

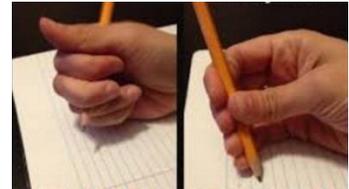


Activities for Developing a Functional Pencil Grasp

There are many small muscles in the fingers and hands involved in holding and controlling a pencil.



When children don't have the strength and stability necessary to correctly hold a pencil (using a tripod grasp in the picture on the left), they develop awkward, uncomfortable pencil grips (like the pencil grips in the picture on the right). In order to build strength in the hands and fingers, frequent practice is necessary - just as it takes many trips to the gym over a long period of time to see results!



Here are some activities to strengthen the small muscles of the hands using materials and tools that provide resistance:

Tongs/tweezers activities:

- Tongs, tweezers, connected chop sticks: use these to pick up small objects for sorting, such as beads, marbles, beans, pompoms and cotton balls
- Tong games: Operation, Crocodile dentist, Bedbug
- Make sure the child only uses his thumb, index and middle fingers to squeeze the tongs or tweezers. His ring and pinky finger should be tucked in his hand.



Clothespin activities:

- Use the pads of the thumb and index finger to open the clothespin rather than pinching it open against the side of the index finger.
- Place clothespins along the top of a container and then on top of each other to construct a design.
- Pick up small objects with the clothespin: cotton balls, pompoms, crumbled paper, beads, pegs, etc.
- Attach several clothespins along the bottom hem of shirt and then pull them off.
- Place clothespins around an index card or a paper plate.
- Hang up pictures or plush toys on a string.



Theraputty, clay or play dough activities:

- Break off small pieces then try rolling the putty or clay between the pads of the thumb and index finger to make small balls.
- Flatten small balls by pinching them between the pads of the thumb and index finger
- Hide small objects (e.g. beads, pennies, etc.) into ball of Theraputty then find the treasures by digging them out



Other ideas:

- Provide opportunities to develop dexterity with in-hand manipulation activities like coins, buttons, lacing, zippers and playing cards.
- Use golf tees, on a carpet surface (or push pins on a cork board surface) to poke along lines on construction paper. You can poke holes along your name or perhaps a fun picture drawn on the construction paper.
- Screw and unscrew nuts and bolts
- Hand hole punch
- Eye dropper

