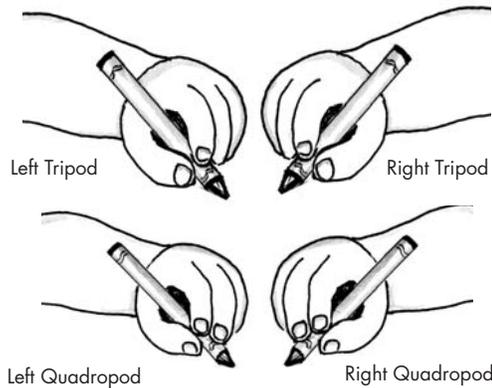


# Handwriting Without Tears®

## Hold On...You Have to Teach Grip!

### Take a look at your neighbor's grip! What do you see?

Does your neighbor use one of these standard grips? If yes, circle the grip.



If not, mark what is standard and what is not.

	Standard	Not standard
Thumb position	_____	_____
Index position	_____	_____
Middle position	_____	_____
Position of last two fingers	_____	_____
Pencil position or angle	_____	_____

### Understanding the hand:

There are two sides to the hand. The first is considered the "mobile" side. It includes the thumb, index and middle finger. These fingers move when you write. The other side is considered the "stable" side. It includes the ring and pinky finger. These two fingers generally are closed and resting on the table during writing. The web space is the open area between the thumb and the index finger. It is where the pencil should rest during writing.

### Things to think about:

1) Good crayon and pencil grips should be actively and regularly taught. 2) Teach grips as soon as age 4 or whenever crayons are introduced. 3) Grips become automatic or habitual with repetition. 4) The older the child, the harder it is to change the pencil grip. 5) Try to change grips if it hurts to write, or if the grip makes writing inefficient. 6) Use physical devices only if demonstration and practice haven't worked.

### You can easily promote good crayon/pencil grips:

- 1) Encourage self-feeding for toddlers to develop skill using the pincer grip.
- 2) Start early writing/drawing with small broken pieces of chalk or crayon.
- 3) Encourage finger use and finger awareness with gestures, signs, and finger-plays.
- 4) Teach correct crayon grip with the Crayon Song.



### CRAYON SONG

Tune: "Open and Shut Them"

Pick up a crayon, Pick up a crayon, This is easy to do  
Pick up a crayon, Pick up a crayon, I just tell my fingers what to do  
My thumb is bent, Pointer points to the tip, Tall Man uses his side  
I tuck the last two fingers in, And take them for a ride

Now I'm holding it just right, But not too tight, Every finger knows what to do  
And now I have a big surprise, A big surprise for you  
Let's drop 'em and do it again

NOTE: As you are singing the song, it's very important to walk around the room and position children's fingers for them correctly on the crayon. It will take several repetitions before children will pick up the habit naturally.

## Pencil problems:

- 1) Thumb wrapped around, on top of index finger.
- 2) Thumb tucked in, under index finger.
- 3) Fisted grips.
- 4) Fingers splayed out, all gripping the pencil.
- 5) Pencils pointing straight up in the air.
- 6) Awkward wrist positions.
- 7) Pressure problems, such as too hard or too soft.
- 8) Difficulty with big pencils.

## How to help:

Always demonstrate proper finger position for children (especially young children). You may use devices as reminders. It's best not to use pencil grips in Kindergarten as children are just learning correct grip and just starting to write. There are a lot of devices available. Use what works for children (don't feel limited to the ones shown). If a device is used at school, parents should be educated and the same device should be sent home. It's handy to have one at home and one at school.

## Use general problem solving strategies:

Demonstrate, model, and teach the grip you want the children to learn. Use the 3 steps from HWT. Read more about them in the Teacher Guides:

- 1) Pick Up - Just pick up and hold the crayon/pencil in the air.
- 2) Aim and Scribble - Put the point on the dot and wiggle the pencil/crayon.
- 3) Color/Write — Use the crayon or pencil for drawing, coloring or writing.

Observe carefully to see what writing tool elicits a good grip:

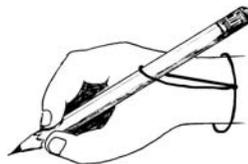
- 1) Does the child hold a small piece of chalk, or crayon correctly?
- 2) Does the child hold a different size or type of pencil correctly?
- 3) Does the child use a special grip or device correctly?

## Special tips:

1) Beginners — Avoid special grips or devices for beginners. During Pre-K and Kindergarten, focus on developing hand skills and teaching children. Use small pieces of chalk or crayon and activities to teach crayon/pencil skills.

2) Fingers splayed out — This atypical grip is difficult to discourage. Consider giving the child an extremely short pencil. Just sharpen the pencil and use pruning shears to cut it short.

3) Pencil pointing straight up in the air — Try two rubber bands looped together. One loop is on the wrist, and the other is looped over the pencil to pull the eraser/pencil back. There is a commercial version available or you may make your own with ponytail holders.



4) Pressing too hard — Actively demonstrate soft pressure. Use red or black pencils to make red/pink or black/gray marks. Experiment with mechanical pencils. Demonstrate invisible or very light writing. Let child experiment with cardboard under the paper to see if student can avoid making holes in the paper.

5) Pressing too soft — Try softer lead pencils. Use carbonless copies to see if marks go through to the yellow copy. Try to color small areas very dark with red or black pencils.

6) Awkward wrist position — Try demonstration with "Aim and Scribble" activity. Try a slanted desk/slant board or vertical surface. Place the paper correctly for the child's handedness.

## Resource to purchase handwriting accessories:



[www.hwtears.com](http://www.hwtears.com)



Handi-Writer™



Thumb Buddy™



The Pencil Grip™



Stetro™



Grip Tec 3000 Pencil™

Therapro

[www.theraproducts.com](http://www.theraproducts.com)