

Parent Guide



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What is this resource and how do I use it?

Find out more about what each stage of developing pencil grip looks like and how you can support your child at each stage in this helpful parent guide - full of practical and simple activities and easy-to-read information. Ages are included as a rough guide; try to follow the stage your child is working in, not necessarily their age.

What is the focus of this resource?

Pencil Grip

Pencil Control

Activity Ideas

Early Writing Skills

Further Ideas and Suggestions

Pencil grip is all about your child's development of strength and gross and fine motor skills. To find out more about fine motor skills, download this helpful **parent guide**. We also have **more information about mark making** and lots of activities to help you set up mark-making opportunities.

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Stages of Developing Pencil Grip

Use this quick-look poster to help you recognise the different pencil grips.



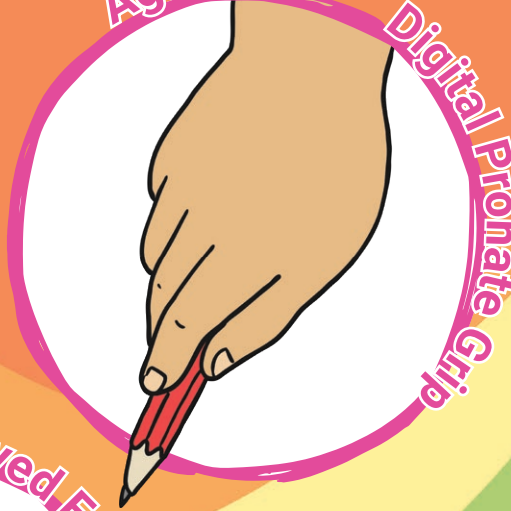
Ages 1 - 2



Palmar Grip



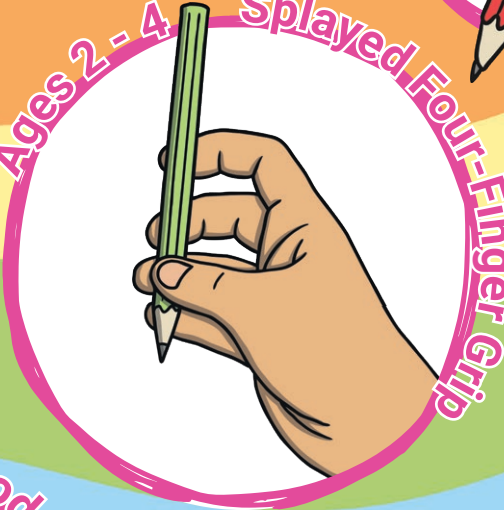
Ages 2 - 3



Digital Pronate Grip



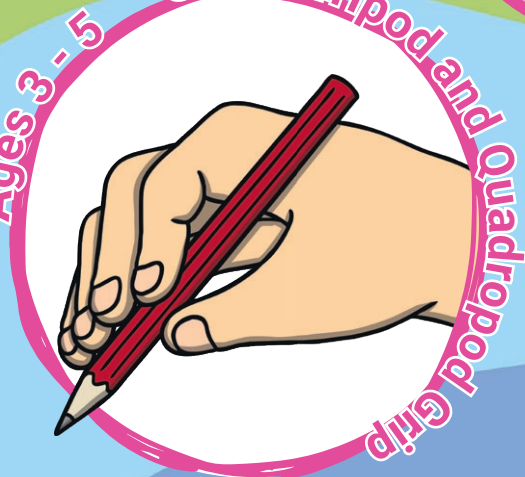
Ages 2 - 4



Splayed Four-Finger Grip



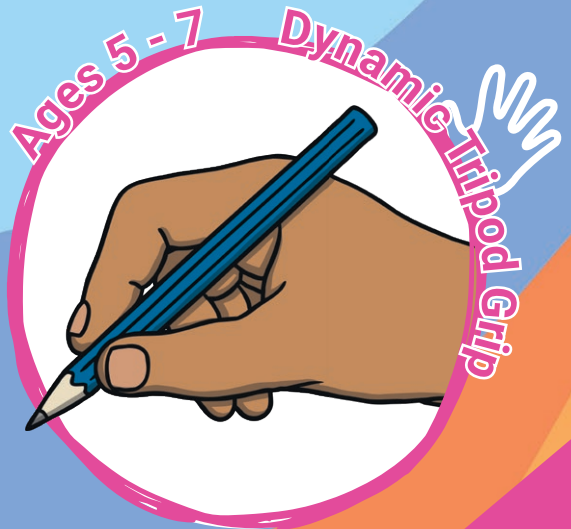
Ages 3 - 5



Static Tripod and Quadropod Grip



Ages 5 - 7



Dynamic Tripod Grip

Find out more about what each stage of developing pencil grip looks like and how you can support your child at each stage in this helpful guide.

A Detailed Look at Developing Pencil Grip

Ages 1 - 2

Palmar Grip



What does it look like?

Your child holds their pencil with their whole fist. When mark making, their elbow, wrist and fingers stay still, with the movement coming from your child's shoulder.

How can I support my child at this stage?

Working on your child's large muscle groups is great for this stage. Encourage them to pull themselves up using their core, dance around, run, jump and balance as much as possible. Support mark making with large tools such as chunky crayons and large sticks.

Ages 2 - 3

Digital Pronate Grip



What does it look like?

Your child's fingers hold the pencil with their palm facing downwards. Their elbow and the wrist stay in a fixed position and the movement still comes from their shoulder.

How can I support my child at this stage?

Go to the park! Climbing frames, monkey bars and other playground equipment are all brilliant for helping to strengthen your child's arm and hand muscles, which they need for good pencil grip. Developing movement and strength in your child's wrists is also important - painting on vertical surfaces such as an easel or fence is perfect for this. You might tape some paper on the underside of a table or chair and encourage them to pretend to be an astronaut writing in their rocket!

A Detailed Look at Developing Pencil Grip

Ages 2 - 4

Splayed Four-Finger Grip



What does it look like?

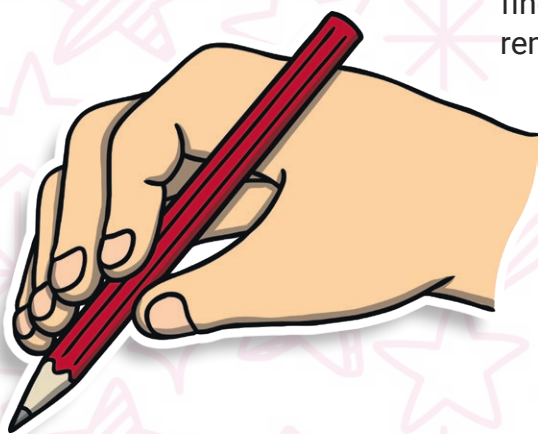
Your child will hold the pencil with four fingers on one side and their thumb on the other, like you would hold a dart. This means that, when they draw or write, their hand is in the air instead of resting on the table. Your child will use their elbow and then, later on, their wrist to move their pencil. The hand is in the air, not resting on the table. Movement comes from the elbow and later the wrist. They may look a bit stiff as their fingers don't move in this grip.

How can I support my child at this stage?

At this stage, activities which really support the development of your child's hand and finger muscles, strengthening and coordinating them, are perfect. You could give your child a spray bottle and have some target practice or a water fight - using the spray helps your child develop the strength to keep their palm arched when writing. You could encourage your child to use a rolling pin either when using modelling dough or baking to help stabilise their wrists too. Using spray bottles and modelling dough can also help strengthen your child's fingers.

Ages 3 - 5

Static Tripod and Quadropod Grip



What does it look like?

Now your child will hold their pencil with their first three or four fingers. The movement for using their pencil will come from the wrist, while their fingertips, elbow and shoulder remain in a fixed position.

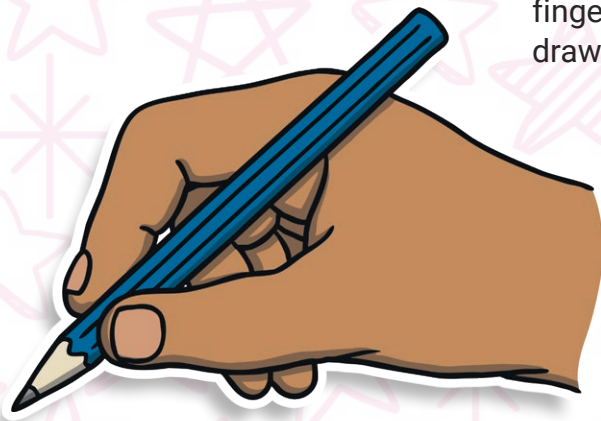
How can I support my child at this stage?

At this point, it's important to encourage independent finger movements so that your child's fingers can move independently in the next stage. You can do this by encouraging your child to join in with finger songs like, 'Incy Wincy Spider' and 'Tommy Thumb'. Playing with finger puppets and doing 'modelling dough dancing' with their fingers are also perfect activities for this stage. Really encourage your child to move their fingers one at a time during these activities.

A Detailed Look at Developing Pencil Grip

Ages 5 - 7

Dynamic Tripod Grip



What does it look like?

Your child will hold their pencil lightly between their thumb and first two fingers. Their ring and little finger will curl into the palm of their hand and their hand should rest lightly on the table. They will use their fingertips to move the pencil to draw or write.

How can I support my child at this stage?

Even when your child starts to develop a dynamic tripod grip, you should continue to support them with their fine motor skills, building strength in their fingers and palms. Activities where they need to squeeze clothes pegs or tweezers are good for this. You can also encourage them to develop their 'pincer grip' with threading activities - this helps your child work on the pressure they use which is important as, although they may have the correct grip, it's common for children to use too much or too little pressure when putting pencil to paper.



Activities at a Glance

Here is a quick 'cheat sheet' you could keep on display in your home to quickly refer to if you need an activity idea. Please remember that all the ages are approximate and there only as a guide - go with the development you see from your child. Feel free to mix and match activities too - a child who has developed a static tripod grip will still reap the benefits of playing on a climbing frame!

Ages 1 - 2 Palmar Grip

- Dancing
- Running
- Jumping
- Balancing
- Using chunky crayons
- Drawing with sticks

Ages 2 - 3 Digital Pronate Grip

- Using climbing frames and monkey bars
- Painting on an easel or cardboard box
- Using a large paintbrush to 'paint' the fence with water
- Being an astronaut in a rocket and mark making upside down

Ages 2 - 4 Splayed Four- Finger Grip

- Having a water fight or aiming at targets with a spray bottle
- Spritzing the plants with water
- Using a rolling pin with modelling dough
- Doing some baking - mixing, rolling and kneading
- Using a pestle and mortar to grind leaves or spices into potions

Activities at a Glance

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Ages 3 - 5

Static Tripod and Quadropod Grip

- Singing finger songs (e.g. 'Incy Wincy Spider' or 'Tommy Thumb')
- Playing with finger puppets
- Getting your child to dance their fingers around their modelling dough
- Playing the 'table piano', trying to use all fingers independently
- Asking your child to show you a number of fingers

Ages 5 - 7

Dynamic Tripod Grip

- Helping to hang the washing out with clothes pegs
- Playing games with pom-poms and tweezers
- Playing threading games activities
- Encouraging your child to move counters themselves when playing board games

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