

PRESCHOOL HOME LEARNING PACK

Writing Skills

Very often we as parents worry about our child to be able to form letters and write their names before starting school.

Now, just like anything in life, the correct pencil grip will take practice. Practice, dedication, and one on one instruction WILL pay off.

Whilst we have more time to spend with our pre-schoolers at home nowadays; why not dig into it and help them.

We all know that in order for pre-schoolers to write comfortably and correctly they should be using the tripod grip. "The pencil should be positioned so that there is equal pressure between the thumb, the side of the middle finger and the tip of the index finger. All fingers are bent slightly. This is called a "tripod grip" or "tripod pencil grasp".

This requires strong hand and finger muscles, improved dexterity and good hand-eye coordination. So before giving pencil in their hands, let's try these activities first:

General hand development

- Have children walk on their hands or pretend they are animals and crawl around on the floor.
- Roll objects such as Playdoh, silly putty or clay between their hands.
- Have children hold as much as they can of sand in their cupped hand.

Muscle strength development:

- Play with Playdoh, clay or silly putty.
- Wring out a sponge
- String beads on a necklace.

Wrist strength development:

- Have children use a rolling pin with their hands open to flatten out objects.
- Draw on a chalkboard or whiteboard that is positioned above eye level.
- Screw and unscrew lids of jars.

Improve hand pressure ability:

- Pick up mini marshmallows with tweezers.
- Pick up a grain of rice one by one with index finger and thumb.
- Use a nasal aspirator to blow Styrofoam balls back and forth.

Ability to hold and use fingers simultaneously:

- Roll small objects between index finger and thumb.
- Hold and squeeze a squirt gun.
- Have the children hold a few pennies and dimes in one hand and sort using only their index finger and thumb.

Games & Activities That Improve Hand and Eye Coordination:

- Play the classic board game "[Operation](#)" by Hasbro. The students hold tweezers to manipulate items without getting buzzed.
- Have children create finger plays to go with a song or story.
- Practice using chop sticks to pick things up.
- Use lacing cards.
- Play with puzzles that have pegs for the children to grasp.
- Build with Legos.
- Play with a magna-doodle.
- Play with an etch-a-sketch
- Write on a chalk board.

DEVELOPING PENCIL GRIP

From 1-1.5 years of age

*You will see your toddler holding a crayon with fisted hands, slightly flexed and the arm moving as one unit. Guess what? It is called a **palmar grasp** and it is **totally developmental!** This is the time to develop their **palmar arches** without focusing too much on writing and grasp.*

***Palmar arches** allow for the cupping action of the hand to hold objects (like a pencil). So instead of the pencil, focus on manipulatives and toys that involve squeezing, pinching, putting small objects together and pulling them apart.*

But remember exposure is also important! Expose toddlers to crayons and let them make marks and scribble for fun!

From 2-3 years of age

You will see your toddler holding the pencil more with their fingers.

As their hands get stronger and more coordinated, and their wrist will also straighten out. This period is the time to develop their thumb, index, and middle finger to work together.

Manipulatives that focus on this are:

clothespins, tweezers, tongs, eye-droppers, spray bottles, stamps

Strategies for Proper Grasp:

- *Break crayons into small pieces (as it requires them to use the three fingers),*
- *Use small pieces of chalk*
- *Use short and fat crayons or markers*
- *Golf pencils*
- *Draw on a slant or vertical walls! WHY? Their wrist goes into a slight extension, which is the optimal position when using a pencil.*

Prewriting Benchmark Skills: (these are lines your 2-3-year-old can write)

- *Imitate vertical*
- *Horizontal*
- *Circular strokes*

From 3-3.5 years of age

Now is the time to sit and practice one on one WITH your pre-schooler. Spending 5 minutes on the set-up, and 7 minutes working WITH your child will have a powerful payoff.

Set aside the same time every day to practice together. This practice is not a time to battle over how to hold a pencil. It is time to take a step back and look at the activity together with a much slower pace.

Now is the time to refine their skills!

*If your pre-schooler is not holding their pencil with a tripod grasp, then it may be because they got in the habit of keeping the pencil the wrong way or have **weak hand strength** or perhaps **not enough exposure**.*

*Focus on the above strategies for proper grasp and **make writing fun!***

*Incorporate **mazes, dot to dot, tracing, drawing,** and games instead of worksheets and writing letters. –*

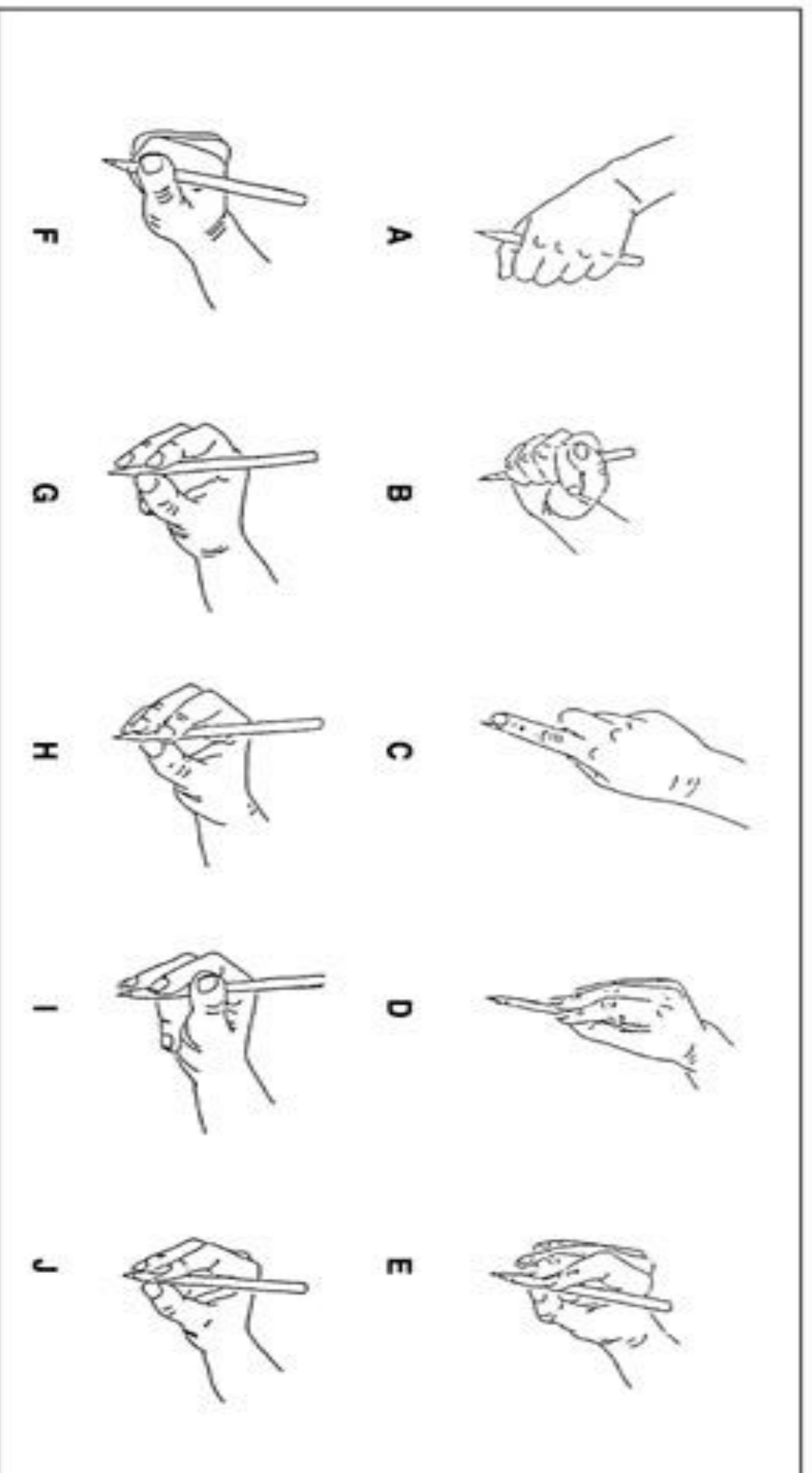
*Remember, **hand dominance** fully develops at around age 4-5 years, so make sure they get the opportunity to strengthen both sides of their hands.*

After all the above has been done, then you may show your children how to copy/trace letters of their names.

Please introduce lower case letters to your child with only capital at the beginning of their names.

See attached two picture documents. You may print it and display.

- *Pencil Grip Pictures*
- *Writing letters, the correct way*



A = radial cross palmar grasp; B = palmar supinate grasp; C = digital pronate grasp, only index finger extended; D = brush grasp, E = grasp with extended fingers; F = cross thumb grasp; G = static tripod grasp; H = four fingers grasp; I = lateral tripod grasp; J = dynamic tripod grasp.

Figure 2 - Pencil grip postures¹⁶

a b c d e f

g h i j k l

m n o p q

r s t u v

w x y z