



Get Ready for Kindergarten

Activities to Promote Motor Skills:

Pencil Grasp

Scissor Skills

Printing Skills

Fine Motor Development

Strengthening

Gross Motor Coordination

Motor Planning



Occupational and Physical Therapy
412-299-0704 www.aotinc.com

Activities To Promote an Efficient Pencil Grip

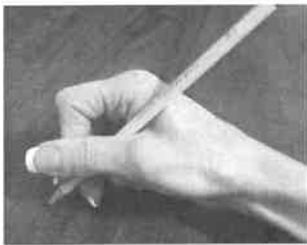
An **efficient or functional grip** is one that enables your child to:

- Control or move the pencil or crayon using finger movements (not the whole hand, the wrist or the arm)
- Complete a writing task without getting fatigued
- Complete a writing or drawing task neatly and smoothly

A dynamic tripod grasp is the traditional and preferred grasp in which the thumb and index fingers hold the pencil as the shaft rests on the middle finger.



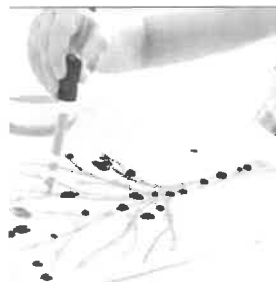
However, there are variations to this grasp which still enable the child to control the pencil using finger movements, complete writing tasks neatly, and without getting tired. Here are a few examples:



Eye Dropper Activities:

Have your child hold the eye dropper with his/her thumb and index finger or thumb, index and middle finger.)

- Squeeze colored water from an eye dropper onto a piece of felt, coffee filter or into a jar of water.



Clothespin Activities:

Encourage your child to use his/her index finger, middle finger, and thumb and keep remaining fingers tucked in the palm of the hand. (To facilitate this position, have your child hold a small pom-pom ball or eraser in the palm of the hand with the ring finger and pinky finger while doing the task).

- Pinch and place a number of clothespins along the edge of a container.
- Put colors/ shapes/ letters/ or numbers on the clothespins and have the child match the clothespins to another surface with the corresponding letter or number.



Tong and Tweezer Activities:

Make sure your child is holding the tweezers like a pencil with his/her thumb, index and middle finger to promote hand separation.

- Pick up and sort pom poms into a small container.
- Pick up and place/sort small erasers into a small container.
- Pick up small items and stack.



Scissor Tasks: *Can help with developing an efficient grasp*

- Start with snipping plastic straws into pieces or snipping strips of a note card.
- Cut on a wide line to a target (i.e. sticker).
- Progress to cutting on simple lines across 6-8 inches of paper.
- Cut out simple shapes.
- Progress to more complex shapes involving several angles, curves, and direction changes

Use short Pencils or crayons (3 inches or less) to promote a fingertip grasp during coloring, printing, drawing, and tracing tasks.

Flip the pencil trick: With the pencil lying vertically on the table, have the student pinch the pencil shaft where they would hold it (on the point where the paint meets the wood) then hold the eraser and flip it into the thumb web space.

Use Vertical Surfaces: Have your child complete printing, coloring, tracing on a vertical surface to promote a better grasp and wrist position (i.e. tape the worksheet to the wall, use an easel).

How to Hold Scissors



When cutting, kids should have their thumbs in the smaller loop and their **middle** finger in the larger hole. Also, the ring finger can be inserted in the larger loop for support. The index finger should **not** be in a loop but used to stabilize the lower loop and guide the cutting. The loops of the scissors should be close to the middle joints.

- Always remind kids that their thumbs should point towards the sky and most of the movement when turning corners and rounding curves is with their assisting hand that is holding the paper. The scissors do not turn as much as the paper.

Cutting Activities

- When kids are first starting to cut, a non-flimsy paper such as index cards provides the most stability. Also try cutting straws, then lacing them on a string.
- Glue items on a card or use stickers and have kids cut towards the items. Then have them go to the next item.
- Glue two pieces of items on an index card (yarn, straws, pipe cleaners, sand paper) parallel and have the child cut between them. Once the child improves, decrease the space between the items.
- Use a hole punch and punch holes in a line through an index card. Have the child cut through the holes in a line.
- Pipe cleaners can be wrapped around loops of scissors to make holes smaller and reduce fingers slipping out. Lastly, if wrapped thick enough, scissors can shut completely which allows for increased continuous contact. Make sure there is enough space for the child's fingers to comfortable fit.
- Cutting activities can be graded tremendously
 - Type of scissors: traditional kids scissors, lift assist or self-opening scissors, loop scissors
 - The type of paper: thicker paper like construction paper or card stock provides more stability and results in less tearing of the paper initially
 - The thickness of the lines: cutting lines can be thickened or highlighted to increase accuracy
 - Complexity of the picture:
 - snipping straws, card strips, note cards
 - cutting straight lines (short to long)
 - cutting simple curved lines
 - cutting simple shapes (square, triangle, circle)
 - cutting more complex shapes with corners and direction changes (star, tree, car)

Key Points When Teaching Letter Formation



- Emphasize where each letter starts. This impacts neatness and speed.
 - All **uppercase** letters start at the **top line**
 - All **“tall”** lowercase letters start at the **top line** (b, d, f, h, k, l, t)
 - All **“small”** lowercase letters start at the **middle line** (a, c, e, i, m, n, o, r, s, x, z)
 - All **“diver”** lowercase letters start at the **middle line** (g, j, p, q, y)



- Teach and reinforce proper order and stroke direction of the number or letter.

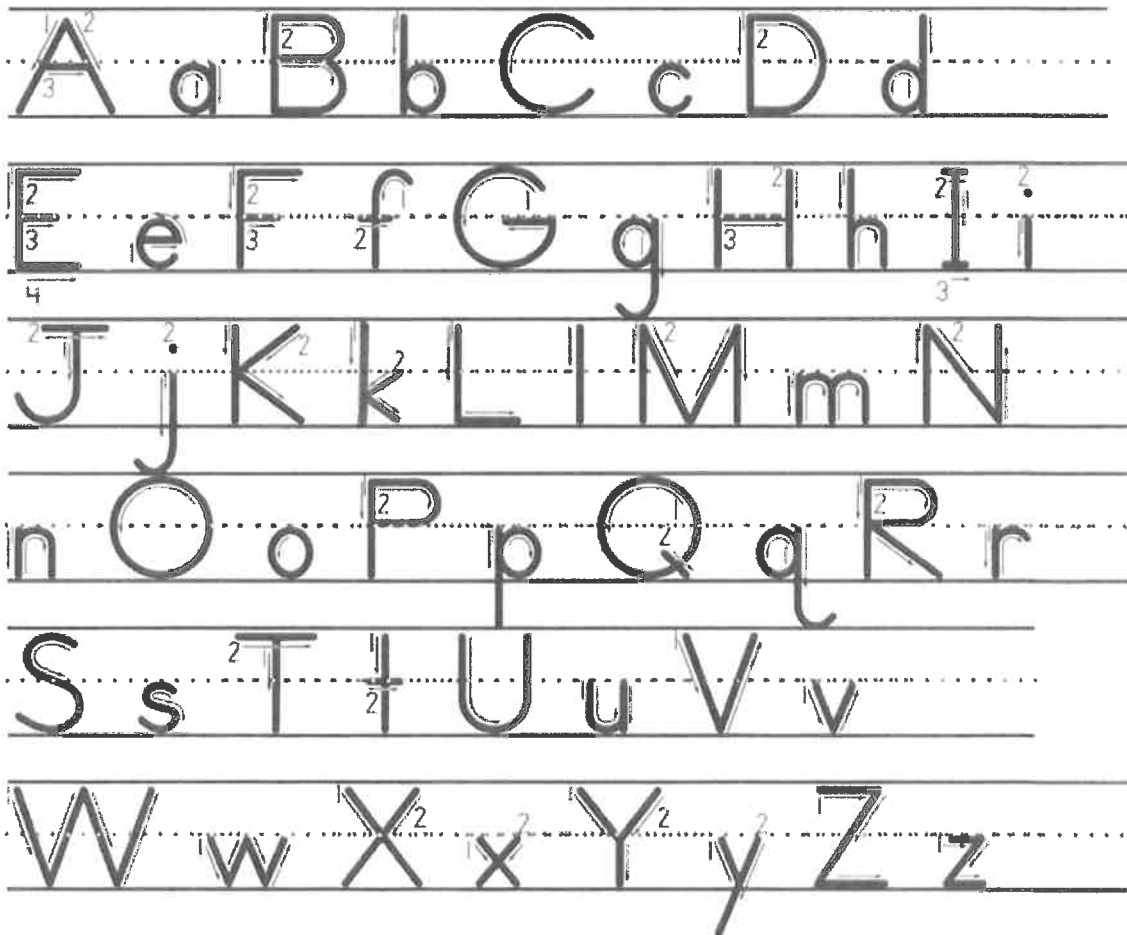


- Use common and consistent language to teach letter and number formation (e.g. Letter “D” – start at the top, big line down, jump to the top, big curve around).




- Teach touch points (e.g. Letter “V” touches the top line and bottom line)

How to Print Letters



Activities to Develop Forearm, Hand and Finger Control

- Use a squirt bottle to squirt at different targets (i.e., make letters/numbers on sidewalk with chalk and squirt off)
- Nuts and bolts (unscrew/put them together)/Plastic carpenter sets
 -  Put pennies in a bank one at a time and progress to holding up to four pennies in his palm and transferring the pennies to his fingertips to place them in the bank one at a time
 - Practice opening various types of twist off jars
 - Hide objects in putty, rolling putty into balls to make animals/forms, cutting putty with scissors, rolling it out with a rolling pin
- Legos/blocks
- Construct shapes / forms with pipe cleaners
- Use marshmallows, toothpicks and various small edible fruits / candies (i.e., raisins, grapes, gummy bears) that could be pushed onto toothpicks to make design and/or practice sequencing
- Pick up objects with clothes pins and/or tweezers (i.e., pretend to make soup by picking up various sizes of uncooked noodles)
- Use thin and short crayons/ pencils
- Lacing projects (i.e., stringing beads, lacing cards)
- Use an eye-dropper to drip colored water onto tissue paper or shaving cream
- Use of wind-up toys during play (have child hold toy still with one hand while turning knob with the other hand)
- Use stamps to make a picture having the child hold the stamper with first three fingers
- Make designs / jewelry using pop-beads
- Crumple paper into small "peanuts" and throw them into a paper towel roll (pretending it's an elephant's nose)
- Games: Hungry Hippos, Bed bugs, Cootie, Operation, Lite bright, Barrel of Monkeys
- Rub art: place paper over an object (i.e., leaf, and stencil) to be rubbed with a small piece of a crayon flat side down
- Fill a balloon with flour to squeeze (more flour = more resistance; can also use beans in combination with flour or alone)
- Bake with your child (i.e., rolling dough, using cookie cutters, decorating with icing)



Promoting Fine Motor Development

Vertical Surfaces

Working on vertical surfaces assists to promote the development of appropriate hand and wrist position for fine motor and handwriting skills. This position allows the wrist to be properly positioned to develop stability, promotes thumb opposition, and arching of the hands which is required for the skilled manipulation of objects. Working on vertical surfaces also helps to develop the muscles of the arm and shoulder which is a prerequisite for skilled fine motor development.

Many activities can be placed on a vertical surface by using book holders, easels, taped on the wall, or placed on a slant board (or a 4-inch binder turned sideways – to create a slanted surface).



Suggested Activities:

- Making pictures with stickers: tape a piece of paper to the wall or other vertical surface
- Window clings
- Draw, color, trace, and practice letter and number formation on chalkboards or paper taped to a vertical surface
- Draw, color, trace, practice letter and number formation with Crayola window markers
- Use puzzles with pieces that have small handles. A small piece of Velcro can be placed on the puzzle board and on the puzzle piece so that it can be used on a vertical surface.
- Use stencils on a vertical surface or chalkboard. One hand holds the stencil and the other one colors/traces
- “Magna-Doodle”
- Painting on a vertical surface
- Ink-stamping activities on a vertical surface
- Peg boards such as Lite Brite
- Magnet letters and shapes

Strengthening Activity Tips

For Upper Arms/Forearms:

- Push-ups
- "Wall" push-ups
- "Wall" push-ups on extended fingers
- Wheelbarrow walking (if feasible)
- Bear or Crab walk
- Tug-o-war
- Use of a rolling pin to flatten clay or dough
- Practicing arm hangs/pull-ups on monkey bars (if feasible)
- "Chair" push-ups



For Hands/Fingers:

- Use of clay
- Use of a spray bottle (to help clean up and such)
- Use of clothespins - this can be varied by having child use thumb and index finger, then thumb and middle finger, thumb and ring finger, etc.)
- Use of a hole punch (hand held single punch) to punch out X's drawn on paper. Difficulty can be increased by doubling or tripling the paper, by introducing construction paper, etc.
- Stirring of resistive batter / dough
- "Hiding" pegs or pennies (or other small objects) in putty or modeling clay, to have child find them
- Use of a rubber band, which is placed around the tips of fingers then fingers are spread apart (resistance can be varied by using thicker rubber band - or by using more than one)
- Use of "bubble wrap" (packing material) to pop the bubbles

Gross Motor Activities and Motor Planning Skills for Kindergarten

- Jumping helps a child learn to move the top half of his/her body separately from the bottom: This is a major milestone in development, and a building block toward hopping and other skills requiring a sense of sidedness.

- Be "bunnies" or "kangaroos" and jump around the yard together
- Jump in the air and do a quarter turn, a half turn, and a full turn
- Hop scotch
- Jumping Jacks



- Teach your child dance moves such as twist, side step, marching
- Have your child perform two step actions such as stepping while clapping to music, jump and clap, step and kick, jumping jacks

- Ball skills such as kicking and catch and throw.

- Call out activities and have your child perform them. For example, jump on one foot, gallop, skip, jump like a frog, etc.



- Play a game of Simon Says - Have your child try to copy various hand and body positions to increase body awareness and motor planning

- The game Twister

- Participate in heavy muscle work activities such as pushing, pulling, lifting, reaching, bending, hanging to improve awareness of what your child's muscles are doing and awareness of body position in space

Resources and Websites:

Resources:

Wikki Sticks-available on Amazon or Michael's craft store

Strawberry huller-available on Amazon or at kitchen stores

Putty-available at Five Below or Michael's

Kumon books- available on Amazon or at Walmart for printing, numbers, mazes, or scissor tasks

Tongs-available at Dollar Tree or Amazon

Golf Tees-available at Walmart or Amazon

Craft foam-available at Dollar Tree or Michael's

Self-open scissors-available at Dollar Tree or Amazon

Clothespins-available at Dollar Tree or Walmart

Websites for additional information on fine and gross motor activities:

Pinterest

school-ot.com

ot-mom-learning-activities.com

therapystreetforkids.com

eyecanlearn.com

Printing APPS:

Android:

Letter School

Wet Dry Try by Handwriting Without Tears

Kids Letters Tracing

Writing Wizard

Apple:

Letter School

Wet Dry Try by Handwriting Without Tears

Zaner Blosler-Manuscript

Writing Wizard