

PRE WRITING PREK PENCIL GRIP SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Last week we talked about some of the building blocks needed for future handwriting success and what development may look like for young toddlers and babies.

With each age range, children start to master previous skills, such as copying a vertical line, and begin to add more skills like a single circle.

You will begin to notice children start to pick up writing utensils or crayons for coloring with their fingers towards the tip of the utensil, instead of facing up towards the top of the eraser side of the utensil.

Let's take a look at the milestones for handwriting for ages 2-3:

- Can string 4 large beads onto a piece of yarn - 29 mo.
- Imitates horizontal lines on paper - 29 mo.
- Begins to imitate a single circle shape - 29 mo.
- Can copy a vertical line - 36 mo.
- Able to cut a piece of paper in half (bilateral coordination and visual motor) - 36 mo.
- Imitates bilateral movements of limbs (e.g. arms up together) - 36 mo.
- Able to complete lacing cards (bilateral coordination) - 36 mo.
- Digital Pronate Grasp develops (fingers and thumb grasping a writing utensil with fingers and thumbs facing the writing tip of the utensil) - 24-36 mo.

Before we get started here are some term definitions that will help explain some of the hand grasps:

- Radial – Thumb side of the hand
- Digital – Finger or pinkie side of the hand; can also mean digits as in fingers
- Palmar – Palm side, or inside part of the hand
- Supinate – Palm facing up or forwards
- Pronate – Palm facing down or backward

TYPICAL PENCIL GRASP DEVELOPMENT FOR HANDWRITING



What Are Pre-Writing Skills?

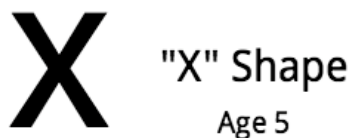
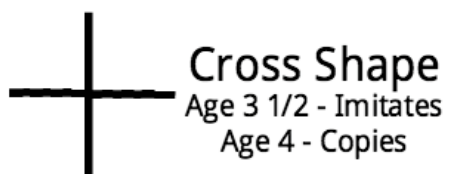
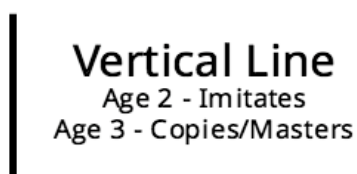
In short, pre-writing skills are the lines and strokes kids need to master and know BEFORE learning how to print the alphabet. Each of these lines is developed in a sequence, based on how old the child is.

This developmental sequence is:

- Vertical Line – (Age 2 imitates, age 3 copies/masters)
- Horizontal Line – (Age 2 1/2 imitates, age 3 copies/masters)
- Circle Shape – (Age 2 1/2 imitates, 3 copies/masters)

- Cross Shape (+) – (Age 3 1/2 imitates, age 4 copies)
- Square Shape – (Age 4)
- Right/Left Diagonal Line – (Age 4 1/2)
- X Shape – (Age 5)
- Triangle (Age 5)

PRE-WRITING LINE DEVELOPMENT FOR KIDS



5 Tips for Correcting Your Child's Pencil Grasp

1. Focus on Fine Motor and Hands-On Activities NOT Pencil and Paper.

I know it seems counterproductive to not have them practice with a pencil and paper to write, but for children of this age, working on fine motor activities and strengthening the fingers for handwriting is going to get you a lot farther than just rote practicing with pencil and paper.

You particularly want to focus on fine motor activities that require them to imitate how to hold a pencil or strengthening the fingers used in a pincer grasp.

2. Using pom-poms or coins in the last two fingers.

This one is pretty self explanatory. The fingers that are not on the pencil hold on to a small pom-pom or coin. This reminds the child to keep those fingers closed in their hand with the correct fingers on the pencil.

3. “Go” & “Stop” fingers.

This was a little trick I used when I was working in the school system as an Occupational Therapy Assistant. I had a sign with a picture of the green “go” fingers for writing and a red stop sign with a picture of the “stop” fingers. “Go” fingers are the fingers on the pencil, “stop” fingers go in the hand.

So when I saw a child using the wrong grasp, I would remind them to use their “Go” fingers. This worked pretty well with a lot of my kiddos. You could also make a sign to have hanging or on the child’s desk as a visual reminder instead of always verbally reminding them.

4. Using smaller or fatter pencils.

Typically a suggestion given is to use smaller, shorter pencils or crayons to promote a good grasp. However some children really do benefit from the thicker, fatter pencils, particularly if they have weaker hand grip. They may have a hard time feeling the smaller size pencils or being able to put the proper amount of pressure on them. So experimenting with different types of writing utensils would be beneficial. Pencils with a triangle shape to them can also help.

5. Pencil grips as a last resort.

The reason I use pencil grips as a last resort is because many children lose them or they just become more of a distraction than a help, I have found. However, depending on the type of grip they can be beneficial.