

## Children lack skill in holding pencils due to iPads

4th April, 2018

PIC: Schwellnus et al  
<https://ajot.aota.org/article.aspx?articleid=1851631>



A study shows that new technology is reducing children's ability to use a pencil or pen. The study is from the National Health Service in the UK. Researchers said that nowadays, children spend so

much time swiping iPads or mobile phone screens that they cannot hold a pencil properly. Children are not using pencils, so they now lack the muscle strength in their hands to be able to write properly. Researcher Dr Sally Payne said: "Children are not coming into school with the hand strength and [ability] they had 10 years ago. Children coming into school are being given a pencil but are increasingly not able to hold it because they don't have the fundamental movement skills."

The researchers said technology is changing the physical way that children write, draw or make things. Children are increasingly using technology to create. Dr Payne explained why. She said: "It's easier to give a child an iPad than encourage them to do muscle-building play such as building blocks, cutting and sticking, or pulling toys and ropes. Because of this, they're not developing the underlying foundation skills they need to grip and hold a pencil." Some experts say technology may be causing bigger problems. One expert said if a child isn't strong enough to hold a pencil, perhaps their whole body is weak. She said it was better for children's physical development to climb trees than to watch YouTube videos.

### Sources:

[treehugger.com](http://treehugger.com) / [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com) / *Schwellnus et al*

## Writing

Pencils are better than tablets and smartphones. Discuss.

## Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

study / technology / pencil / nowadays / screens / muscles / writing properly / skills / researchers / draw things / building blocks / toys / expert / body / climb trees / videos

## True / False

- a) The article describes a study done by health services in the USA. T / F
- b) Children today do not have the muscle power to hold a pencil properly. T / F
- c) Children had more muscle strength to hold a pencil 10 years ago. T / F
- d) The article says schools no longer give pencils to children. T / F
- e) Technology isn't changing how children draw or make things. T / F
- f) A researcher said it's easier to give a child an iPad than building blocks. T / F
- g) A researcher said weak hands might be a sign of a weaker body. T / F
- h) Children climb trees more often than they look at YouTube videos. T / F

## Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                        |                   |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. <b>reducing</b>     | a. power          |
| 2. <b>nowadays</b>     | b. create         |
| 3. <b>properly</b>     | c. basic          |
| 4. <b>strength</b>     | d. correctly      |
| 5. <b>fundamental</b>  | e. starting point |
| 6. <b>make</b>         | f. these days     |
| 7. <b>encourage</b>    | g. growth         |
| 8. <b>foundation</b>   | h. specialists    |
| 9. <b>experts</b>      | i. decreasing     |
| 10. <b>development</b> | j. persuade       |

## Discussion – Student A

- a) How good is technology for children?
- b) What is wrong with children using smartphones and tablets?
- c) Is using a pen and pencil still an important skill?
- d) In what other ways does the body change when children use iPads?
- e) What problems will children have if they cannot use a pencil?
- f) How useful are pencils?
- g) Which is more useful, a pencil or iPad?
- h) What would happen if pens and pencils disappeared?

# BreakingNewsEnglish - The Mini Lesson

## Phrase Match

1. technology is reducing children's ability
  2. children spend so much time swiping
  3. they now lack the muscle
  4. to be able to write
  5. they don't have the fundamental
  6. changing the physical way
  7. building
  8. skills they need to
  9. perhaps their whole
  10. better for children's physical development
- a. that children write
  - b. movement skills
  - c. grip
  - d. to climb trees
  - e. strength in their hands
  - f. body is weak
  - g. to use a pencil
  - h. properly
  - i. blocks
  - j. iPads

## Discussion – Student B

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What are the dangers of children using technology?
- c) Are children more creative using iPads?
- d) Why should children play with building blocks?
- e) Does it matter that iPads are making children's bodies weaker?
- f) How much do you like mobile devices?
- g) What do you think of climbing trees?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

## Spelling

1. reducing children's yltiab to use a pencil
2. spend so much time wingpis iPads
3. mobile phone csrnese
4. be able to write pelroryp
5. hand hrttgens
6. fundamental venemtom skills
7. the plcsaiyh way that children write
8. using tcyhoonegl to create
9. guncroeea them
10. some petxres
11. if a child isn't strong ngeuoh
12. bcilm trees

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. i	2. f	3. d	4. a	5. c
6. b	7. j	8. e	9. h	10. g

## Role Play

### Role A – Pencil

You think a pencil is the most important thing for children to learn to use. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): chopsticks, scissors or computer keyboard.

### Role B – Chopsticks

You think chopsticks are the most important things for children to learn to use. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): pencil, scissors or computer keyboard.

### Role C – Scissors

You think scissors are the most important thing for children to learn to use. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): chopsticks, pencil or computer keyboard.

### Role D – Computer Keyboard

You think a computer keyboard is the most important thing for children to learn to use. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): chopsticks, scissors or pencil.

## Speaking – Hands

Rank these with your partner. Put the most important thing children must be able to use at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- a joystick
- chopsticks
- a saw
- scissors
- a pen or pencil
- a knife and fork
- a computer keyboard
- a guitar

### Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	F	e	F	f	T	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.