

TRAINING TOOLS

Fingers in the Tripod Position

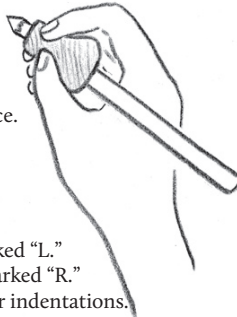
The Pencil Grip, Jumbo Grip, and Crossover Grip

The tripod fingers are placed on indentations on the gripper.

The Crossover Grip is the same as The Pencil Grip, except it has a hood over the thumb and the index finger to keep them in place.

Instructions:

1. Stand your pencil on a hard surface, sharpened end up.
2. Slide the gripper, large end down, onto the pencil.
3. LEFT-HANDED: Place the thumb on the indentation marked "L."
RIGHT-HANDED: Place the thumb on the indentation marked "R."
The tall finger and the pointer finger fall into the two other indentations.

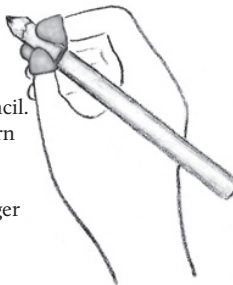


Writing CLAW

The tripod fingers slip into three cups.

Instructions:

1. Stand your pencil on a hard surface, sharpened end up.
2. RIGHT-HANDED: Slide the CLAW, rounded side up, onto the pencil.
LEFT-HANDED: Slide the CLAW, flat side up, onto the pencil. Turn the cup stamped "T" inside-out and mark it with a "T." Turn the other two cups inside-out.
3. Place the thumb in the "T" cup. The tall finger and the pointer finger fit into the other two cups.

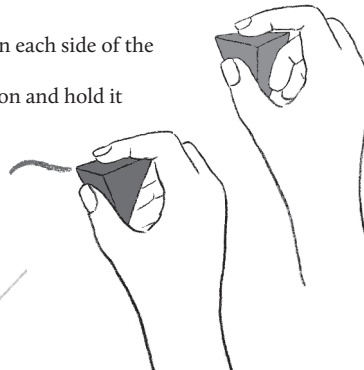


TriWrite Crayons

Each tripod finger is placed on one of the sides of the pyramid-shaped crayon.

Instructions:

1. Lay the crayon on the table. Put one finger on each side of the crayon, and/or . . .
2. Slip the tall finger under the base of the crayon and hold it like a pencil.

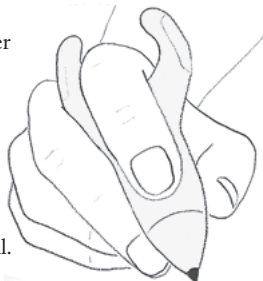


Twist 'n Write Pencil

A mechanical pencil, sized for a child.

Instructions:

1. The pointer finger slips through the wishbone part of the pencil.
2. The thumb and tall finger fit into the indentations on the other two sides of the pencil.



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HOLD THE PENCIL

Using the Tripod Grasp

The time-tested, ergonomic method for holding a pencil is the tripod grasp. Most children can learn how to place their fingers in the tripod position, but it may feel awkward at first if they have already established a different grasp. Changing any habit is difficult, particularly when it involves muscles and coordination. Some children can change to the new grip within a few days, while others need a month or so. Adults tend to take even longer before they can consistently use the new grip. Here are a few things you can do to assist:

Practice Regularly

The basic skills needed for developing good habits for holding the pencil are shown on the next page. Have fun practicing! Draw, write, play tic-tac-toe—choose an activity the child enjoys so they look forward to practicing with you. Practice regularly (daily is best). Five minutes is fine for a five-year-old child, and ten to fifteen minutes is plenty for a child who is nine. Adults can practice whenever there is a spare moment.

Keep It Up!

A child may revert back to their old grasp when you are not there to watch. That's fine. Continue to practice with them and allow time for the new habits to become established. If several months pass and the child has not changed to the new grasp, consider getting help from an occupational therapist.

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HOLD THE PENCIL LIKE THIS

Finger Position

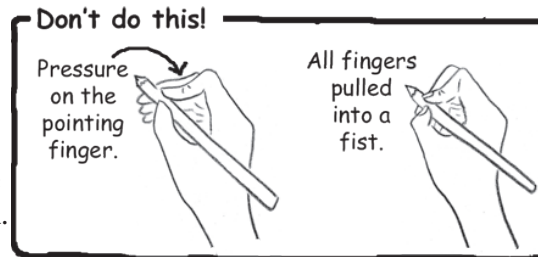
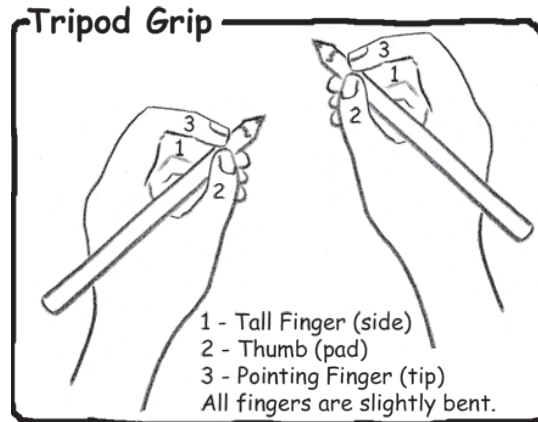
Three fingers—the long finger, the thumb and the index finger—form a tripod to hold the pencil, as shown here.

Index Finger Rests

Many people put extra pressure on the index finger, hyperextending the first joint. (Check for pressure in the knuckle.) The tip of the index finger should rest on top of the pencil.

Fingers Bend, Slightly

All five fingers should bend slightly. (Some people pull their fingers into a fist. Some hold a pencil with their thumb straight.) A ball should be able to fit inside the hand.



Training Tools

It can be challenging to keep the fingers in the tripod position, but there are a variety of tools available to help keep the fingers in place. They are temporary tools, much like training wheels on a bicycle. Several are shown on the back of this paper and are available through our website, DrawYourWorld.com.

Position of the Hand

The underside of the forearm and the thumb should line up. (Some people hook the hand toward the body, pushing the elbow away from the body.) Spend some time practicing on vertical surfaces, such as an easel or paper taped to a wall, since it is natural while working vertically to hold the hand up and drop the elbow down.

Position of the Pencil

The pencil eraser should point toward the shoulder, however the pencil position is not critical if the hand position is good. This rule is most helpful for left-handers, since it allows a better view of the freshly written words and the hand does not smudge the words.

How Does the Hand Feel?

Understand the amount of tension needed to grasp the pencil:

1. Have the child pretend to hold a small stone **tightly** in their tripod fingers as you count together to ten. Release the pretend stone and discuss how your hands felt while holding the stone.
2. Have the child pretend to hold a cooked pea **gently** in their tripod fingers and count to ten. After releasing the pretend pea, describe how your hands felt while holding the pea. How can a relaxed hand make writing easier?

A Softer Pencil

Dark, heavy writing or drawing indicates that the person is bearing down on their pencil. They simply want to see their lines. Over time, this extra tension in the hand becomes a habit. Switch to a soft-lead pencil (sketching pencil, 6B). Compared to a No. 2 pencil, a soft-lead pencil requires much less pressure to produce a dark line. Soft-lead pencils are available at DrawYourWorld.com.



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by Marie Hablitzel & Kim Stitzer
Sample Draw-Write-Now® lessons and teaching tips at the authors' website, drawyourworld.com.

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