

## Hand-Over-Hand vs. Hand-Under-Hand Support

In school-based occupational therapy and classroom support, the way we offer physical guidance can significantly impact a student's comfort, learning, and independence. Using a hand-under-hand approach instead of hand-over-hand encourages participation, builds trust, and promotes skill development.

Hand-under-hand is a technique used in the 'Pre-Tracing' task in the Schoodles Fine Motor Assessment to find starting points for support.

### Key Differences

Aspect	Hand-Over-Hand	Hand-Under-Hand
<b>Control and Participation</b>	Adult's hand is on top guiding every movement. The child is passive and may feel controlled.	Adult's hand is under the child's. The child can feel the motion, join in, or pull away—encouraging participation.
<b>Sensory and Motor Learning</b>	Child's hand is restricted; limited opportunity to feel textures or pressure.	Allows the child to feel movement and pressure through their own hands, promoting sensory feedback and motor planning.
<b>Trust and Safety</b>	Can feel intrusive or uncomfortable, especially for children with sensory sensitivities or trauma.	Communicates safety and partnership—'I'm here with you,' not 'I'm doing this for you.'
<b>Skill Development</b>	Focuses on compliance and task completion.	Supports independence by engaging the child's own motor planning and decision-making.
<b>Professional Approach</b>	Outdated, adult-directed model of support.	Aligned with person-centered, trauma-informed, and neurodiversity-affirming practice.

### Summary

Hand-under-hand promotes connection, consent, and learning. It transforms support from doing something 'to' a child into doing something 'with' them. This approach helps build confidence, trust, and independence in daily school activities.