WRITING INSTRUMENT HOLDER AND HAND SUPPORT

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Publication Date: Apr. 15, 2010

Publication Classification
Int. Cl.  
A46B 17/02  
(2006.01)

U.S. Cl. .......................................................... 401/48

Abstract
A combined writing instrument holder and hand support assists those who have difficulties gripping and controlling a writing instrument. The device releasably receives a writing instrument in a position where it may be brought into contact with paper. The device provides a comfortable hand support that prevents the user's hand from engaging the paper while the device is being used.
WRITING INSTRUMENT HOLDER AND HAND SUPPORT

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 11/407,393 filed Apr. 18, 2006, which claims priority from U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/676,216 filed Apr. 29, 2005; the disclosures of both are incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Technical Field

[0003] The present invention generally relates to devices used to assist those who have difficulties gripping and controlling a writing instrument. In particular, the invention relates to a combined writing instrument holder and hand support configured to hold at least one writing instrument in a usable manner while allowing the user to control the writing instrument by moving the device while also resting the hand on the support.

[0004] 2. Background Information

[0005] A wide variety of reasons affect the ability of individuals from controlling a writing instrument as well as they wish. When a person has difficulty finely controlling a writing instrument on a piece of paper, the written words can become illegible or the process of writing is extended and the process can become frustrating. Different devices are known in the art for holding a writing instrument and supporting the hand of the writer. Some of these devices are difficult to use while others are difficult to manufacture. Despite the numerous prior art examples, room for improvement remains in the art. The device of the present invention provides structural configurations and advantage not realized by known devices.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The invention provides a holder for a writing instrument that simultaneously supports the hand of the user while the user manipulates the writing instrument with the holder.

[0007] In one configuration, the holder includes a first holder and a second holder wherein the first and second holders are configured to hold different types of writing instruments.

[0008] The holder of the invention also provides a configuration wherein the writing instrument holders are disposed at the end of a resilient neck that can bend to allow the writing instrument to engage the paper and then flex back to remove the writing instrument from the paper to allow the holder to move to another location without marking the paper.

[0009] In one configuration, the invention provides a writing holder having a broad, generally flat base that spreads the weight of the user’s hand over the paper to avoid pressure points that could tear the paper or cause the holder to snag.

[0010] In another configuration, the invention provides a writing instrument holder that includes at least one sharpened envelope opener. In another configuration, the invention provides a writing instrument holder having a base that incorporates a magnifying glass.

[0011] In another configuration, the base of the device includes arms that are disposed on either side of a neck. The arms stabilize the device and can support the finger tips of the user.

[0012] These configurations may be used alone or in combination.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the writing instrument and hand support device made in accordance with the concepts of the present invention.

[0014] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a user’s hand manipulating the device of the invention.

[0015] FIG. 3 is a perspective view of an alternative embodiment of the invention wherein the device is fabricated from a substantially transparent material.

[0016] FIG. 4 is a plan view of the front portion of the device showing the two holders for the writing instruments.

[0017] FIG. 5 is a section view taken along line 5-5 of FIG. 4.

[0018] FIG. 6 is a top plan view of the device.

[0019] Similar numbers refer to similar parts throughout the specification.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0020] The writing holder and hand support device of the present invention is indicated generally by the numeral 10 in the accompanying drawings. Device 10 generally includes a base 12 and a neck 14 wherein neck 14 includes at least one holder 16 adapted to securely hold a writing instrument 18 so that it may be manipulated by a user to write on a piece of paper 20.

[0021] Neck 14 is connected to base 12 at a joint 30. Neck 14 is angled forwardly and upwardly from base 12. Joint 30 may be a resilient joint that allows neck 14 to be pushed down toward the reference plane where base 12 is located so that writing instrument 18 may be pushed down toward paper 20 and then moved back up where instrument 18 is disengages paper 20. Joint 30 allows the user to load instrument 20 into holder 16 in a position wherein the resting position of neck 14 maintains writing instrument 20 slightly above the surface of paper 20. Joint 30 is configured to allow the user to push down on neck 14 to cause instrument 18 to engage paper 20 to allow the user to mark paper 20. The user may then release neck 14 causing instrument 18 to move back up away from paper 20. The user may also load writing instrument 18 in a manner wherein instrument 18 is in direct contact with paper 20 when device 10 is resting if the user does not wish to push down on neck 14 during use. Joint 30 alternatively may be configured to be a rigid joint to prevent neck 14 from pivoting with respect to base 12. In the exemplary embodiment, joint 30 is an elongated living hinge having a length that is over half the width of base 12.

[0022] Neck 14 is substantially rigid along its length so that writing instrument 18 may be precisely controlled by device 10. Neck 14 is also configured to support a portion of the user’s hand. Neck may include a pair of spaced rails 32 that form an elongated grip for the user. The space between rails 32 may receive a portion of the user’s finger or hand to assist the user in moving device 10 laterally with respect to paper 20. A transverse rib 34 (FIG. 4) extends between rails 32. An outer transverse rib 36 may also be provided to form a secure connection with base 12 and to provide a support for a portion of the user’s hand as shown in FIG. 2. Outer transverse rib 36 may be connected to base 12 at joint 30.

[0023] Neck 14 supports at least one holder 16 adapted to frictionally or resiliently clamp writing instrument 18. Each holder 16 is substantially shorter than a typical writing instrument 18. In one configuration of the invention, first and sec-
ond holders 16 are provided at the outer end of neck 14. In this exemplary embodiment, inner holder 16 has a continuous outer wall 40 with a plurality of holding ribs 42 extending inwardly from outer wall 40. Ribs 42 may be tapered or have a curved or angled lead-in surface as shown in FIG. 5. Outer holder 16 may have a non-continuous outer wall 44 that allows outer holder 16 to expand radially outwardly to accommodate a writing instrument 18 having a larger outer diameter than could be disposed in inner holder 16. In one configuration, inner holder 16 may be configured to hold a No. 2 pencil while outer holder 16 is configured to hold a pen having a larger diameter than a No. 2 pencil. Although each outer wall 40 and 44 may be cylindrical, the wall may be bowed inwardly along its length to form a tighter gripping configuration for instruments 18. Each holder 16 may be loaded from either end of holder 16 depending on the configuration of writing instrument 18. Ribs 42 may be tapered at both ends to help the loading of the instruments.

Base 12 has a flat lower surface that is adapted to glide smoothly along a smooth writing surface such as a piece of paper or along the surface that supports the piece of paper. The body of base 12 disposed behind joint 30 is configured to be slightly larger than an average adult male fist so that the base of the palm may be supported on the body of base 12 as shown in FIG. 2. The body of base 12 is a broad, generally flat surface defined by the upper surface of a thin, generally flat body wall. A portion of the body of base 12 may be formed into a magnifying glass 48 as shown in FIG. 3. In the context of this specification, the gently curved surface of the magnifying glass is considered to be generally flat as the term is used above. In the configuration shown in FIG. 3, base 12 is fabricated from a transparent material (such as polycarbonate) that allows the user to see the material on paper 20 while using device 10.

Base 12 also includes a pair of arms 50 that extend forwardly on either side of neck 14 such that neck 14 may pivot down between arms 50. Arms 50 are disposed in the same reference plane as the body of base 12 and help to prevent base 12 from pivoting on paper 20 while neck 14 is being push down toward paper 20. Arms 50 also may support the finger tips of the user.

The inner edge 52 of each arm 50 may be sharpened to allow device 10 to function as a letter opener. Arms 50 extend forward to a location wherein the forward tips 54 of arms 50 are disposed intermediate holders 16 and joint 30.

In the foregoing description, certain terms have been used for brevity, clearness, and understanding. No unnecessary limitations are to be implied therefrom beyond the requirement of the prior art because such terms are used for descriptive purposes and are intended to be broadly construed.

Moreover, the description and illustration of the invention is an example and the invention is not limited to the exact details shown or described:

1. A device for holding a writing instrument and supporting a hand; the device comprising:
   a base having a pair of arms and a hand support disposed in a reference plane adapted to be disposed parallel to the surface on which the device is resting;
   the pair of arms being spaced apart by a gap;
   a neck connected to the hand support of the base at a joint;
   the neck resiliently pivoting with respect to the base about the joint between a resting position and a depressed position;
   the joint being an elongated, resilient living hinge disposed within the reference plane of the base;
   the entire hand support being disposed behind the joint such that the joint is disposed intermediate the neck and the hand support of the base; the hand support of the base being adapted to receive a portion of the user's hand;
   the neck being disposed intermediate the arms above the gap;
   the neck being movable to the depressed position from the resting position without moving the hand support of the base from the reference plane when the device is in use;
   and
   a first holder supported by the neck; the holder adapted to securely hold a writing instrument such that pivoting the neck toward the depressed position moves the writing instrument toward a writing surface when the base is disposed on a writing surface.

2. The device of claim 1, further comprising a second holder supported by the neck; the second holder adapted to securely hold a writing instrument such that pivoting the neck toward the depressed position moves the writing instrument toward a writing surface when the base is disposed on a writing surface.

3. The device of claim 2, wherein each of the holders includes an outer wall; one of the outer walls being non-continuous so that its size may be adjusted to hold different writing instruments.

4. The device of claim 2, further comprising at least one rib disposed in the first holder; the rib adapted to frictionally engage the writing instrument.

5. The device of claim 4, wherein the at least one rib is at least partially tapered.

6. The device of claim 2, wherein the base integrally includes a magnifying glass.

7. The device of claim 1, wherein the base integrally includes a letter opener.

(canceled)

9. The device of claim 1, wherein the neck is rigid.

(canceled)

10-14.

15. The device of claim 1, wherein each of the arms includes a forward tip disposed intermediate the first holder and the joint.

16. The device of claim 1, wherein the neck includes a pair of spaced rails that form an elongated grip adapted to receive the user's finger between the spaced rails.

17. The device of claim 16, wherein the neck further includes an inner transverse rib disposed between the rails.

18. The device of claim 17, wherein the neck further includes an outer transverse rib projecting outwardly from the rails.

19. The device of claim 18, wherein the joint connects the outer transverse rib to the base.

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