

Advice sheet

Prewriting

The making of marks that imitate another person's marks, is important because it helps a child learn eye-hand coordination. A child also learns that making marks can be meaningful and a form of communication. Drawing aids the development of pre-writing skills such as pencil control, ability to copy designs and correct posture.

Activities

- Try drawing on sandpaper, patterned wallpaper, in sand or mud.
- Draw in lotions, pudding, whipped cream, icing sugar, chocolate spread and shaving foam.
- Experiment with different colours of chalk, markers, crayons, pens, pencils and paints.
- Draw in shallow trays of sand.
- Make scribble drawings with the child. After allowing time for the child to make their own marks, demonstrate making marks such as - | O
- Draw on cakes with coloured icing tubes or draw with cheese spread on bread or crackers.
- Encourage activities such as fuzzy felt and making pictures out of shapes.
- Try outdoor activities such as such as rubbing over different textures e.g. concrete, brick or bark.
- Use thick paintbrushes and buckets of water to paint on outdoor surfaces.



Strategies

- High frequency sounds are alerting and help a child to orientate to what you are doing. If the child is attending use directional words, e.g. down, across, round.
- Praise the child if they look at the mark, as you make it. Praise any attempt they make that is approaching your example.
- Use short regular pencils, small pieces of chalk, felt markers and crayons, this helps the development of finger control.
- Encourage large movements when making marks, this encourages use of the muscles of the whole arm and shoulder against gravity and helps to reinforce the "mental picture" of the pattern. This is recommended at the early stage of learning letter formation.
- Encourage the child to experience a wide range of different mark-makers and surfaces on which to make their patterns. Materials used to stimulate the senses, are excellent to reinforce learning and will help keep the child's interest.
- Start to make a link for children between prewriting shapes and marks and letters eg. A circle is the same as an 'o'.

Prewriting

Writing is a complex perceptual, motor and cognitive skill. Pre-writing skills are the activities children take part in to prepare them for writing instruction. The following activities can support your child to develop their prewriting skills.



Activities

- Experiment with different colours of chalk, markers, crayons, pens, pencils and paints.
- Make shapes with noodles or spaghetti.
- Draw large shapes in paint on an easel or paper pinned to the wall.
- Stencils.
- Use of mazes to encourage development of pencil control.
- Maze activities: Start with getting the child to walk on large shapes/lines on the floor (masking tape or chalk) and drive toy cars through mazes, over crossing lines and diagonals. Then encourage drawing between a horizontal or vertical path. Gradually increase the complexity of the maze with curves, circles and dead ends. Gradually decrease the width of the maze to encourage increased control.

These can be done with finger paints, crayons, pencils or paints on a table, at an easel or on paper on the floor or pinned to the wall.

- Practice dot to dots. Encourage the child to stop on each dot. Use arrows to indicate the next dot to improve forward planning and directionality
- Make shapes and lines out of rolled up play dough.
- When working on pre-writing skills encourage the child to experience a wide range of different mark-makers and surfaces on which to make their patterns. Materials used to stimulate the senses, are excellent to reinforce learning and will help keep the child's interest.
- Encourage large movements when doing the activities as this encourages use of the muscles of the whole arm and shoulder against gravity and helps to reinforce the "mental picture" of the pattern. Gradually reduce the size to smaller, refined movements.

Strategies

- If the child struggles with attention and perseverance, try doing the sensory activities before drawing with crayons or pens e.g. drawing in sand, play dough, as sensory input can help prepare a child to focus.
- Gauge how much help you give the child. Initially you may need to use a hand over hand approach but try to reduce how much physical and verbal help you give the child so they become more independent.
- Praise and positively reward the child when they have achieved a part or all of the activity successfully.
- Don't focus too quickly on forming letters, try to make drawing fun!

