

Developing effective pencil grasp

Developing hand arches

There are many small muscles in the hand that are used to arch, cup and shape our hands around small objects so that we can hold them better.

1. Press a ball or round object into the child's palm. Facilitate arching of their hand by stroking or shaping it into an arched posture with your hands.
2. Cup hand with palm facing up so that a deep hollow is formed. Gradually add grains of rice or sand while encouraging the child to make the hollow deeper to hold more.
3. Shaking Dice: Cup both hands before placing them together at a 90-degree angle to each other. Maintaining the arches and the sealing of the borders of the hands will allow the dice to shake within the palm without being dropped.
4. Domino Theory: Arrange dominoes on their narrow end about ¼ inch apart in a long line. By pushing the first in the line one should see a chain reaction of them falling in order.
5. Tower Building With Compressor Erasers: Hold chisel erasers between each thumb and index finger. The pointed ends should be positioned toward the web space. Pick up tiny cubes or dice from a table surface by compressing them between the round open ends of the erasers. Stack the cubes to build a tower. Controlled bilateral release is essential for the tower to reach great heights. (Adapted from handouts by Mary Benbow, Occupational Therapist)
6. Waiter Tray Carrying: support a tray on extended fingers; balance objects on the tray
7. Water Dish Rotation: a. place elbow on table b. place a dish or cup filled with water on fingertips c. rotate the dish clockwise

Activities to encourage thumb opposition working with the index and middle finger

1. Using playdough or clay: roll tiny balls with thumb and index finger or with thumb, index and middle finger. Variations: Make a play dough pancake or ball, stick one piece of spaghetti in the play dough, pick up Cheerios to drop over the spaghetti (could also use tooth picks)
2. Thumb Resistive Exercises: make an OK sign with hand; have someone else try and pull your thumb out.
3. Plastic Bag Sealing: using both hands seal Ziploc Bags. Pinch the grooved ridges together at the middle with the thumb pulps working opposite the finger pulps.
4. Clothespin games: matching games for colors, numbers, sight words, uppercase letters to lower letters
5. Playing with lego
6. Bubble wrap popping 2
7. Put- in tasks or pennies in piggy bank: get a container and make a slit on top, have your child pick up pennies and put it in the container. Could also use cherrios, buttons, beads and popsicle sticks.

8. Taking lids off/on markers
9. Beading and Lacing
10. Eye droppers – can fill it with a food color to be used while playing in the tub, cooking or baking
11. Turn pennies: have them pick the pennies up off the table and making sure not sliding them off the table.
12. Card games : turning cards over (deck cards, memory cards, picture cards, dealing cards – sliding card off pile with thumb)

Activities to promote the development of a dynamic grasp:

1. Use of a shorter writing tool. Can use broken crayons or chop the pencil 3 inches in height.
2. Work on a vertical surface or use slant board.
3. Getting a coin out of a change purse, one at a time.
4. Crumpling paper, tissue, cellophane to a make an art project.
5. Playing games with chips, marbles, pegs
6. Use stylus when tracing or writing on an Ipad. Check out how to make your own stylus <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCure6mG1AE>

Another great resource: <https://sites.google.com/view/schoolbasedot/fine-motor/pencil-grasp?authuser=0>