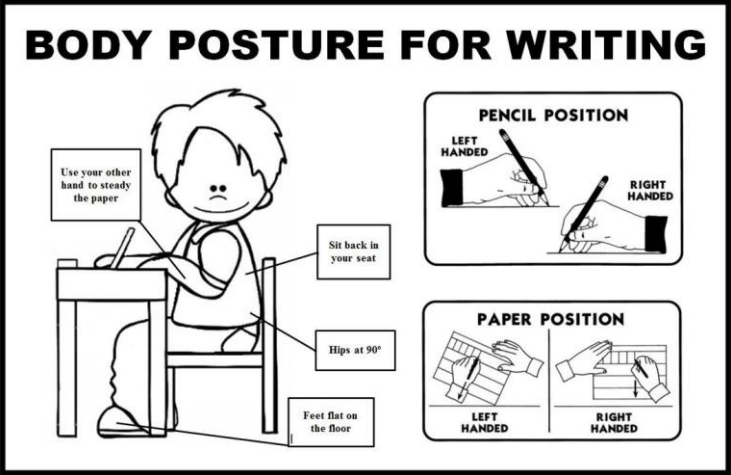
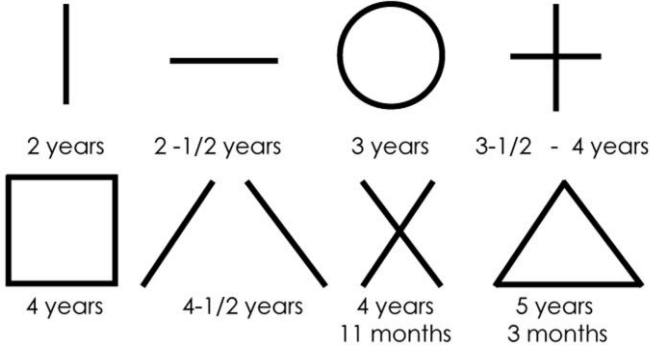



Tier 1 - Classroom Suggestions for Occupational Therapy Related Concerns

Common Questions	Classroom Suggestions
Fine Motor:	
Many of my students have weak hands. Is there anything I can do to help this?	Yes! Incorporate games, activities, and play that builds strength like playdough, interlocking blocks, spray bottles, kinetic sand, clothespin activities, child sized tongs to count and sort small items, squirt with spray bottles, climb on playground equipment, etc. (See handouts below)
What fine motor ideas can I share with parents and/or use in my classroom?	See PREP handout below - FINE MOTOR SKILL IDEAS FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS
How can I help my students with cutting?	Remind students to hold scissors with thumbs up and elbows down. Start with snipping, then cutting short, thick lines before cutting simple shapes. Card stock type paper is easier to cut.
Handwriting:	
What is the best posture for writing?	 <p><b>BODY POSTURE FOR WRITING</b></p> <p>Use your other hand to steady the paper</p> <p>Sit back in your seat</p> <p>Hips at 90°</p> <p>Feet flat on the floor</p> <p><b>PENCIL POSITION</b></p> <p>LEFT HANDED</p> <p>RIGHT HANDED</p> <p><b>PAPER POSITION</b></p> <p>LEFT HANDED</p> <p>RIGHT HANDED</p>
How can I help my students with holding a pencil?	Try using small pencils, bits of crayon and chalk and consider positioning work in the vertical plane to promote wrist extension and a more mature grasp. Consider use of Twist-n-Write pencils, monitored use of pencil grips, and visual/tactile cues on pencil to encourage a proper grasp. (See handout below.)

Common Questions	Classroom Suggestions
When should a student have a clear hand dominance?	A hand preference usually starts to develop <b>between the ages of 2 to 4</b> , however it is common at this stage for children to swap hands. Between the ages of 4 to 6 years a clear hand preference is usually established.
At what ages do pre-writing shapes develop?	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pre-Writing Shapes/Strokes</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Children should be able to form these 9 pre-writing strokes before they are asked to write.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>Children who can draw/copy an oblique cross are likely to be able to write letters and numbers easier than those who cannot</small></p>
What can I do for light, scratchy writing?	Try weighted pencils, #4B or 6B pencils, and a slant board. Use a white board and dry erase markers, or markers on paper.
What should I do if my student bears down too hard and tears the paper?	Try varying the writing surface textures (such as a piece of craft foam under the paper) to provide feedback. If the paper rips, too much pressure was used. Use mechanical pencils with older students to get a feel for the need to have lighter pressure - try to write without breaking the lead. <a href="#">Pencil Pressure When Writing - The OT Toolbox</a>
What can I do for letter reversals?	Teach letters in groups, for example, “Magic c letters” - c,d,g,o,q and “Diver letters” - b,h,m,n,p,r. For right handers with number reversals, use the left hand as an anchor on paper and draw numbers like 3 and 5 around the index and thumb. <a href="#">Letter Reversals and How to Fix Them - The OT Toolbox</a>
What can I do for poor letter placement on and within the line space?	Provide strong visual cues, such as highlighting the baseline, consider use of adaptive or three-lined paper, and provide a writing checklist for older students to check their work.
What can I do for students that don't space between words?	Teach the student to “finger space”, use a popsicle stick, or place a sticky note flag between words. Highlight spaces between words or underline for each word in a sentence.

Common Questions	Classroom Suggestions
At what age do you recommend we shift from handwriting to using technology?	Start exploring technology at any age. When handwriting is not functional, try speech to text or word prediction options: Google Read and Write <a href="#">Read&amp;Write for Google Chrome™</a> Co-writer <a href="#">Co:Writer</a>
Are there free typing programs I can use at home or school to help work on keyboarding?	Some recommendations: <a href="http://www.typing.com">www.typing.com</a> or <a href="http://www.typingclub.com">www.typingclub.com</a>
Sensory Processing:	
What should I do for a wiggly student who distracts others with their fidgets?	Fidget Rules, choose fidgets that don't make noise 
Why should I allow fidgets in my class?	Many students can focus better while fidgeting. Typical adults usually fidget when they are trying to focus or listen. Help your students to fidget in an appropriate way.
Is it sensory or is it behavior?	Can the child easily turn off the behavior when redirected or do they have a difficult time organizing themselves? Use the sensory or behavior checklist - <a href="#">Sensory or Behavior Checklist</a> - to clarify.
What kind of movement breaks can you recommend while seated at a desk or table?	Chair push ups, hand presses, dots and squeezes, stretchy bands around the chair legs, foot fidgets, and theraband attached to the chair to pull, are all things to try while seated. Consider placing coloring or other supplies on the floor so they have to lean over or bend down to get items.
My student is falling out of his/her chair, what can I do?	If your student is falling out of his/her chair, try turning the chair backwards. Some chairs have cut outs for the student's legs and are designed for this. Try movable seating options the student may need more movement in his day.

Common Questions	Classroom Suggestions
Why are my students super active after a Go Noodle activity?	When choosing a Go Noodle activity, choose something with a distinct ending and/or is repetitive, as this is more likely to be grounding and calming.
How do I get my kids to calm down after recess?	S'cool Moves handout. <a href="#">I Can Calm Myself</a>
Other:	
My student receives outside OT. Shouldn't he/she qualify for school OT also?	<p>Private OT is provided through a medical model. In the educational model (in schools), OT is a related service. That means the student must <u>first</u> qualify for Special Education Services.</p> <p>According to IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), school-based occupational therapy is a related service that provides support to a child with an identified disability so that they can benefit from special education. This can take the form of direct interventions, consultation/collaboration with the educational team, accommodations, and modifications.</p> <p>In contrast, outpatient therapy in a clinic setting focuses on providing services that support a child's ability to independently and efficiently access their home or the community, and approaches evaluation and treatment using the medical model rather than the educational model.</p>
What should I do if I've earnestly implemented Tier 1 suggestions on a regular basis and still have motor and/or sensory concerns about a particular student?	Follow your division procedures to make a referral for an informal OT observation. This may require a parent signature.

Last edit - 12/2022 by PREP occupational therapists



# Activities to Encourage Proper Pencil Grasp

An efficient pencil grasp allows a significant amount of finger movement and does not fatigue the muscles of the hands. The most common “efficient” grasp is called a tripod grasp. The index finger and thumb pinch the pencil and the pencil rests on the tip of the third finger. In order to develop an efficient grasp, children need to move their fingers in isolation, develop good shoulder and wrist stability, and strong hand muscles. The following activities support the development of an efficient pencil grasp.

## Shoulder and Wrist Stability

- Weight-bearing into the arms by crawling, crab walking, yoga poses, donkey kicks
- Drawing and coloring on a vertical surface (chalkboard, wall, easel)
- Drawing and coloring on a clipboard on the floor
- Playing on a lego wall, magnetic wall, refrigerator magnets

## Hand Strength

- Pegboard games and activities
- Bead stringing and lacing activities
- Squeeze water out of sponges
- Play with play dough, silly putty
- Knead cookie dough
- Use scissors to snip construction paper
- Make slime
- Connect pop-beads
- Games that involve tweezers or tongs

## Developing the Arches of the Hands

- Weight-bearing into the hands during yoga or animal walks
- Rolling dice in the palm of the hand
- Making balls out of dough or putty
- Finger plays, itsy bitsy spider, making shadow puppets



## **FINE MOTOR SKILL IDEAS FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS**

### **GROSS MOTOR ACTIVITIES FOR FINE MOTOR SKILL IMPROVEMENT**

Activities that require weight bearing through the upper extremities are helpful for improving fine motor skills. Ideas include the following:

- Yoga poses such as cat, down dog, cobra, plank, donkey kick.
- Wall and chair pushes.

Activities such as these elongate muscles of the arch of the hand, which improves stability and promotes disassociation of the “stability” vs. “mobility” sides of the hand. Thumb, index and middle fingers comprise the “mobility” side of the hand. The ring and pinky fingers the “stability” side. These activities also promote co-contraction of muscles in the shoulder girdle. This promotes increased strength and stability of the shoulder muscles and improves distal control in the hand.

Working against gravity helps increase stability through the shoulder girdle, again, assisting in promoting greater distal control. Ideas include the following:

- Throwing/catching a large therapy ball, beach ball or basketball overhead.
- Hanging up artwork or laundry on a clothesline placed at or above eye level.
- Lifting/stacking objects at eye level. Putting groceries away on higher shelves.
- Working at the wall, with work placed at or above shoulder height.
- Working, reading, and/or playing in prone on elbows.
- Any pulling, pushing or carrying activity – again to strengthen and increase stability of the shoulder and trunk musculature. Use of hands in this manner also strengthens grasping patterns.

### **TOOL USE TO PROMOTE IMPROVED GRASP**

Tool use is a great way to improve strength in the hands, improve grasping patterns, and work on eye-hand coordination. Here are some ideas for tool use activities:

- Use tongs to pick up small objects. Good for sorting, one-one correspondence, and matching. Ideally, a 3-fingered grasp should be used on the tongs, although younger kids may use a four-fingered grasp. Use a sticker, Velcro or rubber bands to give visual/tactile cue for where fingers should be placed on the tongs.
- Scissors - cutting a variety of materials – foam, cardboard, Play Doh, Silly Putty.
- Hole punches, staplers, tape dispensers, pencil sharpeners...
- Using plastic knives to cut spread, etc.
- Raking, sweeping – again promoting a power grasp and bilateral coordination.
- Tweezers – like in the game, Operation.

- Hammer/nails.
- Using ladles, spatulas, measuring cups, can openers, potato peelers – All great tools!

### **FUN ACTIVITIES FOR FINE MOTOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

- Pop bubble wrap
- Pick up objects such as coins, beads, mini-pompoms and nest them in the “stability” side of the hand (pinky and ring finger) without dropping. Then move these objects, one at a time, to the fingertips without dropping.
- Make small balls out of cookie dough, Play Doh, ripped paper, etc., by rolling the material with between thumb, index and middle finger tips. It’s most challenging when only one hand is used.
- Put coins into slots in a container/bank. Slots can be made at varying angles to encourage motor planning and wrist stability. Slots can also be vertical (box placed on a wall).
- Hiding coins, letter tiles in putty and finding them.
- Holding cards during a card game – this is surprisingly difficult for kids due to the grasping pattern that is used. You could use a Clip Chip to keep the cards together and the child would still benefit.
- Pencil races – have the child walk fingers forwards and backwards along a pencil.
- LEGOs

### **FUNCTIONAL TASKS FOR FINE MOTOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

- Spray bottles – fill with vinegar water and use to clean tables, windows, white boards, etc. You add visual cues by using a dry-erase marker to indicate the area you want cleaned.
- Clean windows.
- Wringing out a dish rag or sponge.
- Buttoning, snapping, zipping.
- Folding socks into pairs – nice for matching and motor planning – could also use clothespins to make pairs if folding is too difficult.
- Mixing/stirring activities.
- Spreading/cutting using a knife.
- Pouring using a pitcher.
- Scooping or ladling from a large bowl into smaller containers.
- Moving/stacking chairs – again more for increased strength.
- Shoes on/off using HANDS not pushing off with feet.
- Sweeping with a broom or vacuuming– again for bilateral coordination, strength and grasp development.
- Washing the car.
- Carrying laundry or groceries.

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