



# Support for Developing a Comfortable Pencil Grip



## Pencil grip for handwriting

Children can find it difficult to develop, and remember how to form, a tripod grip due to the fine motor control and pressure skills needed.

### Pencil grip rhyme for young children (4 - 5 year olds)

We have adapted the traditional nursery rhyme "Tommy Thumb" to help young children learn how to form a tripod grip.

The grip version of the rhyme can be taught alongside the original as just another verse; the placing of the pencil can be replaced by using a finger from the other hand, this way a child can begin to develop the thumb and finger movements they will need later on to hold a pencil correctly.



<https://www.teachhandwriting.co.uk/handwriting-pencil-grip.html>

### Hand & finger games to improve handwriting

#### Hands & Fingers and children's handwriting

Good hand strength and agility is a combination of three skills; 1. Dexterity of the hands and fingers - allowing the fingers to grip the pencil freely, 2. In-hand manipulation - allowing the pencil to be held in the hand freely and, 3. Strong arches of the hand - allowing the pencil to be rested and moved on the hand.



#### Hand Strength Games to Help Improve Children's Handwriting

Children often experience hand cramp when handwriting because their hands aren't strong enough to write for extended periods. These games help to strengthen hands to overcome this problem.



#### Individual Finger Games to Help Improve Children's Handwriting

Manipulating your fingers to hold a pencil efficiently needs individual finger strength and dexterity. These games help strengthen individual fingers to make handwriting more comfortable.



#### In-hand Manipulation Games to Help Improve Children's Handwriting

The coordinated movement of the fingers, thumb and hand are needed to hold and move a pencil effectively for handwriting and drawing. These games help practise in-hand manipulation.



#### Arch of Hand & Grip Games to Help Improve Children's Handwriting

For efficient writing the pencil rests on the hand and the hand moves freely across the paper, requiring the arches of the hand to be strong. These games help strengthen the arches.

### Activities to improve individual finger strength for handwriting

#### Marbles

##### You need

Marbles or small plastic balls, targets, cardboard tube, plastic cups.

##### How to do it

Using a finger-thumb flick, the nail of the index or middle finger pressed against the thumb pad, start by flicking the marble across the table/floor. Then try to use the other fingers to flick the marble, not forgetting to try with the other hand as well. If the child is finding the marbles too heavy or small then change to small plastic balls or ping pong balls or scrunched up pieces of paper or even cotton wool balls.



**Shooting Range**— the range can be set up in a number of ways, for instance, different size paper or plastic plates/cups could be propped up as targets, the smaller the target the more points they are worth. Another idea is to use cardboard tubes numbered and set out at different distances, the further away the target, the greater the points earned.

**Marble Alley**— can be bought or you can make your own.

#### Finger Football

##### You need

Football pitch A3 size and variety of small balls.

##### How to do it

Start by flicking the ball across the table/floor as far as possible using the index or middle finger. The kicking finger needs to work independently from the rest of the hand. This will be made easier if the tips of the other fingers are resting on the surface, giving greater support and stability to the hand. Then repeat with the opposite hand.



If the child is finding it hard to isolate one finger then adapt the flick to a two finger flick. Then move to a flick with the nail of the index or middle finger pressed against the thumb pad.

A more challenging position is to hold the hand above the surface and curl the thumb and other fingers into the palm leaving the kicking finger free.

Use softer lighter balls to start with then move to heavier ones.

#### Finger Escape

##### You need

Sellotape or masking tape

##### How to do it

Ask the child to hold two fingers together, for instance index and middle finger. Then gently wrap tape a couple of times around the top of the fingers. The aim is to get the sellotape (masking tape is easier to start with) off the fingers only using the fingers and thumb from the same hand on which the fingers have been taped.

This is a hard activity to do and can make the fingers ache a little so start off by making the sellotape looser so that it is easier to remove, gradually make it a little firmer so that the task becomes more challenging. Remember not to wrap it too tight so that it affects the blood circulation to the tips of the fingers.

Try taping different pairs of fingers together and also repeat the exercise on the other hand, building strength in both hands.





#### Pinch Pots

##### You need

Play dough, plasticine or air drying clay.

##### How to do it

Ask the child to roll the clay into a palm size ball and hold it in the palm of their hand. Next get them to stick their thumb of the other hand into the middle of the ball and use two fingers (usually the index and middle fingers) on the outside of the ball to help pinch the ball into a pot shape.

Move the thumb and fingers around the edge of the ball as well as slowly moving the ball/pot around in the palm of the hand until the pot has been made. Try making them with the ball of dough/clay held in the palm of the other hand.



#### Egg Box Share

##### You need

The bottom section of an egg box and dried beans / peas or beads.

##### How to do it

Using the egg box as the catching container ask the child to hold a number of small dried beans in the palm of one hand. Then ask them to place one bean at a time into each of the cups of the egg box. They will need to have their palm and curled fingers facing upwards. Then use their thumb to help roll each bean up from the palm of the hand to drop into the each egg cup.

Start off using a 6 space egg box and 1 bean per egg space, so they hold 6 beans at the start. Gradually get them to hold more in their hands and see how many they can place in the holders. This can be played as a time or number challenge, 'how many beans can they place in one minute' or 'how many beans can they hold and place in the holders without dropping any'. Remember it is important to do one bean at a time!



#### Posting Frenzy

##### You need

Money box or container with a slot cut into the lid, cardboard box, money, paper clips anything that can be posted through the slot and a timer.

##### How to do it

**Time Trials** – Pick up one object at a time and post through the slot, 'How many can you post in a minute?' Change the size and angle of the slot to make it more challenging.

**Double Post** – You can use the side of a cardboard box for this activity. Cut a slot an appropriate size in the card, depending on the child's ability you or the child holds the card in one hand and posts through 5/10 objects with the other hand. Once they have been posted they have to move around to the other side of the card where the posted object now lay and post them back using the opposite hand to before. This is a timed activity, 'Who is the fastest double post master?'