

Pencil grasp

An efficient pencil grasp is skill that will prove to be important one through their school years and life. An efficient pencil grasp is a dynamic tripod grasp. A dynamic tripod grasp is when the pencil is pinched between the thumb and index finger, and the middle finger is placed beneath the pencil. The ring finger and pinky finger tucked into palm of hand. It is dynamic when just the fingers move and your child is not making their whole hand move to move the pencil.

Your child may not be using an efficient pencil grasp yet, but there are many ways and activities to help your child develop an efficient pencil grasp. Some different fine motor activities you can do are:

- Threading beads onto different items (string, pipe cleaner, wooden dowels)
- Coin games (putting coins into piggy bank using one hand, picking up a coin without sliding it off the table)
- Tong activities (Using kitchen tongs, chopsticks to pick up various items practicing tripod grasp on tongs)
- Clothes pin games
- Stacking with blocks, Legos, Cheerios



Dynamic-Tripod

To help your child with their pencil grasp when they are practicing printing, start by using a shorter writing tool such as a crayon, mini marker or primary pencil. Using a slant board or having them write on a vertical surface will also help their development. If they are using an iPad or a tablet, have them use a stylus pen to help practice their grasp.

Pre-printing shapes

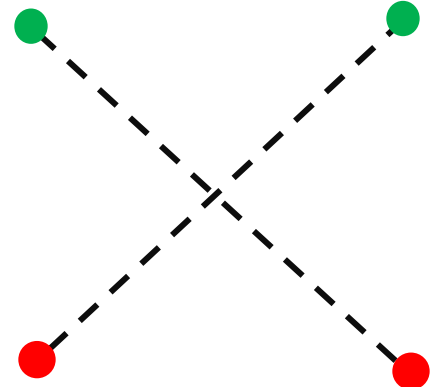
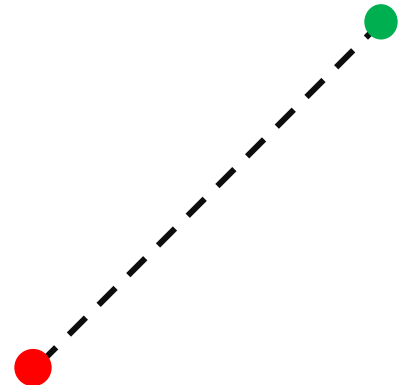
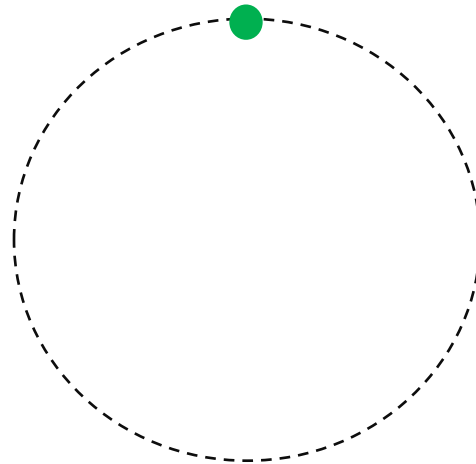
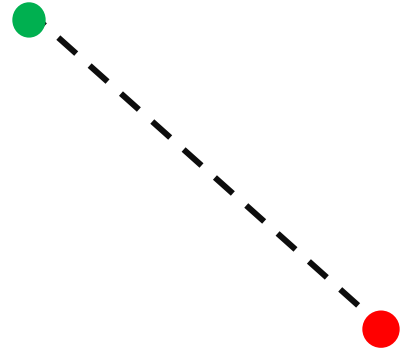
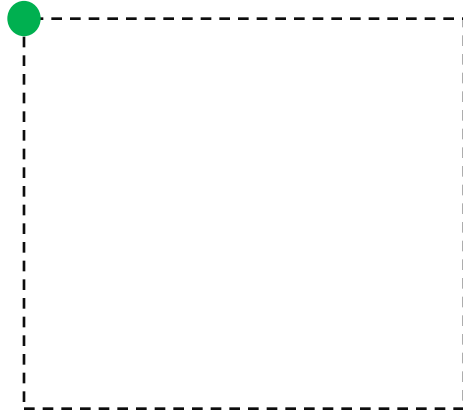
Pre-printing shapes and lines are important steps to learning correct letter formations.

The pre-printing shapes are vertical lines, horizontal lines, cross, square, circle, diagonal lines, X's and triangles. | - + □ ○ / \ △

Imitation comes before the ability to copy so have your child trace these shapes and progress to copying them. Remember to encourage printing principles when making the shapes (starting at the top, left to right formations) Try and use different materials to practice the shapes to make it fun for you and your child. Some materials and ideas are:

- Chalk and sidewalk chalk
- Paint
- Water
- Dry-erase markers on a whiteboard

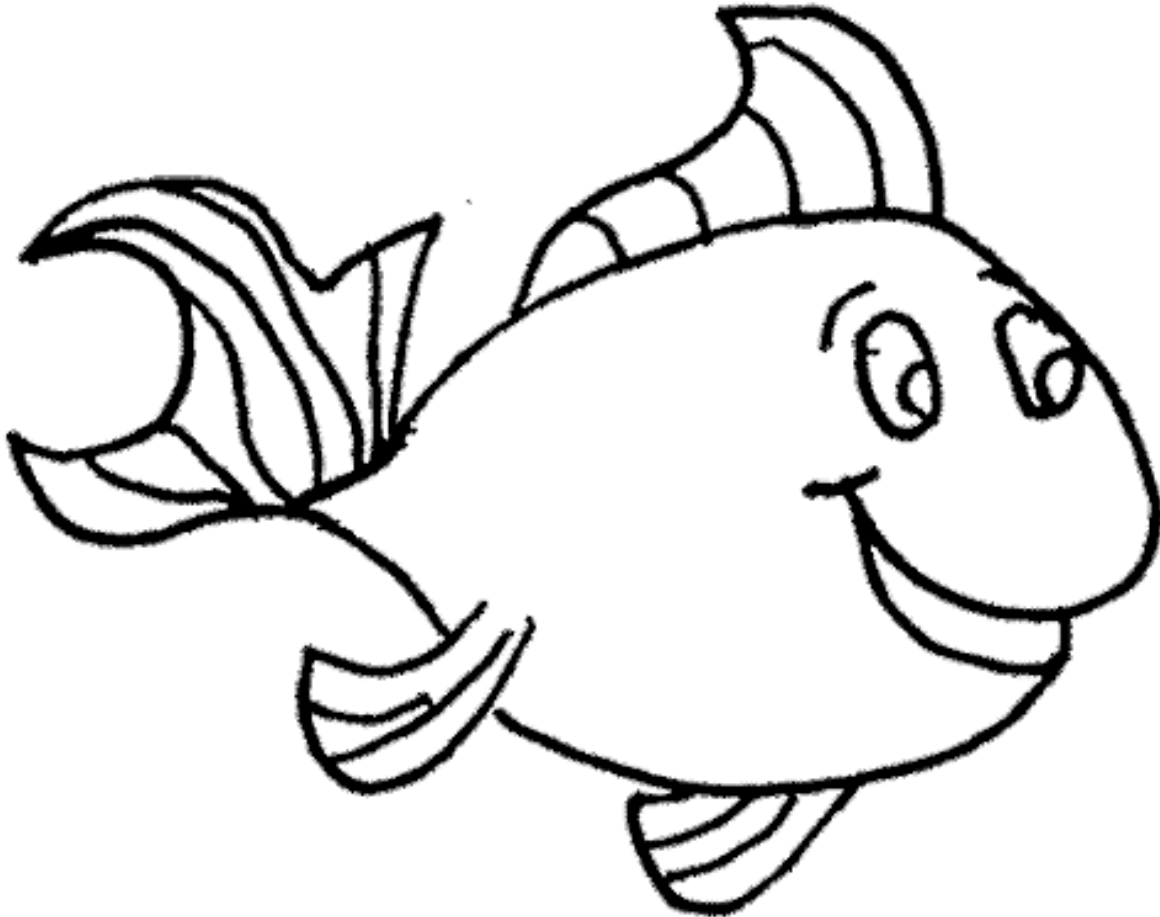
Pre-printing shapes



Colouring

Colouring is a great activity to help develop so many skills. Colouring is an excellent fine motor activity as it helps to build strength and endurance in your child's hand, grasping skills, marker control and attention to task. Thicker borders around pictures are helpful for success as children can tend to go outside the lines. Using a thicker, shorter marker is helpful for working on grasping skills.

Have your child practice this skill by having them colour in the picture below:



Printing skills

Correct letter formation when learning to print is top down and left to right. Always encourage your child to start their letters at the top. When learning to print letters, starting with the Uppercase letter alphabet is easiest as it has a lot of the pre-printing shapes such as lines and curves and they are all the same size. Lowercase letters can be learned easier after your child has a good grasp on the Uppercase letters formations. Letters that similar formations can be grouped into the same group to help your child learn them. For example, E, F and D all have the same starting line and you “jump” back up to the top to continue making the letter. Another example for lowercase letters is that c, o and a all start with a “c” formation when correctly forming the letters.

There are many resources online that you can access to help your child learn correct letter formations. One resource is Handwriting without Tears and they have many strategies that will help.

Scissor skills

Having your child use and learn scissor skills are very important. Scissor skills will continue to develop throughout the course of childhood. Cutting helps build shoulder, forearm and wrist stabilization, fine motor skills, eye-hand coordination, bilateral coordination of hands, muscle strength and helps with motor planning skills. Spring loaded children’s scissors are a good starting point when a child is learning how to cut and then they can progress from there. Good scissor form for a child is their thumbs in the small hole of the scissors with the thumbs up (and to the sky!) and elbow to stay tucked in (no chicken wings!). Thumbs up position should also be the position their helping hand is in when holding the paper. You can cut different materials with scissors depending on their skill level. Some materials are:

- Play-doh. Play-doh is a fun and easy material to use to help them learn scissor skills.
- Plastic Straws.
- Thicker paper such as construction paper or cardstock
- Thinner paper such as printer paper. Thinner paper is more flimsy when cutting and some children may find this material more difficult to hold onto and keep straight when cutting.

Cutting straight lines is a good place to start when they are ready to start cutting shapes. Make it a fun activity by drawing a line between two different items on paper and have them cut on the line. Start with thicker lines and progress to thinner lines. Once they are doing well with straight lines, progress to curved lines and then to shapes. Encourage your child to use their helping hand while they cut and when they get to shapes, remember to encourage shifting and rotating the paper, not their hand.

Lunch time

Lunch time at school is only 15 minutes so it is best to practice this during the summer so your child is prepared. Prepare a lunch in containers and time it for 15 minutes so you child can practice. Try a bento box, or not a lot of containers as this takes up time during the lunch time and can be frustrating for a child if they cannot get it open. Have your child be involved in their lunch and have them pick out snacks will get them excited for lunch.

Dressing

Dressing Skills are important to help promote your child's independence in self care, and gives them a sense of belonging in the classroom. These skills will continue to develop throughout childhood. You can start to practice these skills over the summer to help prepare your child for JK. Some useful tips to help your child practice are:

- Practice dressing when you have the time, not when you are in a time crunch. A good time is bath time, or weekend mornings.
- Take note of your environment. Make sure it is a quiet environment so you and your child aren't distracted and can focus on the task
- Start with easier dressing first and then progress to more difficult. Larger clothing can make it easier for your child when learning how to get dressed.
- Use a stool or bench if your child needs extra trunk support when getting dressed.
- Backwards chaining can be a good strategy. Child always does the last step and starts with adult doing 95% of task, child doing 5%. Then progresses to adult doing 80% and child doing 20% and so on until child can do full task on their own.