

# **Fine Motor Skills... Write Out of the Box!®**

**Workshops – Keynotes – Products – E Blasts**

**Presented by:  
Marianne Gibbs, EdD, OTR/L**

Gibbs Consulting, Inc.  
[mgibbs@writeoutofthebox.com](mailto:mgibbs@writeoutofthebox.com)  
[www.writeoutofthebox.com](http://www.writeoutofthebox.com)  
(281) 492-2936

## **Today's Agenda**

1. Introductions
2. Purpose of Write Out of the Box!
3. Pencil Grasps: Efficient vs. Inefficient
4. Developmental Theory: The Basics
5. Classroom Activities to Promote Fine Motor Development and Efficient Pencil Grasp
6. Prerequisites for Writing: A Reference
7. Cutting Tips

# Fine Motor Skills... Write Out of the Box!®

## 1. Introductions

- A. About the Presenter
- B. About the Audience

## 2. Purpose of Write Out of the Box

Why?

What?

Then:

Now:

## 3. Pencil Grasps

### Types of Pencil Grasps: Efficient vs. Inefficient

#### Appropriate Pencil Grasps (3)

- Mature, Dynamic Tripod (4.5-6 years): **\*Will naturally occur if precision muscles are properly developed.**



- Static Tripod:



- Adapted:



## Inefficient Pencil Grasps (infinite):

- Fisted:



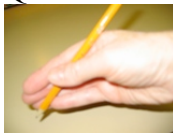
- Thumb Wrap:



- Thumb Tuck:



- Quad:



- Index:



- ????:

\*Aha! Moment:

#### 4. Developmental Theory: The Basics

##### A. Concept of Mobility on Stability

“Danglers” and the Remedy:

\*Aha! Moment:

##### B. General Developmental Sequence

- 
- 

##### C. The Importance of Weight Bearing:

- 
- 

##### D. Strategies for Incorporating Weight Bearing Opportunities in the School Day:

- 
- 
- 
- 

#### 5. Classroom Activities to Promote Fine Motor Development and Pencil Grasp

**Head and Neck Stability:** Usually in place. Supports appropriate use of the visual system.

Activities: “Superman”, “Snowball”, ball work on tummy with target, lay on tummy supported by forearms, swimming

**Trunk Stability:** Must have this to use two arms effectively in activities.

Look for “W”-Sitters. Encourage side, long, and tailor sitting. Allow for sitting options at circle time, be flexible because your students may not be!

“W” Sitting:

Why do children “W” Sit?

Other Positions to Encourage:

**Activities:** “Superman”, “Snowball”, gross motor play, swimming, ball work (sitting), unassisted sitting, sock pull, hand presses

Sock Pull:

**Shoulder Stability:** This is critical! Allows for control of arm, hand, and fingers.

**Activities: Use of vertical surface! 1. 2. 3.** , push-ups, rocking on all fours, crawling games, wheel barrow, crab walk, ball work on tummy, “Down Under”

**Forearm Rotation and Elbow Stability:** Supports wrist hand and fingers appropriately.

**Activities:** Animal Voice, Giggle Tube, one-handed button retrieval out of Putty, opening a candy in one hand away from body, carrying laundry basket/books, pouring from a container, utensil use, scissor use

**Wrist Stability/Extension:** Allows for dynamic movement of fingers as in holding a pencil when writing.

**Activities:** Twirling Wheel, Chinese yo-yo, use of vertical surface (ie. wall, refrigerator, blackboard, easel, 3-5 inch notebook), “Mirror Me”, “Marble Madness, Lite Brite, jar lids, nuts and bolts, ball work on tummy, crawling games, crab walk, wheel barrow, “Down Under”

**Palmar Arches:** Hands can form a “cup” which facilitates grasping and in-hand manipulation skills.

**Activities:** Mini Dice, jingle bells, “more” sign, Mini Slinky, Squirters, Squeeze Ball, Worm Ball, Tongs, Putty, cutting Play Doh with plastic knife/craft stick/ Pizza Cutter, and playing piano

**Grasp and Release Patterns:** Promotes strength and timing coordination of hand use.

**Activities:** Squeeze Squirter, Squeeze Ball, Worm Ball, Mine Hole Punch, peg games, clothespins, gross motor play, and climbing

**Extrinsic (Strength) Muscles:** Powerful “on/off” muscles that stabilize.

**Isolated Finger Control:** Students must realize they have 10 fingers and not just two paws!

**Activities:** Jumping Frogs/Insects, Flinging Frogs, Spin Tops, Lite Brite, finger puppets, stringing beads, flicking wedges, “I love you” sign, clothespins, playing piano

**Thumb Opposition:** Thumb touches each finger individually.

**Web Space:** Maintain “O” shape with thumb and index when holding a pencil.

**Activities:** Zip Lock bags, “Straw Wars”, Putty Balls (just using thumb and index), “Silly Sunglasses”, OK sign

**Separation of Hand:** Critical! The two halves of the hand have different jobs. Facilitates tripod pencil grasp position.

**Busy Fingers (3):** Mobility

**Sleeping Fingers (2):** Stability

**Pillow:** cotton ball, pom pom, Lego, coin, etc...

**Activities:** Animal Grabbers, Lacing Cards, Tongs, Tweezers, Mini Hole Punch, Mini Lock and Key, Stringing Beads, Wind-Up Toys, Spin Tops, Short Pencils/Crayons, Mini Spray Bottles, Scissors, Snapping Fingers, PILLOWS and more!

**Fingers and Pillows**  
**(Sung to tune of Oh My Darlin')**

I have two hands with ten fingers -- I have five on each hand

First is Thumbkin, then Pointer, then the tall one, Middleman.

These three are special, they are busy, and they love to play

They play with toys and hold a pencil in just the right way.

Next is Ringman and Pinky -- they are sleepy little ones

They hug a pillow and stay sleeping so the busy fingers can have fun!

**Intrinsic (Precision) Muscles:** Necessary for precise control as with using a pencil.

**Activity:** Mini Rolling Pin with Play Doh

**Shift:** The ability to make minute pencil adjustments without thinking about it.

**Activities:** Mini Cards, Wikki Stix, Play Doh, single page turning, buttoning, moving hand along shaft of pencil

**Translation:** Single handedly move objects between fingers and palm. Leads to more efficient stroke making when writing.

- Finger to Palm:
- Palm to Finger:

**Activities:** popcorn pick-up, coins in vending machine, “Feed Freddie” with pennies, checkers, discs, etc...

**Rotation:** Use fingers in precise rotation movement without wrist movement. Turning the pencil over as if to erase during writing.

**Simple Rotation Activities:** Play Doh, jar lids, nuts and bolts

**Complex Rotation Activities:** turning a coin, turning pencil in 1 hand to erase

**All skills above lead to the tripod grasp which is the most efficient grasp for handwriting!**

## 6. Prerequisites for Writing

1. Established hand dominance with coloring, drawing, or using a fork (may not be in place until 6 years old)
2. Able to cross midline
3. A functional pencil grasp
4. Able to understand directional terms; recognizes differences and similarities in forms
5. Able to copy basic shapes:

### **Year - Months**

<u>Of Age</u>	<u>Symbol/Shape Produced</u>
2-10	vertical line (top to bottom reinforced)
3-0	horizontal line (left to right reinforced)
3-0	circle (counter clockwise reinforced please!)
4-1	+
4-4	/
4-6	square with defined sides
4-7	\
4-11	X
5-3	triangle with defined corners

6. Able to use 2 hands in an activity
7. Able to coordinate eyes and hands together

8. Able to maintain proper sitting posture
9. Oriented to print
10. Mastery of recognition of letter forms and sounds
11. Able to attend to a task for a minimum of 1 minute
12. Has interest in writing

## 7. CUTTING TIPS

Sequence Progression:

Media Types:

Positioned for Success:

Method to Track Progress: Lollipop Friends

### References

- Beery, K. E. (2004). The Beery-Buktenica Developmental Test of Visual-Motor Integration (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). NCS Pearson Assessments.
- Smith-Case, J., Allen, A., & Pratt, P. (1996). Occupational Therapy for Children (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). St. Louis: Mosby.
- Vreeland, E. (1998). Handwriting: Not Just in the Hands; A Comprehensive Resource. Hanover, NH: Maxanna Learning Systems.