

Hand Skills

Writing

Proper body positioning is critical for tabletop activities. Your child should be seated in a chair that allows both of their feet to sit flat on the ground. Their knees should be slightly lower than their thighs, their back should be straight, and they should be leaning slightly forward toward the table.



Improvement of hand skills begins with the core/trunk of the body. If your child hunches over the paper when they are doing tabletop activities, it may be that they do not have enough strength in the core of their body to hold themselves up.

Things to try to improve core strength: Swinging at the park, balancing on objects, and ensuring that your child gets plenty of exercise outside.

Developing a proper handwriting grasp. A proper handwriting grasp consists of the pencil being held between the tips of the thumb and index finger with the middle finger resting behind. This is called a tripod grasp. If your child prefers to rest the pencil on their ring finger and have the thumb, index finger, and middle fingertips holding the pencil this is also alright. It's most important that the thumb and index fingers create an "O" shape. This will allow your child to create letters with fine motor precision at the finger tips which will help them when developing other hand skills now and in the future.



Things to try if your child is new to writing or experiencing difficulty:

- Pencil grips can help facilitate proper pencil grasps.
- Increase your child's hand and arm strength to help improve their writing ability. Having wheelbarrow races with your child, doing finger plays like Cat's Cradle, or playing sports/games with rackets are good ways to improve these abilities.



Resources:

Case-Smith, J. (2005). *Occupational therapy for children* (5th ed.). Maryland Heights: Mosby/Elsevier.

<http://www.pediastaff.com/>

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Pictures from: <http://www.bickids.com/> ; <http://www.watchsonomacounty.com/> ; <http://www.otplan.com/>

