Holding a Pencil – General Advice

Information for Parents, Teachers and Carers

Which children may need support with this?
The majority of children will learn to mark-make and progress with this skill, but for some children this can be more difficult. Here are some examples of children who may need support:

- Children with delayed motor skills
- Children with co-ordination or motor-planning difficulties
- Children with low muscle tone or altered muscle tone
- Children with hypermobility
- Children with reduced attention and concentration

For more information, please contact Occupational Therapy on:

For York and Selby Area: 01904 726599
For Scarborough, Whitby and Ryedale Area: 01723 342357
What can I do?

There are several key skills that must develop before being able to grasp a pencil:

- Isolate index finger movement
- Hold objects in a pincer grasp
- Finger and thumb opposition
- Identifying objects by touch in the absence of vision (stereognosis)
- Finger and hand strength
- Shoulder stability
- Wrist and forearm movements (pronation/supination)
- Hand dominance
- Mid-line integration (using both hands together)

If a child finds these skills tricky, we recommend you continue to work on developing these skills before moving onto mark-making.

Typical pencil grasp milestones look like this:

When grasping a pencil you are aiming for:

- Good web-space
- Thumb and index on top, with middle supporting underneath
- Little finger and ring finger tucked into palm of hand
- Fingers bent slightly

To achieve the desirable ‘tripod’ grasp you can practice by asking the child to hold a small object in the palm of their hand with their remaining fingers to keep them out of the way. Triangular or similar shaped crayons can act as a cue for the correct grasp.

To help with finger placement you may want to place stickers on the pencil or an elastic band to draw their attention to where their fingers should be.

You may want to try a pencil grip to support a child with their grasp – here are some examples to try:
**Tell us what you think**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

**For York and Selby Area:** 01904 724366

**For Scarborough, Whitby and Ryedale Area:** 01723 342472

**Teaching, Training and Research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of staff and improve health and healthcare in our community. Staff or students in training may attend consultations for this purpose. You can opt-out if you do not want trainees to attend. Staff may also ask you to be involved in our research.

**Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

Patients, relatives and carers sometimes need to turn to someone for help, advice or support. Our PALS team is here for you. PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or via email at pals@york.nhs.uk An answer phone is available out of hours.

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- Caring about we do
- Respecting and valuing each other
- Listening in order to improve
- Always doing what we can to be helpful