

Supporting your Child's Pencil Hold

In a typically developing child, the larger, gross muscles will develop before the smaller, fine muscles.

Gross motor skills are movements that use large muscles in the arms, legs, torso, and feet such as sitting, walking running etc. **Fine motor skills** are movements that use the small muscles of the fingers, toes, wrists such as holding or picking up objects. Below is the order of skills development.

Gross Motor Skills Development:

- 1. Control of their posture**
- 2. Stability of their shoulders,**
- 3. Strength in their arms**

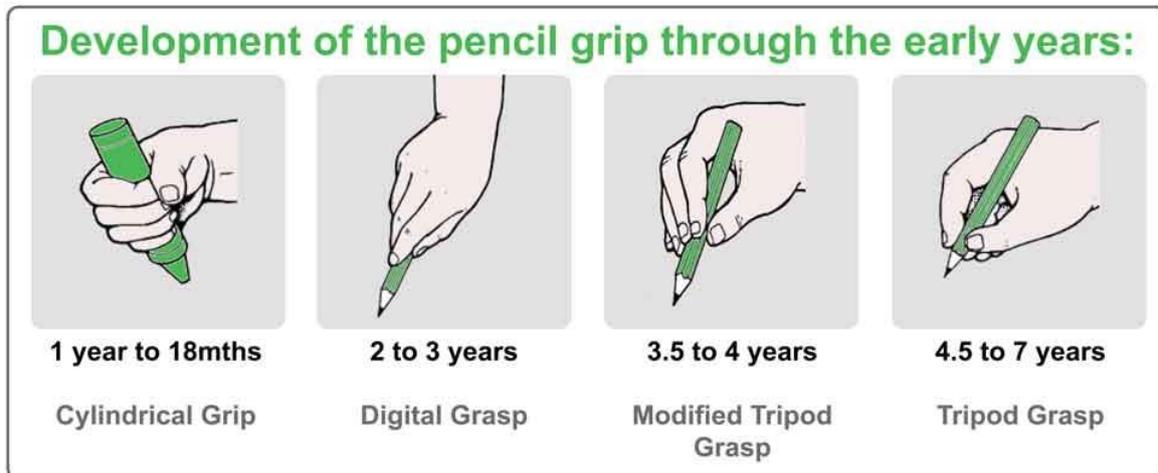
Fine Motor Skills Development

- 4. Stability in their wrists**
- 5. Strength in their hands**
- 6. Finger strength**
- 7. Manipulation**

In order to develop a correct pencil grasp all of the above skills are required. Parents can help by developing these skills using these activities:

- Shoulder and upper arm strength: Play push/pull games or hang from monkey bars.
- Wrist strength: Paint on an easel or use a rolling pin.
- Hand strength: Use a hole punch or trigger spray bottles.
- Use finger puppets or sing finger songs.
- Development of pincer grip: Pinching playdough, thread small beads or use pegs.

It is important that the correct *age-appropriate* grip is encouraged. Rushing the correct pencil grip when a child's muscles are not developed may result in incorrect habits which are difficult to amend over time or a child may develop an awkward version of the correct grip.



For nursery children we use chunkier writing tools and children write using whole arm movements. The muscles of young children will not be strong enough to hold small writing tools and will not have developed the control to stabilise their shoulders/wrists etc. As their strength and control develops, the movement of writing will move from the whole arm, to the wrist, and finally to the fingertips. **Most children will master the tripod grip by the age of 6 or 7.**

For a developed **Tripod Grasp** only 3 fingers will hold the writing tool. This is the correct grasp to move the pencil accurately and at a good speed. Your child will then be ready to start mastering letter formations.