

Preparing for Paper & Pencil

THREE EASY STEPS

When it comes to handwriting, children must be taught everything, including how to sit, position the paper, and hold a pencil. This is the physical approach to handwriting. Sometimes it's the physical approach, not the letters and numbers, that causes a child to struggle with handwriting. Think of it like playing a musical instrument; if you don't know how to position yourself and hold the instrument correctly, how can you play beautiful music? The same is true with writing letters and numbers. The ability to position yourself and hold your pencil correctly has a lot to do with being able to write legibly.

Important questions:

- How do you get children to sit up while writing?
- How do you position the paper?
- What is the secret to a good pencil grip?

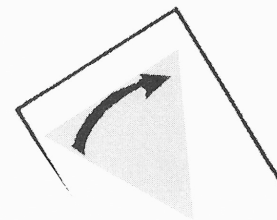
STEP 1 – POSTURE

Does the furniture fit? The right size and style of chair and desk affect school performance. Children don't come in a standard size. Check that every child can sit with feet flat on the floor and arms resting comfortably. Children who sit on their feet often will lose stability in their upper torso. On the following page, we show you how good posture can be fun. We have a secret for getting children to stop sitting on their feet.



STEP 2 – PAPER PLACEMENT

There's a misconception that people should slant their paper to make slanted writing. Not true. In fact, we slant paper so that it fits the natural arc of the forearm. Children who slant their papers properly can write faster because the arm moves naturally with the paper.



STEP 3 – GRASPING GRIP

The most important thing to understand about pencil grip is it doesn't develop naturally—it is learned. Based on our years of experience helping children, we developed our own theories about how to develop good pencil grip habits effectively. Because children are born imitators, demonstration will lead to success.

On the next few pages, you will find fun strategies to help you teach posture, paper, and pencil skills.

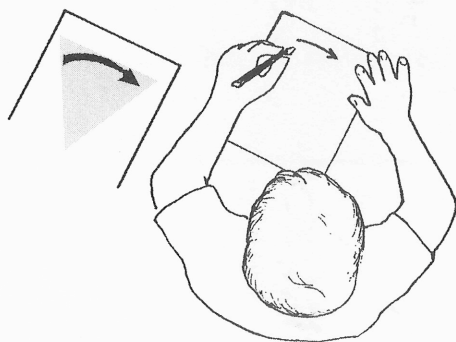


Paper Placement & Pencil Grip

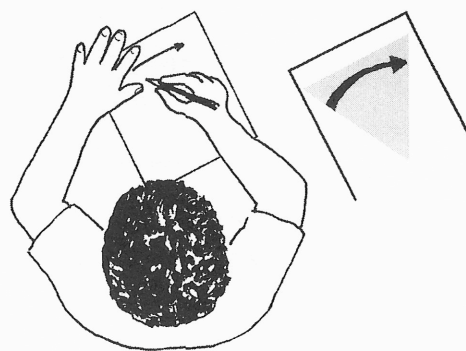
PLACE THE PAPER

How do you position paper correctly? Some children may lean over in an awkward position to write. Children who put their paper in front of them and slant it properly can write more efficiently because they position their arms naturally with the paper. You need to teach them how to place their papers appropriately. Have your students turn to p. 6 in *Kick Start Kindergarten*, and teach them how to slant their papers for their handedness.

Children who are able to print sentences across the page are ready to tilt the paper at a slight angle to follow the natural arc of the writing hand. The correct way to tilt the paper is easy to remember (see illustrations below). For right-handed children, put the right corner higher; for left-handed children, put the left corner higher. The writing hand is below the line of writing. This practice encourages a correct, neutral wrist position.



Left-Handed Students



Right-Handed Students

LOOKING OUT FOR LEFTIES



You might observe some left-handed children slanting their papers too much. They do this to prevent their wrists from hooking. Allow them to exaggerate the slant on their papers if it doesn't cause speed or neatness trouble. Visit dp.lwtears.com/ext/TGKSK/2018 for more information about the left-handed writing position.

Cross Strokes

When writing, we typically travel from top to bottom and left to right. At times, left-handed children may choose to cross letters by pulling their writing hand from right to left. This is natural. Model it for them in their workbooks for the letters below.

Mark arrows → for right-handed students. Mark arrows ← for left-handed students.

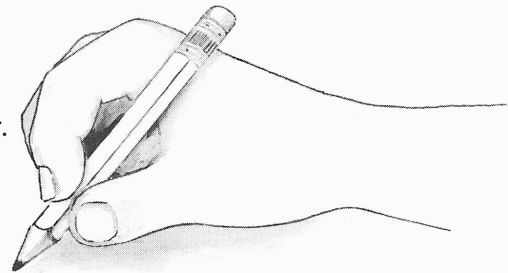
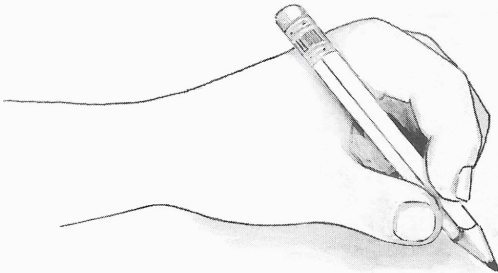
A E F G H I J T - f t

The Correct Grip

The standard way for children to hold their pencil is illustrated below. If you write using a grip that is different than tripod or quadropod, alter your grip for classroom demonstration.

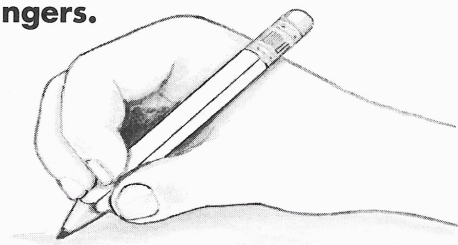
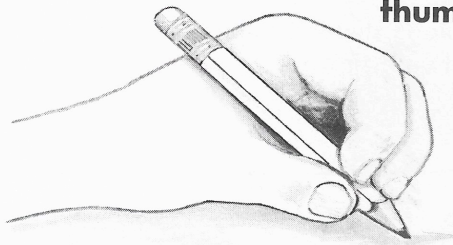
Tripod Grip

Standard grip:
Hold pencil with
thumb + index finger.
Pencil rests on middle finger.

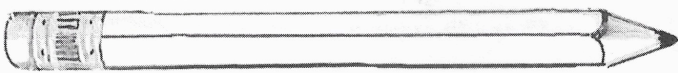


Quadropod Grip

Alternate grip: Hold pencil with
thumb + index and middle fingers.
Pencil rests on ring finger.



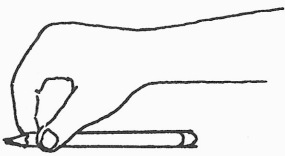
A Note About Pencil Size



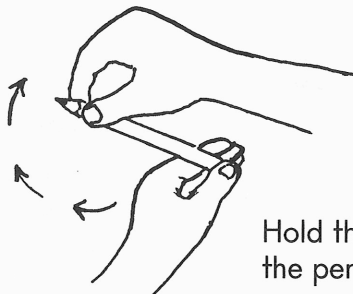
Start by using golf-size pencils. As children gain handwriting experience, their control will improve. Typically, as children gain more control in first grade, they will be ready for a standard-size pencil.

Flip the Pencil Trick

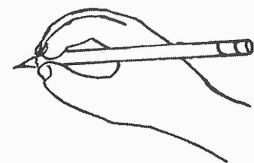
Here is another method that someone introduced to us at a workshop. It's such fun that we love to share it. Children like to do it and it puts the pencil in the correct position. (Illustrated for right-handed students.)



Place pencil on table pointing away from you. Pinch the pencil on the paint where the paint meets the wood.



Hold the eraser and twirl the pencil around.



Voilà!
Correct grip.