

Hillsborough County Public Schools
Occupational Therapy
Quick Reference for Teachers
Pencil Grasp

A child's pencil grasp progresses from a whole hand grasp to a more refined grasp that uses the thumb, index, and middle fingers that helps a child to make small movements of their fingers for coloring, drawing, and writing. Mature pencil grasps typically develop between the ages of 4 to 6 years old. This allows for the child to write fluently and with control to support legible handwriting. How the child holds the pencil should be considered when handwriting difficulties are present.

The following are examples of functional pencil grasps:		
		
Tripod grasp	Quadrupod grasp	Thumb wrap grasp

Is the grasp functional? Things to consider:	Yes	No
Is the student's grasp uncomfortable? <i>(Student takes frequent breaks, shakes/squeezes hands when writing, complains of hand pain)</i>		
Does the student have poor control of the pencil when writing? <i>(Jagged lines or irregular lines, oversize writing compared to peers)</i>		
Does the student keep pace with their peers when writing?		
Does the student write within the lines of a worksheet or lined paper?		

- If you answered **No** to all the above questions, the student may have an atypical but functional grasp.
- If you answered **yes** to any of the above questions, please see the guidance below and/or reach out to the occupational therapist assigned to your school site.

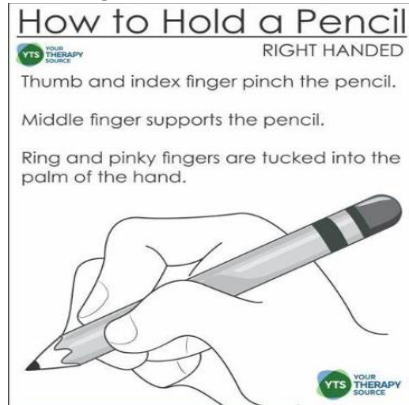
When should pencil grasp	Typically, prior to the end of first grade. However, it depends on the needs of the student. If a student is not experiencing pain and the grasp is functional for them to utilize, then it does not necessarily need to be corrected.
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How to Teach Correct Pencil Grasps

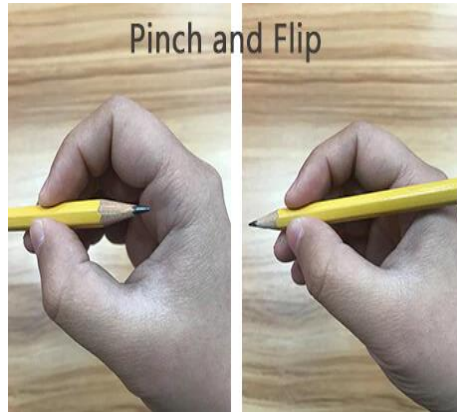
Correct pencil grasp techniques should always be taught to the student first.

Instructional techniques include:

Provide a visual model of correct pencil grasp.



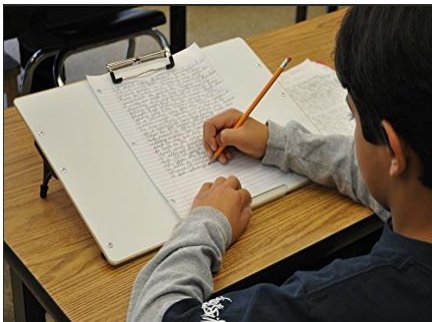
Teaching the pinch and flip method.



Use of short crayons and (golf) pencils.



A slanted surface can assist with wrist positioning. (can use a 3" binder turned horizontally)



Slant the paper when writing (left-handed).



Slant the paper when writing (right-handed).



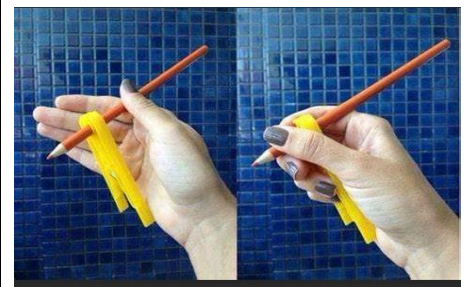
Place a small object (pom pom) in palm of hand to separate the thumb, index and middle finger from the 4th and 5th finger.



Place a small sticker (i.e., smile face or star) where the index finger should sit on the pencil.



Attach a clothespin to the pencil to encourage a proper grasp and tuck 4th and 5th finger into the palm.



The above information is intended to provide general information regarding pencil grasp and to aid in supporting students in the classroom. Please contact the occupational therapy practitioner assigned to your school if you have additional questions.