

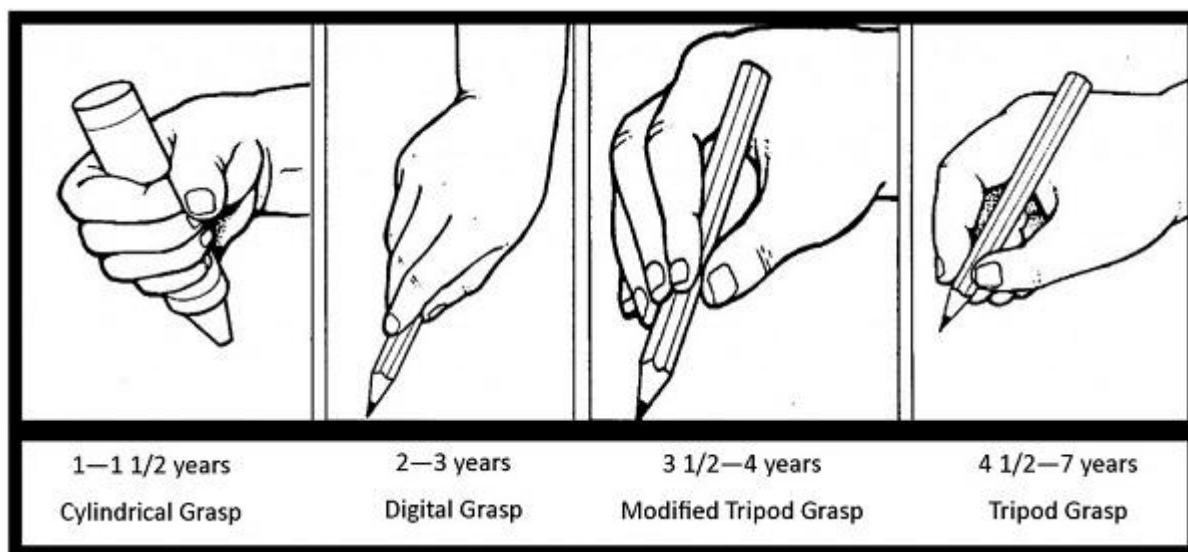
Early Writing: Tips for helping your child learn

Before your child can hold and use a pen correctly they need to develop good hand-eye co-ordination and their fine motor skills. It is therefore important that your child has plenty of opportunities to strengthen the muscles in their hands through messy play and by using tools. Activities such as playdough, slime, clay, platercine, filling and emptying pots and containers of sand or water, painting, using scissors should be encouraged. Activities that involve being precise, coordinated and spatially aware are also extremely important such as: threading, puzzles, manipulative toys.

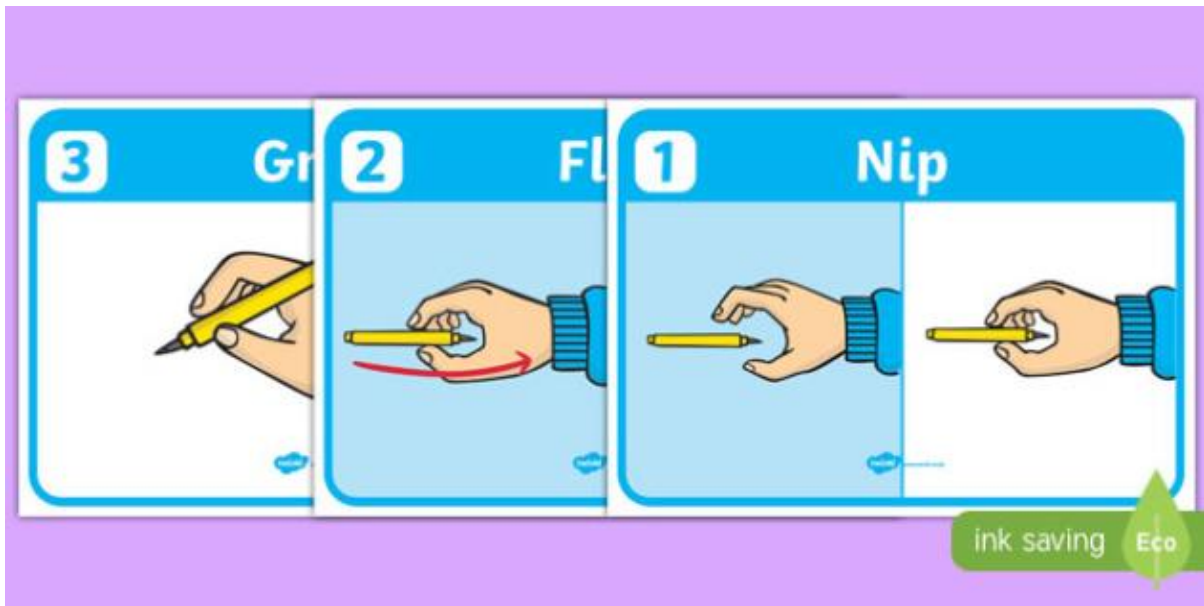
Before your child can write they need to learn to make marks. This may be on paper with crayons, pencils or pens; or in the sand/mud with a stick. Encourage your child to make marks using a variety of different methods. Ask them what their marks represent – children can have get imaginations so go along with what they say! Don't criticise them but always encourage them. They may like using a clip board or pretending to make their own shopping list. They may enjoy a variety of different size or shaped paper. Why not give them some old wall paper to draw on or cut up some tiny squares.

It takes time for a child to develop a dominant hand so in the early stages they may frequently swap hands. Do not worry about this. With lots of practice and opportunities to mark make or use tools they will eventually establish whether they are left or right handed. (Please note you can get scissors for left handed people).

Children develop the pen grip gradually as the muscles in their hand strengthen so do not be overly concerned as to how they hold a pen but show them how you hold yours.



A way to show them how to pick up a pen correctly to use the NIP, FLIP & GRIP method.



Initially encourage your child to make lines up and down, zig zags and circles.

When they show an interest in writing letters, encourage them to copy their name. This should be written with a Capital letter at the start and then all subsequent letters should be written as lower case letters.

Your child is likely to want to write the letters quite big to begin with and then they will gradually learn to write smaller ones. Encourage them to allow enough space on the paper to write all the letters across the paper and to start on the left hand side of the paper. To begin with your child may wish to write the letters in random places on the paper, don't worry about this as at this stage any letter writing is good and should be praised.

As your child starts to write more they may start doing mirror-writing. This is the letters in reverse direction, so that they look normal when viewed in a mirror. Some people may mirror-write intentionally; but unintentional mirror-writing is surprisingly common amongst young children. Again, do not worry either ignore it if your child would get put off by you commenting on it or if your child is open to learning tell them what they have done and write their name to show them what it should look like. Perhaps even use a mirror on their writing and show them what their name look like.