

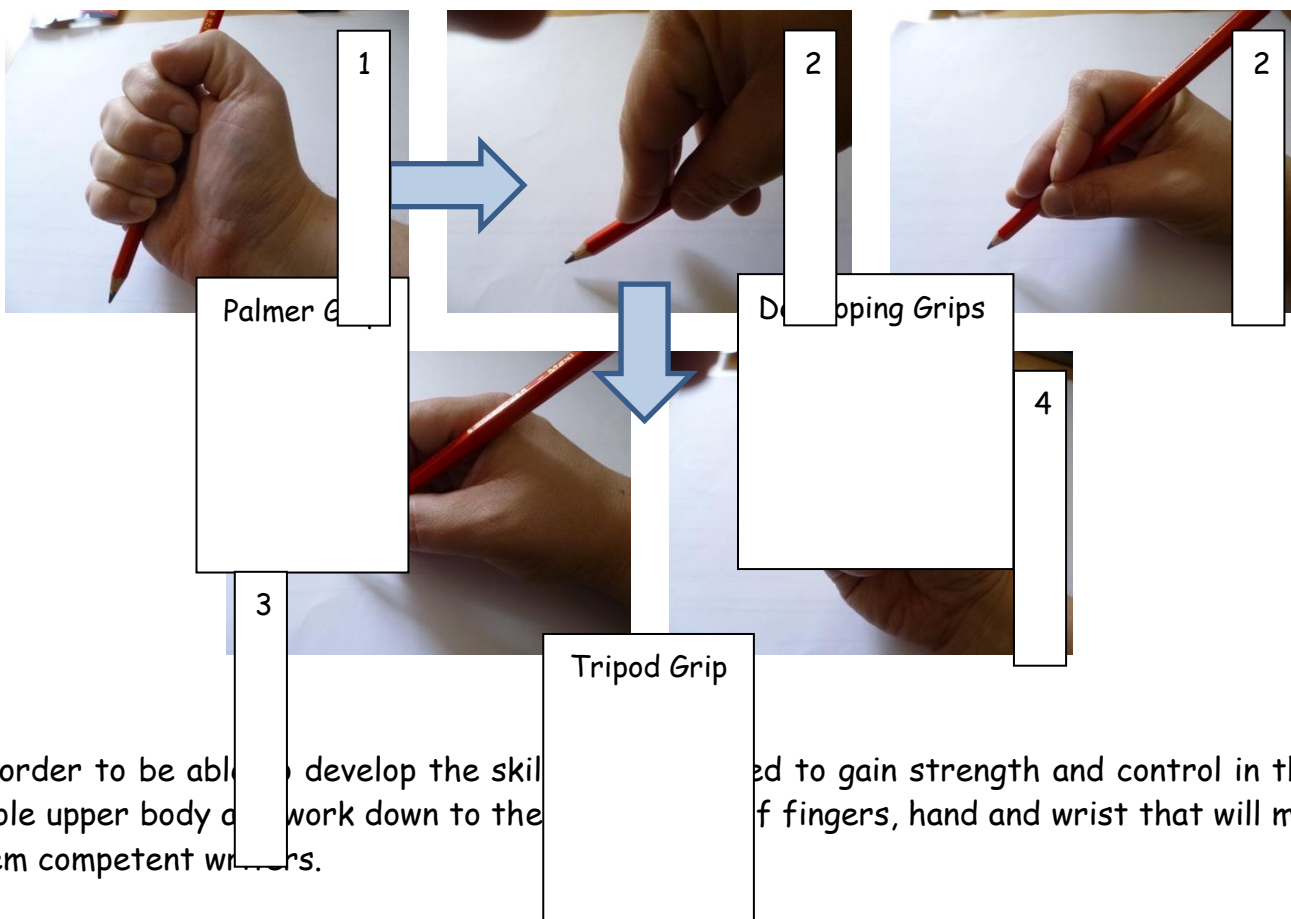


# Getting a grip on writing

*Writing is a complex skill for children that involves a great deal of knowledge and skill for a young brain. Before even deciding what to write, what words to choose and how to form the letters required, children have to develop the strength and control to use the pencil or pen on the paper. This booklet is aimed at helping you to help your child develop these physical skills.*

## Pencil grip

Children usually begin mark making by using a whole hand grip sometimes called a palmer grip (1). They will usually go through a variety of developing grips that give them more and more control (2). With support most children are able to develop the writing grip that offers the most control (3). This is known as the tripod grip because it uses the thumb, index finger and middle finger to hold the pencil in a three way grip (4).



In order to be able to develop the skill of writing, children need to work down to the fingers, hand and wrist that will make them competent writers.

Children need to gain strength and control in their fingers, hand and wrist that will make them competent writers.

## Large to fine movement

*Usually children develop control in large movements first and this helps their brains and muscles to then develop and control smaller movements, such as the ones we use when we write. We give children lots of opportunities to use large movements (gross motor control) and develop control in their arms and upper bodies and this helps to increase the control in their hands (fine motor control).*

Using bats and balls, scarves and streamers all help children to develop control in their arms and develop coordination between brain and muscles.



Using tools such as mops and brushes can be great practice, particularly if you can add some paint for mark making.



A less messy option is using paint brushes with water outside on a dry day. This is an excellent way to practice large and small movements.



Large mark making in a sand tray with a thin layer of sand/salt/flour etc. is great for developing control. It helps a child develop the link between their brain and their fingers and any mistakes are easy to erase.



When we begin to teach letter formation we always teach it with large movements often writing letters in the air. When children are at this stage it is important to keep using large movements so they can really see and feel the movements, lines and curves involved in forming the letters. Finger painting, sticks in the mud and writing with a finger on each other's backs and trying to guess the letters are fun ways of practising this.

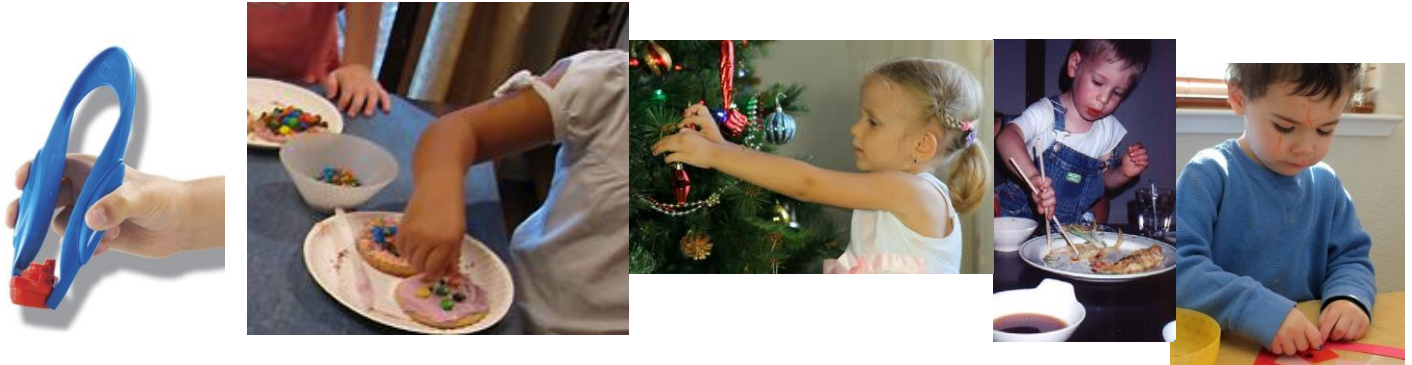


*Young children will always benefit from recapping large movement control. So keep coming back to large movements even when your child is writing fluently*



## All fingers and thumbs...

While children are developing control in large movements it is also important to help them improve the control in their hands. We particularly want to help them use their first two fingers and thumb so the tripod pencil grip is as easy and natural as possible. Any activity that encourages controlled finger movement is helpful but things that use a pincer or pinching grip are best for strengthening the fingers and thumb for writing. Using tools such as knives and forks or magnetic fishing rods also help children work on skills needed for pencil control.



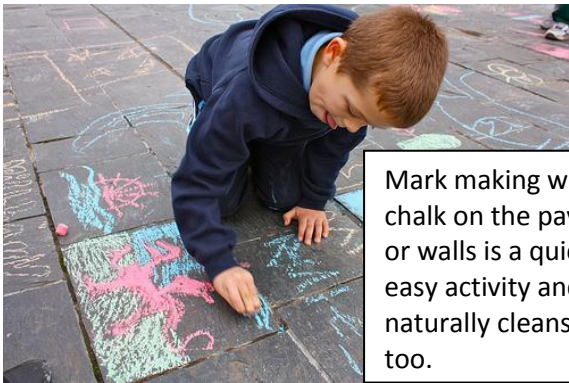
Some ideas for activities:

- Using tweezers to pick up objects large and small
- Putting creative resources like glitter in small pots that make children pinch to get them out (old chocolate box trays and ice cube trays are great for this)
- Any sprinkling activities, for example decorating cakes or biscuits
- Using clothes pegs to hang up washing or make dens.
- Using doughs and modelling materials. From soft Play dough to stiffer plasticine
- Making pipe cleaner models
- Building with construction toys such as Lego and Mobilo
- Eating with different implements or unusual foods i.e. chopsticks, spaghetti with a fork.



## Be Creative

Look for every opportunity for your child to mark make and practice their skills for writing, the more fun and purposeful the better.



Mark making with chalk on the pavement or walls is a quick and easy activity and rain naturally cleans it up too.



Clip boards give a sense of purpose and come in all sizes.

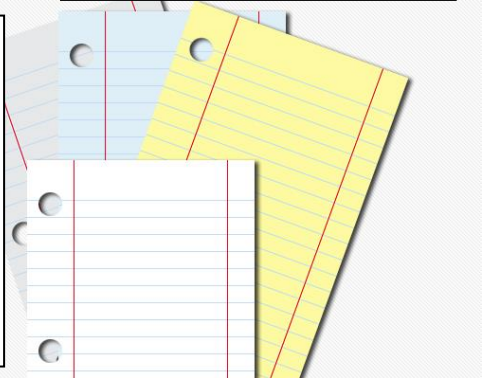


Decorate the skin of fruits and vegetables that will be peeled before eating. Here is an easy Halloween idea.



Make picture or writing with wool or cooked spaghetti. This helps grip and explores shapes and formation.

Use a variety of paper types and forms. Children love to fill in grids and forms. They will also experiment with squared paper or dotted paper in a different way to lined or plain paper.



## Useful Links

Printable types of paper dotted, grids etc. <http://www.printablepaper.net>

Some ideas for fine motor play <http://www.learning4kids.net/list-of-fine-motor-play-activities/>