

Writes too Lightly

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We often see this problem when children have weakness in their hands and poor finger dexterity. Some have poor sensory awareness. They have difficulty pushing on the pencil tip without the pencil slipping out of their hands. You may also see fingertip grasp patterns. Here are some ideas picked up from other OT's over the years:

1. When working with children who write too **lightly**, see if they can (with a little prompting from you) make the pressure adjustment themselves. After setting them up properly (re: posture, position, and grip) and they start writing lightly, tell them that you have bad eyes and that you can't see anything they are writing. Instinctively they will begin to apply more pressure. If the pressure is appropriate, ask them to start writing that way all the time.
2. Place a piece of **carbon paper between the worksheet** (or whatever paper the child is writing on) and a blank piece of paper. Tell the child that this is a game of "magic," and if they press real hard when they write or draw, it will come through on the blank piece of paper, like magic.
3. Place a sheet of **sandpaper** under the sheet they are coloring. Stabilize everything with a clipboard.
3. Some children may be seeking proprioception because they are not getting enough feedback when writing. Try some **heavy work activities**/deep pressure/proprioception aka a sensory diet. I've also used different writing surfaces and different implements to write or color with, such as e.g. brushes and watercolor. You might try having the class do a **color wheel** where you apply graded pressure from dark to very light. .
4. Take turns with a **Squiggle Wiggle pen** (available at Wal-mart).
5. When all else fails, use **markers**.
6. Rollerball pens and **thicker lead pencils** can be tried.
7. Some stores carry crayon holders shaped like a cartoon character. When the crayon is pushed down with enough pressure, it either makes a noise or plays music, depending on the character. Have to look around. Sometimes found in toy stores. Hearing the noise or the music is incentive for some students to push harder.
8. Small wrist weight or hand weights (to give more sensory input to muscles and joints).
9. **Short pencils or crayons, which promote a better grip**. I save all small pieces of chalk or break up my chalk. Hard to hold it improperly if its just a little bitty piece.

10. Try using a **number 1 pencil** which has softer lead and requires less force to produce a darker result.

11. Crayola has recently come out with crayons called **Color Slicks** (Wal-mart). Their purpose is to produce more vivid colors without the need for as much pressure or coloring over and over on the same spot.

12. Try wrapping a **rubber band around the pencil** about one inch up from where the point begins and have the child place their fingers on the rubber band to reduce slippage.

13. Use those **rubbing plates**-kids love them and you have to press down hard to see the picture appear.

14. Clothes pin activities for **developing finger strength**-have children form fingers into an "O" as doing it.

15. **Weight bearing activities** on the arms such as wheel barrow walks, crab walks, bear walks.

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST

16. Use a **vertical surface** such as chalkboard, or slant board part of the day. The chalkboard is underused in most schools but remains the **BEST** surface for learning to write.