



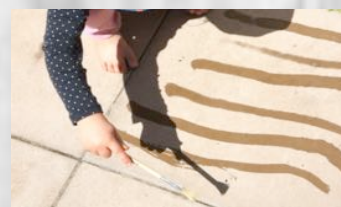
Supporting Mark Making and Writing at Home

Gross and Fine Motor Development

Children begin their journey towards writing by making marks, not by producing letters and words.

Before a child can hold tools to make marks, they need to develop strength and control in their arms and upper bodies and gain control of larger movements. Once they have developed this strength and control in large movement, they will be able to demonstrate control over their hands and make smaller movements and hold mark making implements.

The more opportunities a child has to develop large and small movement in their arms, hands and fingers, the easier it will be to make marks with a variety of tools.



For children, writing is a skill that they have to learn and, like so much during their childhood, it develops gradually.

Ideas you could try at home...

- Spend lots of time outdoors, running, jumping, crawling and climbing.
- Climb the ladders and ropes on the playground.
- Practise throwing and catching balls and bean bags.
- Dancing and movement activities.
- Action rhymes and songs – Especially those that involve using and manipulating fingers, such as '1,2,3,4,5 once I caught a fish alive.'
- Large art projects – hang some paper on a wall or an easel – reach up, left and right while painting.
- Mixing and stirring with various sized spoons.
- Digging with spades in sand or mud.
- Yoga poses – these provide muscle strengthening and postural control.
- Lifting heavy objects such as buckets filled with sand or pushing wheelbarrows or wheeled toys or pulling waggons.
- Shaking, tapping, beating musical instruments.
- Squeezing out sponges in the bath or while doing the washing up.
- Popping bubbles.
- Encourage different ways of manipulating playdough, including rolling, patting, squeezing, moulding, etc.
- Threading activities – start big and get smaller!
- Exploring with tools such as tweezers, scissors, hammers, screwdrivers, tongs, knives to cut food, etc.
- Develop finger strength by using pegs to help to put the washing on the line.

Making Marks

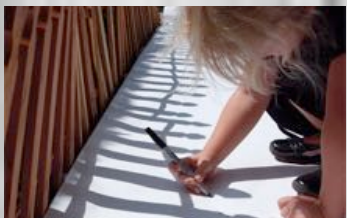
The first marks children make are usually big circular marks and straight lines. You may think this is just a scribble, but it is an important step as children are trying out new things and seeing what happens. The marks your children make will slowly begin to have meaning to them.

Sometimes marks are made for the pure physical enjoyment of the activity. On these occasions children have no interest in an end product at all; the physical activity is an end in itself and an opportunity for them to experiment and explore.

Making marks is an extremely important part of a child's development. They help to develop and enhance children's motor skills and build finger muscles. They also allow them to explore pencil grip and develop control over mark making implements.

Through drawing, children will explore with and imitate shapes, such as circles and lines.

Children need to gain confidence when beginning to create marks on paper. It is important that all of their attempts to make marks are encouraged by adults - even if this may look like a scribble!



Ideas you could try at home...

- Making marks outside with sticks or feathers in the mud.
- Pushing cars or trains through paint.
- Drawing on the pavement outside with water or chalks.
- Drawing collaboratively on a large roll of paper.
- Using a scrubbing brush with paint or water.
- Finger paints
- Making parks in sand.
- Shaving foam and paint brushes
- Painting on foil.
- Clingfilm and paint.
- Paint in a ziplock bag
- Comment on the shapes you can see in your child's picture.
- Model drawing— circles, lines, etc.
- Help to begin to develop your child's control by creating shadows with objects, and encourage them to follow the lines they make.

Giving Meaning to Marks

When children realise that marks can be used to carry meaning they begin to use marks as tools to make their thinking visible.

They are starting to make connection between print and drawing within the environment and the fact that symbols they see, carry meaning.

Even though their marks making often bears no resemblance to print, they are gaining more control over their muscles and the direction they want their marks to go. They can often tell you about the marks they make.

They may enjoy using their mark making to tell stories and express their feelings through pictures and symbols. Sometimes they may be interested in an object or an event and record exactly what they see.

They might discover that they can use marks to help them to make sense of their world, to solve problems or discover solutions to their lines of enquiry. Sometimes, a child's interest in numbers or representations of shape and space, can be seen in their mark making.

Mark making is often more successful when children make marks as part of their play rather than as a separate activity. By doing this we create a context and purpose for the child to make marks.

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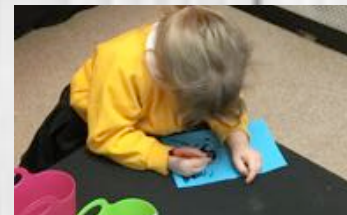
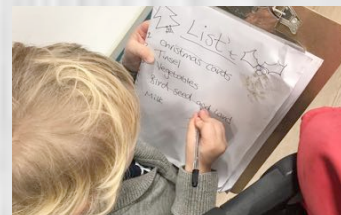
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Children being able to talk about their drawings and give meaning to the marks that they make is the next vital part of their writing journey.



Ideas you could try at home...

- Even if you can't tell what it is, ask your child about their mark making and encourage them to tell you about what they have drawn.
- Comment on shapes that you can see in your child's mark making.
- Think about where your child likes to mark make. Use clip boards, chalks etc. to support mark making outdoors.
- Create more informal areas to mark make rather than at a table.
- Encourage your child to look in a mirror to create representations of themselves.
- Encourage your child to look carefully at objects and begin to create some simple observational drawings.
- Create badges and stickers.
- Make tickets for role play games, such as tickets for a train or bus journey.
- Encourage mark making to record in games, e.g. scores or tally charts.

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To encourage children to become 'writers' it is important that they are exposed to text and writing in their everyday lives.

Modelling Writing – Symbolic Writing

It is important for children to see adults modelling writing. Children who see adults writing will begin to recognise that writing is used for a purpose and a form of communication.

Some children will begin to copy adults -- even though their marks will not fully resemble recognisable letter and number shapes, they will often make marks in the direction print is being read, written or displayed in front of them.

Children who are very familiar with print and are read to on a regular basis often display this stage of mark making.

When children write they are not linking letter shapes to sounds in words, they are just attempting to copy words they see around them.

Ideas you could try at home...

- Join in with your child's play and model writing opportunities – e.g. writing a prescription in their doctor play.
- Encourage your child to help you to create a list for the things you need to buy at the shops. Model the writing process of a list and talk about the letters you are writing. Allow them to take the list to the shop and mark off the list as it goes in the trolley.
- Write letters and cards to send to friends and family. Talk about the process of addressing letters and taking it to the post box.
- Let your children watch as you fill in forms.
- Point out words and letters to your child in books and stories you share together.
- Look at and talk about signs and logos that you see in the environment.
- Do some cooking following a recipe, demonstrating to your child how written text is used for information.
- Allow your child to experience various forms of communications, both handwritten and electronic, such as emails, text messages and letters.



Although their name is one of the first words that a child learns to write, there is lots of pre-work that must be done in order for them to really understand the process of writing their name, as apposed to it just being a learnt skill that they are unable to transfer to the writing of other words.

Emergent Writers

The motivation for making marks, and beginning to write is always the same - the marks are meaningful and relevant to a child as an individuals. For this reason, children's earliest mark making often involves their name or their age, as these are of particular significance to them.

Writing their name is an important skill that a child needs master. However, they need to be developmentally ready to start writing their name. If they are pressured to 'write' too soon, when they are not ready to do so, we risk removing the enjoyment and give them a negative impression of the writing process. Therefore the opportunities for children to explore name writing must be developmentally appropriate, purposeful and fun.

However, before they begin to be able to write their name, they must be able to recognise and talk about the shapes of the letters that make up their name.

Writing does not need to be on paper to be worthwhile and it is often better for their confidence to start encouraging them to form the shapes of letters in less permanent ways such as the air, using their finger to trace through materials or using a paintbrush with water.

During their writing it is important for children to make the connection between the letter they are writing and the letter sound. Children need to be able to discriminate between different letter sounds, to support them to write new words and break down words as they begin to read.

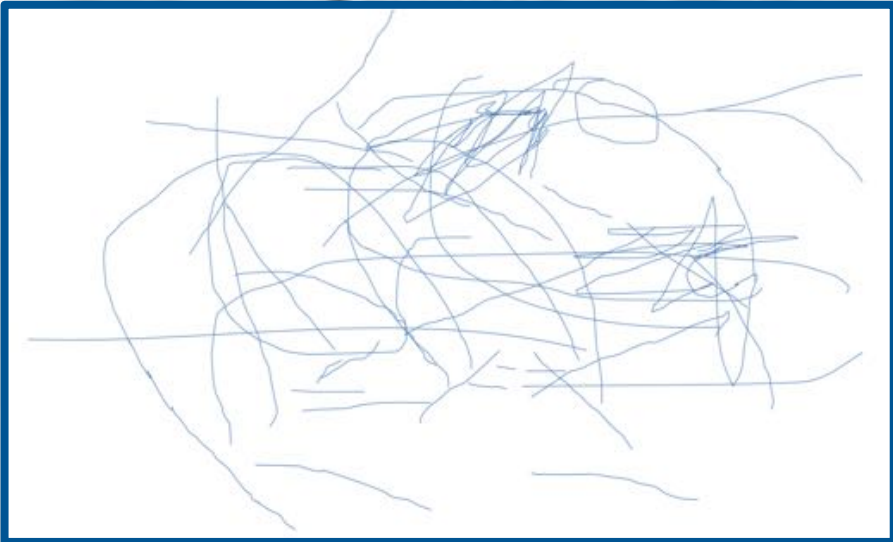


Ideas you could try at home...

- Initially, start with encouraging your child to write the initial letter of their name and build this up over time.
- Point out letters from your child's name within the environment.
- Use the correct upper and lower case when modelling writing their name.
- Write your child's name for them to copy underneath rather than tracing over your writing.
- Help your child to write their name in birthday cards to send to family and friends or to write their name at the bottom of a letter.
- Encourage them to write their name to label pictures and drawings.
- As your child is writing letters, comment on the letter sound to help them make a connection between the written letter and the sound they make. Use the sounds the letters make, not the letter name.
- Use 'Hairy letters' on an iPad or tablet to support letter formation and hear letter sounds.
- Talk about the formation of the letters. e.g. 'n looks like a tunnel'

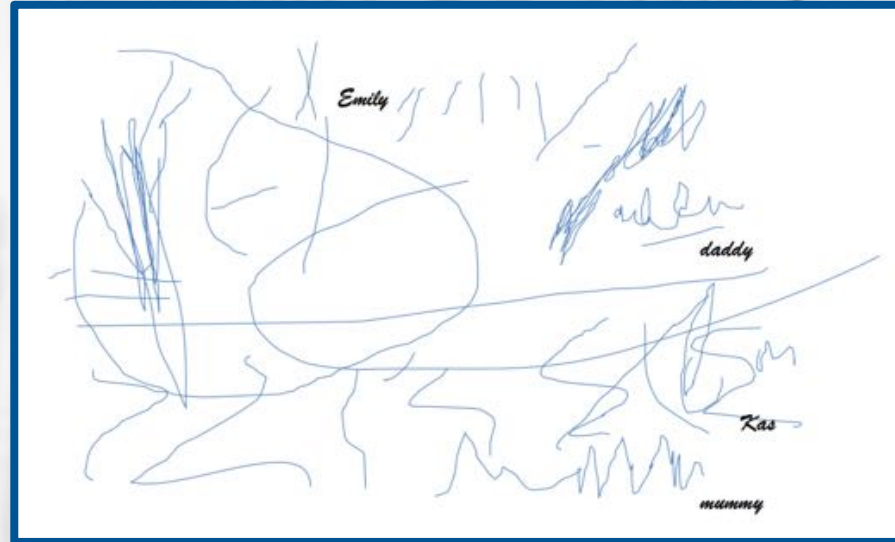
Mark Making

From 2 years



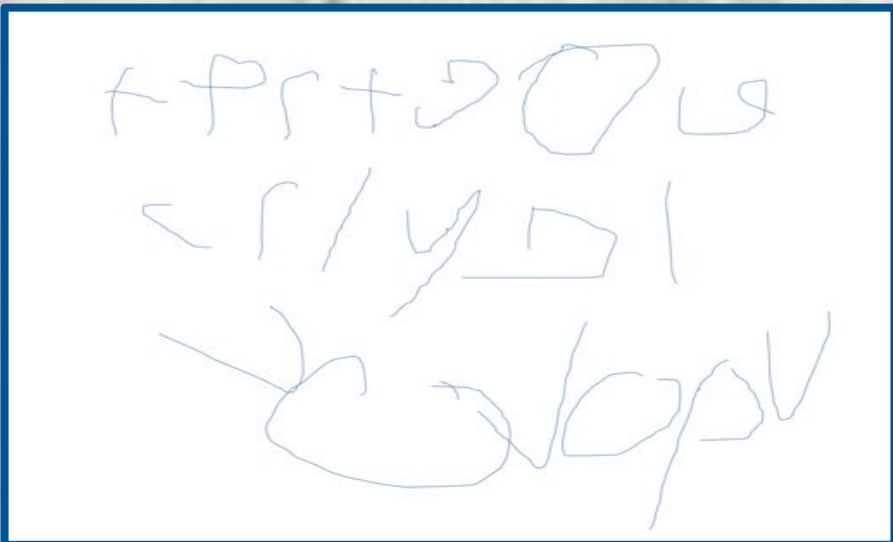
Giving Meaning to Marks

2-3 years



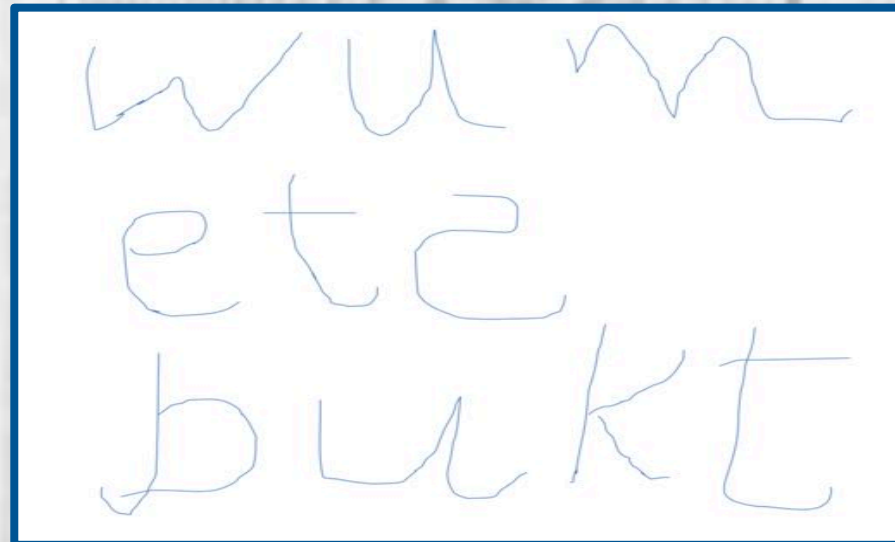
Symbolic Writing

3-4 years



Emergent Writers

4+ years



Pencil Grip Development



1 – 1 ½ years



2 - 3 years



3 ½ - 4 years



4 ½ - 6 years