

Occupational Therapy Tip Sheet

LIGHT PENCIL PRESSURE





What is light pencil pressure?

 Light pencil pressure means pressing too softly on a pencil when writing or colouring.

Why is proper pencil pressure important?

- To improve the speed and neatness of writing
- To make drawing and printing more legible

What are some causes of light pencil pressure?

- Weak hand or finger strength
- Poor pencil grasp
- Difficulty with sensory processing (avoiding touch, poor awareness of body in space)

A child that applies light pencil pressure may do the following:

- Draw and print so lightly that the work is hard to see
- Frequently drop the pencil
- Use a weak pencil grasp
- Switch hands due to fatigue
- Produce less work due to weakness or fatique

Practice the following strategies to improve pencil pressure:

 Use a weighted pencil or hand/wrist weights to increase input to the hand (see an Occupational Therapist for a weighted pencil or try placing a hex nut on the pencil to add weight).



- Practice shading during colouring. Choose one coloured pencil and shade each section of a picture differently by how much pressure is used.
- Ensure the pencil tip is sharp (a mechanical pencil is always sharp and may be beneficial).
- Use short pencils or a pencil grip to improve grasp.
- Use a slant board to help position wrist and hand.
- Use markers or gel pencils to make work easier to see.
- Use a piece of carbon paper between two sheets of paper and draw a picture.
 Press hard enough to make an imprint appear on the bottom paper like "magic."
- Place paper over bumpy material, sandpaper, rubbing plates or plastic needlepoint canvas and write or colour on the paper to feel the texture.



 Increase hand and finger strength by playing with playdough, climbing on playground equipment, building with interlocking toys, etc.