Pencil Grip

Parents often wonder whether their three-year old should or could be holding a pencil or texta correctly. It is unusual for a three-year old to have a perfect pencil grip, however there are many activities that encourage the development of the fine motor control that pencil grip requires.

Dr. Maria Montessori, being medically trained, had a very scientific approach to her teaching method. She recognised the need to build up the finger muscles necessary for fine motor control before a proper pencil grip could develop. The Montessori classroom abounds with activities designed to do exactly that. Spooning and pouring activities are the first of these followed by tweezer activities. Picking up a small round seed with tweezers, holding it and then transferring it to another point not only requires a tremendous amount of fine motor control but concentration and perseverance as well. Pegging activities require the child to push thumb and forefinger together against resistance. When you see your child hanging out the washing in the home corner or doing a peg colour matching activity from the practical life shelf, you can be sure there is a lot more happening for him/her than initially meets the eye.

Cutting is another activity that builds up fine motor control. While it requires a considerable amount of motor planning, it is none the less an activity that we expect to see before pencil grip and will in fact enhance its development. Cutting up old greeting cards and magazines is an easy and inexpensive activity to be doing with your child at home. Always invest in a good quality pair of children’s scissors to avoid frustration and ensure your child knows exactly what they can and cannot cut up!

Other activities seen in the Montessori classroom, including squeezing the sponges to wipe the tables, crayon rubbings, inset line drawings, the buckling, lacing and velcro frames and of course threading, all have as one of their desired outcomes, the enhancement of fine motor control and eventually a workable pencil grip.

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