

Help Me Hold My Crayon

Even if you're not a teacher and don't hold the pencil correctly yourself, you can still be a very good influence on your child. It's as easy as choosing the correct tools and showing your child how to hold them. (This comes directly from the Handwriting Without Tears Program we use at preschool!)

How do I choose the correct writing tools?

- As soon as your child is past age three or the putting-things-in-mouth swalling stage, give him or her little broken pieces of chalk or crayon and lots of big sheets of paper for loose scribbling/drawing.
- Little pieces of finger food also encourage finger skills.

Why little pieces?

Little pieces promote fingertip control and strength. They encourage the precise pinch that's used for crayons and pencils. Notice how well your child uses his/her fingers with little pieces. There's research to show that starting with small pieces encourages the correct grasp.

What about regular crayons and pencils?

There's nothing wrong with regular crayons and pencils, but you must show your child how to hold and use them properly. Save the pencils for later. Pencils are sharp pointed sticks and are inappropriate for beginners. Fat pencils and crayons are too heavy for little hands.

When should I start?

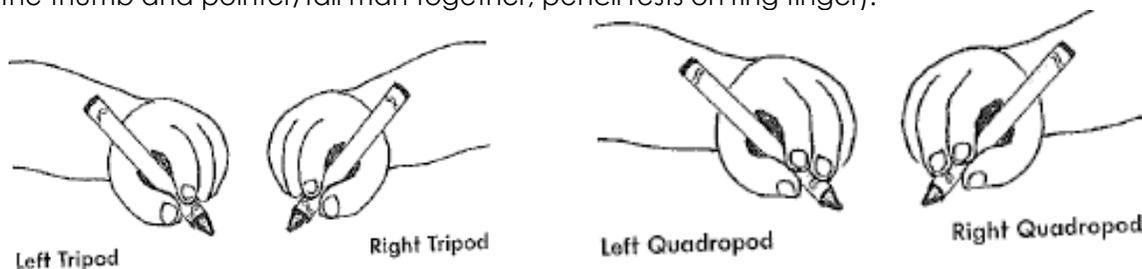
Start now. Show how to use crayons as soon as your child wants to color.

How do I show my child?

1. Teach your child to name the first three fingers: These are the thumb, the pointer, and the tall man.
2. Move them: Give a thumbs up and wiggle the thumb. Have your child point with the pointer finger, and then put the tall man beside the pointer finger.
3. Make a big open O pinch: This positions the thumb and pointer correctly.

What is the correct grip?

Here's a picture. Notice that there is a choice. Some children like to pinch with the thumb and pointer. That's called the tripod (3-pinch with thumb and pointer, pencil rests on tall man). Others like the quadropod (4-pinch with the thumb and pointer/tall man together, pencil rests on ring finger).



What else can I do?

1. Pick up and drop! This is a fun way to practice placing the fingers correctly. Help your child pick up the pencil and get all the fingers placed. Then drop it! See if your child can put all the fingers back in the right place again. Repeat activity two or three times.
2. Aim and scribble. Make tiny stars or spots on paper. Teach your child how to aim the crayon and land on a star to make it shine. Help the crayon hand rest on the paper with the elbow down and the hand touching the paper. Help the helper hand hold the paper. Now just wiggle the fingers to scribble.
3. Show your child how to hold and move the crayon to make different strokes, back and forth, up and down, round and round.