist strength, & developing a skill called separation of the sides of the hand.



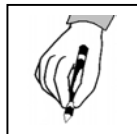
Pronated Grasp

The development of a pronated grasp is the next stage in developing an mature pencil grasp. It is characterized by holding the crayon with your fingers & your wrist is turn so that the palm of your hand is facing down towards the paper.

A child typically develops a pronated pencil grasp when they are between the ages of 2 to 3 years. When using a pronated pencil grasp, the child will still use their whole arm to draw, colour or scribble.

What to Do Next?

To move beyond a pronated grasp, the child must begin to develop the space between their thumb & index finger called the webspace, continue to improve wrist strength & separation of the sides of their hand, and develop the ability to use their fingers with various amounts of pressure, called delicate touch. Drawing & colouring on an easel or another vertical surface will promote correct wrist positioning.



Static Quadripod Grasp

Following the development of a pronated grasp, the child typically develops a quadripod pencil grasp. This type of grasp is the first of the efficient grasps & usually emerges between 3 & 4 years of age. It is called a quadripod grasp because the child will have 4 fingers on the crayon. The webspace between their thumb & index finger may be closed & the fingers & hand moves together.

What to Do Next?

Continuing to develop the small muscles of the hand, separation of the sides of the hand & delicate touch will assist with progressing to a more mature grasp.



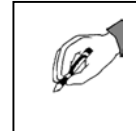
Static Tripod Grasp

A static tripod grasp will typically be next to develop. It appears very similar to the static quadripod grasp, but the child will be holding the crayon or pencil with 3 fingers. A static tripod

grasp should develop around 3 1/2 to 4 years of age.

What to Do Next?

Small muscle development is still important, but now the child must develop a skill called precision rotation. In addition, continuing to work on delicate touch & hand separation is crucial.

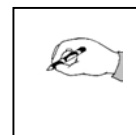


Dynamic Quadripod Grasp

Between the ages of 3-4, a dynamic quadripod grasp should emerge. It is very similar to the static quadripod grasp, but the difference is that the crayon is held near the nib & with the ends of the thumb, index, middle & ring fingers. The webspace is open & the crayon or pencil is move primarily with finger movement

What to Do Next?

The dynamic quadripod grasp is a very efficient grasp. However, continuing to work on separation of the hand & modelling a dynamic tripod grasp will assist with refining pencil grasp.



Dynamic Tripod Grasp

Between the ages of 4 1/2 & 6 years, the child should develop a dynamic tripod grasp. A dynamic tripod grasp is the most efficient grasp. The positioning of the hand & wrist allow the pencil to move accurately through an excellent range of motion & with good speed. Such a grasp is characterized by holding the writing tool with the ends of your thumb, index & middle fingers. The webspace is well developed & the pencil is controlled with finger movement rather than the hand or arm.

What to Do Next?

The dynamic tripod grasp is the most mature & efficient grasp. Upon developing such a grasp, the child should be encouraged to use it at all times to ensure consistency of use.

Please refer to the therapeutic activities, crafts & games section of our website for fun ways & ideas to help develop your child's pencil grasp.

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