

August 27, 2013

Dear Parent(s):

This letter is designed to bring the following classroom information to your attention:

Pencil Size

It is important for your child to use appropriate writing tools as they are learning to write. Small tools, like golf pencils are preferred. “These tools promote using the finger tips naturally. Large tools elicit a fist grip; small tools, a more mature grip. As adults, we write with pencils that are in proportion to our hands. Shouldn’t our children do the same? As children gain handwriting experience, their control will improve. At that time, you may transition them to a standard size pencil.” (Information obtained from Handwriting Without Tears Kindergarten Teacher’s Guide.)

With the above in mind, I have purchased a classroom set of golf pencils for my kindergarteners to use in the classroom and have also purchased four golf pencils for each of my students to use on their homework at home. Your kindergartener is bringing their gift bag of four golf pencils home with them today. Please help your kindergartener find a safe place to keep their golf pencils to use on their homework, for if they are lost I will be unable to replace them.

The Correct Pencil Grip

“The standard way for children to hold their pencil is illustrated below. If you write using a grip that is different from the tripod grip shown below, alter your grip while working with your child. Children are born imitators. When they are watching you write or color, always demonstrate the correct grip because they tend to do as you do.” (Information obtained from Handwriting Without Tears Kindergarten Teacher’s Guide.) This often reminds me of the following expression: “Monkey see, monkey do.”



When working with the children in the classroom, I like to tell them “Thumb and pointer on the sides and middle finger underneath.” If your child has a tendency to use their ring finger and pointer, have them hold something small like a cotton ball with these two fingers as they are writing or coloring.

Picking Up My Pencil Song

Your kindergartener will be learning the following song to assist them in learning the correct pencil grip in kindergarten.

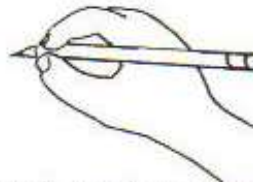
9. PICKING UP MY PENCIL

Oh I'm picking up my pencil look at me
All my fingers are where they're supposed to be
Oh I'm picking up my pencil look at me
Watch me hold it correctly

The thumb is always bent
Pointer points to the tip
Tall man helps he helps your pencil grip
He lets the pencil rest right on his side
The last two fingers tuck them in for a ride

Now I'm holding it just right but not too tight
Every finger is doing it just right
Now you might have missed what
I was showing you!
So I'll drop it and do it again with you

Pick up your pencils
Check your neighbors
Do you have a bent thumb?
How does pointer look?
Get ready, 1 2 3 4



Now we're picking up our pencils watch and see
All our fingers are where they're supposed to be
'Cause we're picking up our pencil and you'll see
We can hold it correctly

The thumb is always bent
Pointer points to the tip
Tall man always helps your pencil grip
He lets the pencil rest right on his side
The last two fingers tuck them in for a ride

Now we're holding it just right, but not too tight
Every finger is doing it just right

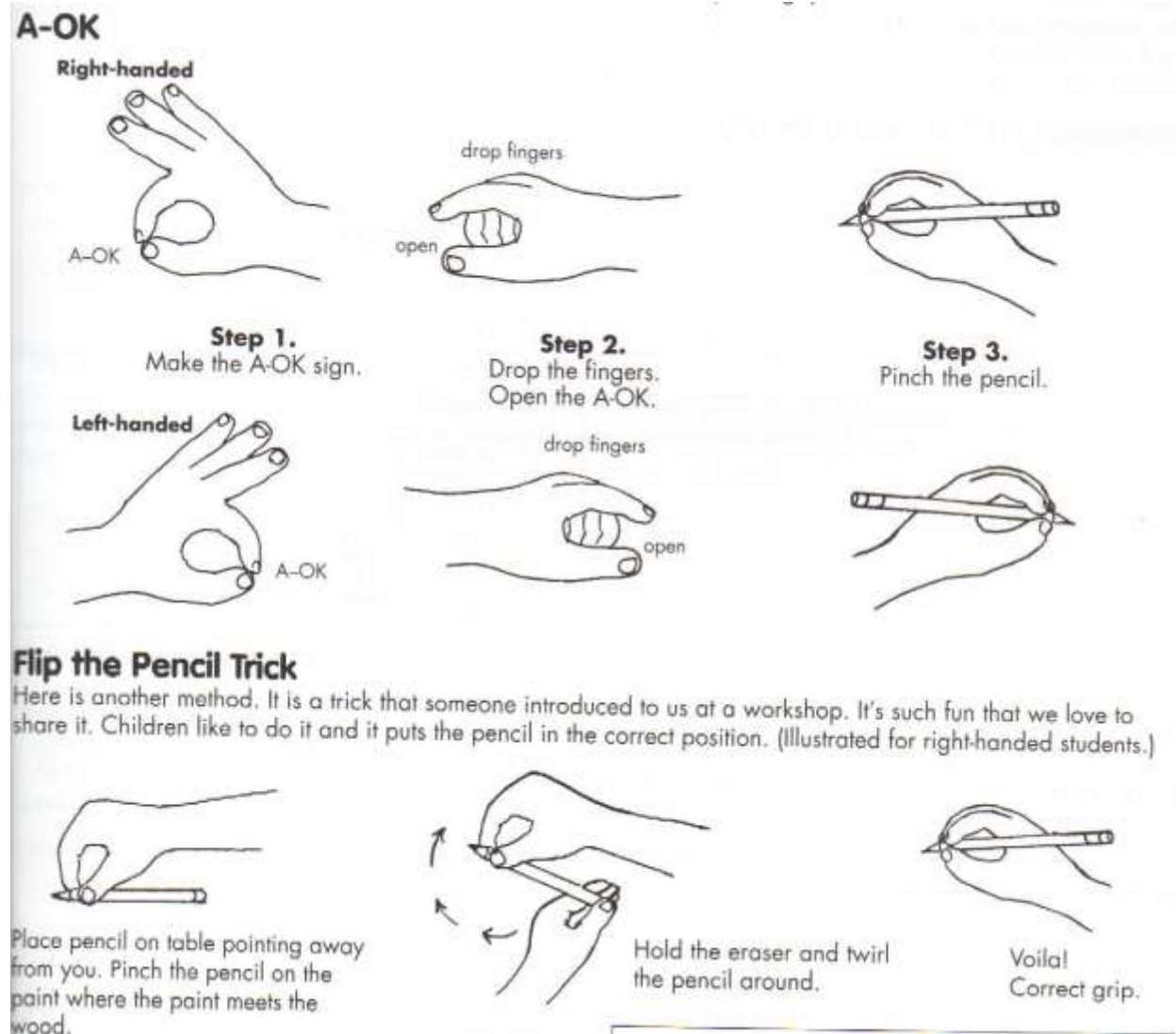
Now we should be as proud
As proud can be
We can hold it, correctly



(Information obtained from Handwriting Without Tears Rock, Rap, Tap & Learn CD.)

Tips for Correct Pencil Grips

“The tips shown below will help your kindergartener hold their pencil with the right combination of mobility and control. These exercises make it easy and fun for children to learn a correct pencil grip.” (Information obtained from Handwriting Without Tears Kindergarten Teacher’s Guide.)



Looking Out for Lefties

“Many wonder if left-handed children require different instruction than right-handed children. In fact, you instruct them the same way with a few exceptions. Because our world typically favors the right-handed population, worksheets and letter sequence charts usually don’t make special considerations.” (Information obtained from Handwriting Without Tears Kindergarten Teacher’s

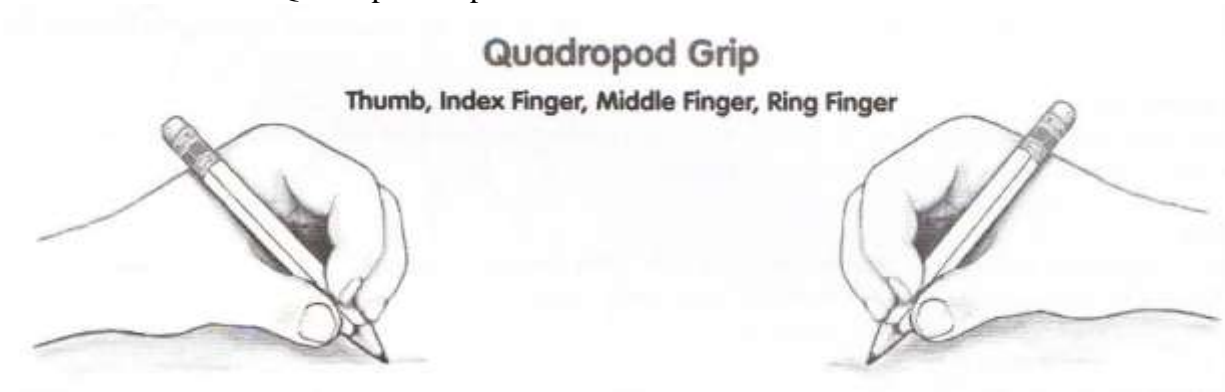
Guide.) Tips for teaching left-handed children that will prevent bad habits and make handwriting easier for them will be coming in another newsletter.

Some Additional Thoughts on Pencil Grip

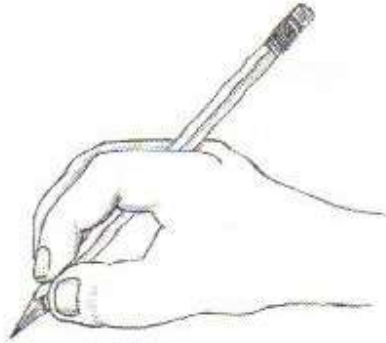
A good pencil grip does not develop naturally. In fact, several factors affect how a child learns how to hold a pencil correctly. Below are some additional thoughts regarding grips:

- “**Experiences** – We develop pencil grip habits while we are young. Children who are encouraged to feed themselves have more fine motor experiences than those who are spoon fed. Children who have early self-feeding experiences may have an easier time learning how to hold their crayons and pencils.”
- “**Toys** – Today’s toys are very different from those with which we grew up. We should encourage our children to use non-battery operated toys, which build hand strength.”
- “**Early Instruction** – Help children place their fingers on pencils and crayons. Teach preschoolers and kindergarteners their finger names and finger jobs and show them how their fingers should hold writing tools.”
- “**Timing** – It is difficult to correct the grips of older children because we have to reteach them motor patterns. Old patterns die hard. Older children need time to get used to a new way of holding a pencil. It takes repetition, persistence, and practice.”
- “**Blanket Rules** – Avoid blanket rules about pencil grip devices. Some devices may work for a child. If they are motivating and work, use them. You should save these devices as a last resort and use them for older children who understand their purpose.”
- “**Joints** – We are all made differently. Some of us have joints that are more relaxed. Therefore, expect slight variations in what would be considered a standard grip.” If a child is unable to use a standard grip, you may consider one of these altered grips as illustrated.

- Quadropod Grip



- Alternative Grip – Place pencil between the index and middle finger.



(Information obtained from Handwriting Without Tears Kindergarten Teacher's Guide.)

Your assistance in ensuring that your child is using a correct pencil grip on his homework at home is necessary in your child's development of a correct pencil grip.

Yours in education,

Mr. Washburn