

## Occupational Therapy Tip Sheet

# ALTERNATIVE PENCIL GRIPS



### What is an alternative pencil grip?

- These are grips made from household items to help improve pencil grasp.

### What is a proper pencil grasp?

- There are many different ways to hold a pencil that are correct. It is important that some fingertips are in contact with the pencil and the hand rests on the desk. Fingers should be used to move the pencil, not the wrist or arm.
- "Dynamic tripod grasp" is the most functional grasp: the hand rests on the table with thumb, index and middle fingers flexed/bent at the knuckle position to hold the pencil.

### Why use an alternative pencil grip?

- To help children develop a proper way to hold pencils
- To compensate for weak muscles or poor finger coordination

### What are the benefits of using an alternative pencil grip?

- It helps create new motor patterns for children, which may become their habit over time.
- It helps children learn to use small movements with their fingers to control the pencil.

### How to use alternative pencil grips?

- Help children develop proper hand position with the side of their hand resting on the table (try having them practice at standing-height tables, on their knees on the floor and leaning forward or propped on their elbows while laying on their stomach).
- Hand weakness may contribute to a poor pencil grasp. Consider using activities such as beading, lacing, playdough moulding, pop-beading and Lego building to help build finger coordination and strength.

### Examples of alternative pencil grips:

If your child is having difficulty holding a pencil with an open thumb web space, try:

1. Ball grip



2. Bottle Cap

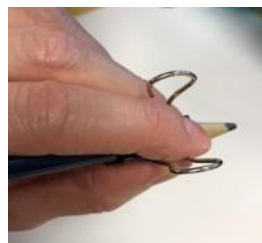


3. Clothespin in hand



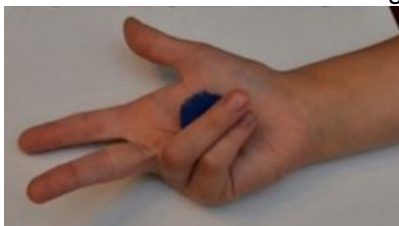
**If your child is having difficulty with where to place their fingers on a pencil, try:**

1. Binder clip grip



**If your child is having difficulty with bending their fingers into their palm, try:**

- Pom pom: Have the child put a pom pom in the palm of their hand. Close the pinky and ring fingers over the pom pom to hold it in place. Hold a pencil with the remaining fingers (index, middle and thumb) without dropping the pom pom. Any small item will work for this strategy.



- Handiwriter: This can be purchased in stores or online. A homemade version can be created with hair ties and a medium sized bead. This option also pulls the pencil back towards the thumb web space.



- See also “Pencil Grips” handout for other options.