

WHAT IS A TYPICAL CLASS LIKE?

- COOL Art Projects
- Grasp Games
- Training on How to Hold a Pencil
- Fine Motor Gymnastics Games
- Rotation through fine motor labs
- Coloring exercises
- Parent Training
- Therapist analyzes grip on pencil. Looks at biomechanical influences. Recommends approach to grasp, and works with child on techniques for change.



The Handwriting Clinic

GRASP CLASSES!

(Change **FUNKY** grips on a pencil!)

Elementary Age Grasp Class
1st - 5th graders

1506 Capital St, Ste. 150
Plano, Texas 75074
972 633-1974



FUN ART PROJECTS!

FUN GAMES

ELEMENTARY GRASP CLASS

Grasp Class Art class with fine motor challenges, games and art projects for students with funky grips on pencils! Students are taught how to hold a pencil correctly, then do fine motor exercises and art projects to work on the new grasp pattern. Students do a final art project suitable for framing! Taught by an occupational therapist. This class is fun, and we love kids that are in our handwriting classes to attend this class if they have a funky grip. Our other classes work on legibility, this class works on fine motor skills, coordination, and grip patterns. Call for schedule. **Classes are 2 hours, 2 sessions (summer 1 hr, 4 sessions) (4hrs total) (First - 5th grade)** See main brochure, website, or call for current pricing.



Preschoolers - We have a Preschool Power Summer Camp or Fall/Spring Sensory Motor ABC classes to work on fine motor skills and grasp

SCHEDULE:

During the school year, the grasp classes are usually 2 Saturdays in a row. Grasp class is 2 hours each session. During the scheduled elementary grasp class may vary - often 1 x week for 4 days.

Call 972 633-1974 to schedule. Classes fill quickly so call early!

www.TheHandwritingClinic.com www.FirstStrokesHandwriting.com

The Handwriting Clinic

1506 Capital Ave, Ste. 150 Plano, Texas 75074 972 633-1974 www.TheHandwritingClinic.com

GRASP INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/TEACHERS Written by: Jan McCleskey, MA, OTR

Do most students have a good grip on a pencil?

My daughter did a science project at a local elementary school and tested 94 students in 5th grade to determine if they had a manipulative grasp on a pencil. 78 percent of the students did NOT have a manipulative grip on a pencil! In contrast, in 1990, Bergmann found that in a study of 447 adults, 80 percent used the dynamic tripod grasp!

So why the change? There is more of an emphasis on handwriting at an early age. Even 3 year olds have had exposure to crayons and markers through their preschool curriculum. Most adults remember their early years running and climbing in the backyard. There may have been a couple good tv shows on in the limited programming for children each day. But most older adults did not spend hours each day in front of the television. Video games were not available. Children played outside, or played with manipulative toys inside.

I think of my youngest of four children. He spent his early years in a carseat taxiing his older siblings to soccer, Tae Kwon Do and various activities. While we did take him to the park, he did not spend his childhood in the backyard. We also put him on his back as an infant due to our pediatricians recommendations. He was later crawling than the other children because he did not like his stomach.

Children that are blind, often have soft hands with flat arches in their hands due to limited time running and climbing. There are many preschoolers with soft, flat hands today, but who are not visually impaired.

Best bet, encourage your student to run and play! During the preschool years, the best thing for fine motor skills, is running, climbing, swinging, and developing those strong hand muscles!

Pencil Grip and the Older Student

Does pencil grip affect handwriting skills? Some research suggest that it does affect younger children's handwriting (Schneck and Henderson, 1990). Other research suggests that it does not often affect speed or legibility of handwriting, but many researchers caution that there is much more research that it is needed in this area. One thing that most researchers agree on, is that by 2nd grade, grasp on a pencil is kinesthetically locked in as a habit. Amundunson states that by 2nd grade, changing a child's grip is so stressful, that the effort should be abandoned.

At The Handwriting Clinic, we have found that in our older children's classes, we cannot simply show students how to change their grip and expect results. We put the child through a grasp class, where they work on using isolated finger movements to color art projects. Many children move their hand in a repetitive up and down pattern, rather than use isolated finger movements to color. We teach students how to hold a pencil, and then how to manipulate the pencil to do "finger and thumb push-ups" when coloring! With practice, many students CAN change their grip.

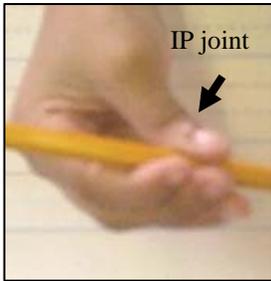
It is often important to let an occupational therapist look at pencil grip. There are so many grips available on the market, and often parents, teachers or therapists will use a grip without analyzing the BEST grip to use biomechanically. At The Handwriting Clinic, there are only a few grips that we use, with the goal of eventually getting the child to progress to NOT using a grip! Also, many funny looking grasps on a pencil may not warrant trying to change a grip.

COMMERCIAL BRAND PENCIL GRIPS: There are many pencil grips on the market. We never recommend just going and purchasing grips, without looking biomechanically at the hand. Of all the grips on the market, there are only 1 or 2 grips that we routinely recommend. Most of our students do not use pencil grips, and for those that do, we recommend a program to progress off the grips. Of the grips that we do recommend, if there is joint laxity - we have to adapt and cut up a grip in order to achieve the mechanical advantage. Also, if a child does not use a grip effectively 100 percent of the time, then the grip is not effective. If you think your child needs a grip, please call the clinic. We can look at digital picture that you fax or email to us, or do a quick \$35 screening. If you child will be in any of our classes, we will be looking at grip as part of our general classroom assessment, and then make appropriate referrals.

Without intervention, the child's grasp that he or she starts Kindergarten with, is likely to be a lifelong grasp without intervention. Fine motor skills and grip develop through the Kindergarten year, and with intervention, most children can change their grip.

Reasons to Change a Child's Grip:

- Grips that occlude a child's vision with the tip of the pencil
- Primitive grips (fisted grips)
- Biomechanical stress to a joint - many funny looking grips may actually be providing stress to a joint that may result in problems in the future!
- Any time the child complains of pain or fatigue in the hand
- Hyperextension of the thumb IP joint (the joint toward the tip of the thumb) within a grasp on a pencil
- Severe hyperextension of the index finger DIP joint (the joint towards the tip of the index finger).



Hyperextension of the interphalangeal joint of the thumb. Research suggest that this is the most common joint for joint laxity in the hand. A student cannot get a manipulative grip with this joint in hyperextension. A good percentage of the population has joint laxity in this joint, but most adults have "cocontraction" in that they can stabilize a pencil and flex this joint to bend and point the thumb when using writing tools.

The problem is that children begin tool use at a much younger age now days, and many times the hand is not ready for pencil manipulation. Children compensate by locking the thumb into extension—resulting in some variation in grasp similar to this picture.

We put these children on a TIP grip protocol and with intervention, most preschool children can effectively improve grip within 8 weeks. Older children can improve grip quickly, but need practice. Our grasp classes use art medium to practice co-contraction of this joint to bend and point, using a TIP grip. The TIP grip protocol is not commercially available - it is a program that we have developed and use in the grasp classes, as well as in our other classes.



There are all kinds of funky grip patterns. Often grip does not affect legibility of handwriting. The research even suggests that it may not affect fatigue or speed, although that research may be disputable, depending on the research. However, one reason we will always try to change pencil grip, is when there is biomechanical stress to a joint!

Since the prevalence of non-manipulative grasp patterns is only recently a new phenomenon, there is not current research on what stress to a joint may do over time. What will these hands be like, after 30 years of writing with stress to these joints!



Hyperextension of the distal joint in the index finger. This is a common grasp pattern error and one of the easiest to help change. I once saw a 3rd grader in one of our classes whose distal joint bent backwards 90 degrees!!! I looked at his non-dominant index finger, and there was NO hyperextension. This student had developed this joint laxity with a heavy pressure to his grip, over the course of 3 or 4 short years!!!

There are many different pencil grips. If you will call the office, we will give you our email or fax number. You can take a digital picture of your child's grasp pattern, and we can make recommendations immediately!