

4 Ways to Hold a Pencil and Improve Your Drawings

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There are several ways how an artist should hold a pencil. Trying to force yourself to use an artificial grip is probably one of the worst things you can do for your drawing -- it only creates stress and upsets the natural flow of your line. Learning how to hold a pencil in new ways is worth exploring -- you may find methods which better play off of your natural tendencies.

A **basic tripod grip** is the same as you use for writing -- one which can be adjusted to raise your hand off the paper, giving you more freedom. You can also train yourself to use overhand and underhand grips which are perfect for quick sketching and shading. Let's explore each one.



The Basic Tripod Grip

The most common method for holding a pencil -- the same one you probably use for writing -- is the basic tripod grip. The thumb and forefinger form a triangle with the middle finger, with the form being supported by the ring finger and pinkie.

This grip allows tight control over the pencil, so is ideal for drawing fine detail when precision is important. The upright position of the pencil allows for accurate shading, utilizing the tip rather than the side of the pencil. When using the tripod grip, use your fingers and thumb to control the pencil's movement.

Rather than using your wrist to anchor your hand the way you would when writing, allow it to hover just above the paper so pencil does not smear. For fine work, your hand may rest on the page. Use a spare sheet of paper to keep your drawing free from smudges and skin oils. If more movement is required, your wrist or elbow may rest against the edge of the drawing surface and be used as a pivot.



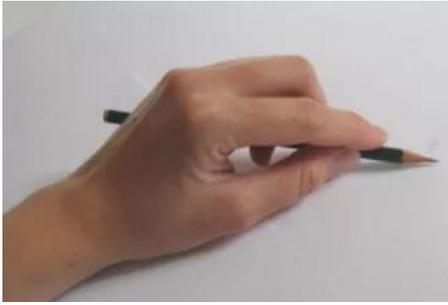
The Extended Tripod Grip

This uses the same hold as the basic tripod, but the grip rests further up on the pencil.

Because it is similar to the more familiar grip, you may find it to be a comfortable way to hold a pencil for drawing, while enjoying the extra freedom it allows.

Holding the pencil in the extended tripod grip allows small finger movements to produce much larger movements of the pencil-tip -- an economical, efficient grip for sketching. It also keeps your hand off the creation surface, reducing the chances of smudging your work.

For best results, keep a relaxed grip on the pencil -- a tight, vice-like grip is both tiring and restricting.



The Overhand Grip

The overhand grip is a popular way to hold a pencil for sketching. It allows you to shade with the side of the pencil and is also a useful pencil hold for vertical drawing surfaces, such as an easel.

To create the overhand grip, grasp the pencil lightly against the fingers with the flat of the thumb. The actual position will vary according to the proportions of your hand; the main goal is to have a secure but relaxed grip on the pencil. For best results, sit or stand so that your arm has a full range of movement, allowing for free, expressive mark-making.

While the overhand grip is often demonstrated as the "correct" way to hold a pencil for drawing (and it is a useful method), it is no more or less correct than any other pencil grip.

The Underhand Pencil Grip



The underhand pencil grip is a very loose, relaxed way of holding a pencil. It is useful for casual, broad sketching and is a great way to draw with charcoal.

This form is basically a tipped-over tripod grip but can be modified to suit your comfort. For instance, you may move the thumb higher up on the pencil. Some artists also allow the pencil to sit in the "V" of the thumb and palm, with the index and middle finger gently controlling the tip.