

# OT NEWS

Developed by Occupational Therapy  
Croydon Child, Adolescent & Family Health Service  
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SYDNEY SOUTH WEST  
AREA HEALTH SERVICE  
NSW@HEALTH



## Pre-writing skills

Welcome to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of OT News for the year

This term, the newsletter is all about pre-writing skills, which are especially important for children getting ready to go to school next year. There are many important pre-writing skills, but the focus here will be on two areas for which pre-school children are often referred to the Occupational Therapist... pencil grip and copying skills.

### Pencil Grip

The way a child holds their pencil, crayon or texta can impact on their ability to copy, draw, colour and write effectively.

Pencil grip has been shown to follow a 'developmental sequence', from an immature grip through to a mature grip. Many children haven't developed a mature grip by the time they start school.

The important features of a 'good' pencil grip are:

- It allows the fingers and thumb to move freely for pencil control.
- There is an open space between the base of the thumb and the index finger (web space).
- The forearm is stabilised on the desk and the wrist is slightly bent backwards.
- The 'skill side' of the hand is used to hold the pencil (ie. the index finger, middle finger and thumb).

The 'tripod grip' is generally viewed as the ideal pencil grip, but many children also use a 'quadrupod' grip (3 fingers and thumb) very effectively.

### Copying Skills

Copying skills are important in the development of writing skills. Copying skills also tend to develop sequentially.

- ✎ Children start by scribbling, which becomes a circular scribble:
- ✎ At about 2½ years, children can copy a vertical line:
- ✎ At about 3 years, children can copy a horizontal line and a circle
- ✎ Next (at 3-4 years), they can copy a cross (+)
- ✎ At about 4½ years, children can copy a diagonal line from right to left (/)  
They can also draw a square (□)
- ✎ An older 4 year old may be able to draw a line from left to right (\)
- ✎ Following on from here, children learn to draw a cross like this (X)
- ✎ At 5 years, children can usually draw a triangle.

Many of these shapes are used in writing the alphabet, which means that most children are not really *developmentally ready* to attempt copying the entire alphabet until they are 5 years old.



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Many of the children are becoming interested in writing - and reading familiar names and words. Below is the script taught in schools throughout N.S.W. Encourage your child to write in lower case letters, and where possible, guide them to form the letters in the correct manner. This will save re-learning how to write when they arrive at school.

**THE N.S.W. FOUNDATION STYLE**

I L E F H T. C G O Q U  
 B P R D J S A V W  
 M N K Y X Z

CAPITAL LETTERS are twice the height of lower-case letters

Numerals are written the same height as Capitals.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

i j u a d g q c e o y v w j  
 n m h b p k r f s x z

Small letter x-height = 1/2 height of capitals.