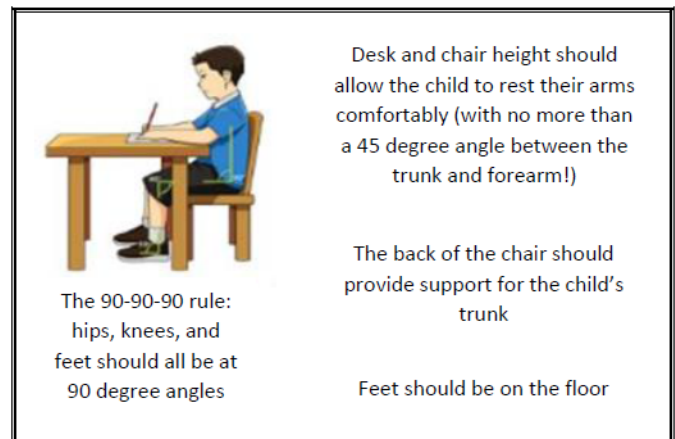


Supports for Printing

Printing and handwriting are complex! We must keep ourselves steady and hold a pencil with enough but not too much pressure while also moving our fingers and thumb quickly in many different patterns. No wonder so many of us have trouble with printing! Here are some ideas to help support your children as they practice this valuable, lifelong skill:

1. Stabilize the body

Find a chair and table that your child can sit at with their feet on the floor and their forearms on the table (i.e. from their elbows to their pinkie fingers) so their arms and shoulders are relaxed but stable. There can be some space between their arms and trunks but not too much.



2. Warm up the fingers and thumb

During printing, the thumb, pointer finger, and middle finger move while the ring finger and pinkie finger remain steady, separating the 'two sides' of the hand. To help improve your children's ability to do this, try these warm-up activities:

- Place your hands on a tabletop. Lift your thumb, index, and middle finger off the table while keeping your ring and pinkie fingers down. Then lift only your ring and pinkie fingers. Repeat five times.
- Hold a pencil with your thumb, index finger, and middle finger (i.e. tripod grasp). Move your fingers and thumb up to the eraser then back down. Repeat three times.
- Find ten small objects (e.g. dimes, buttons, raisins). Pick up one with your thumb and index/middle finger, and move them into your palm and hold them with your ring and pinkie fingers. Continue until you're holding all ten.

3. Compare learning to print/handwrite to learning a new sport

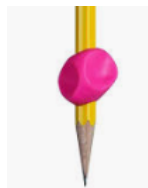
“Remember how challenging it was when you were first learning to ___? Doing something new with your muscles is hard at first because your brain needs to think a lot about what you’re doing... But, as your muscles practice, they start making their own memories, so it eventually becomes automatic. Then you can focus on other things at the same time.”

4. Use a comfortable grasp: The thumb, index, middle (and possibly ring) fingers move to form letters while the pinkie (and possibly ring) fingers remain steady and curled into the palm

See if your child moves their pencil with their thumb, index, and middle fingers rather than their wrist/arm or by squeezing their hand. Many children have trouble printing by moving only their fingers and thumbs because they’re grasping their pencils too tightly, forcing other muscles to over-work. Sometimes, children also have finger/thumb joints that move a lot, and this makes it challenging for them to control their pencils.

Troubleshooting:

- If your child has trouble separating the ‘two sides’ of their hand while printing, ask them to hold onto something soft and small (like a pom pom) with their ring and pinkie fingers while they print.
- If your child has joints that move a lot, try a Writing CLAW (pictured right).
- If your child grasps their pencil too tightly, The Pencil Grip Mini (pictured bottom left), The Pencil Grip (bottom middle), or a Grotto Grip (bottom right) may work the best.



5. Practice for 15 minutes a day... Give it time and celebrate your children’s effort!

Studies have shown that it takes at least 80 minutes of weekly practice to learn or improve printing/handwriting so it’s faster and more legible. Work slowly at first so eyes and hands can work together on the best patterns and line positioning.

- Printing Like a Pro! is a great printing program and free to download:
<http://www.childdevelopment.ca/SchoolAgeTherapy/SchoolAgeTherapyPLaPWorksheets.aspx>

- **Loops and Other Groups from Therapro is recommended for handwriting.**