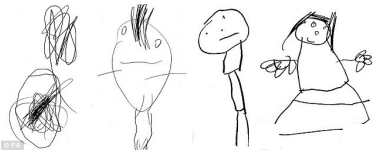


Early Mark Making



In nursery we call the children's writing 'early mark making'. This is a stage when children are 'experimenting' and their mark making and drawings are their way of communicating.

'Writing' is not just about holding a pencil and correctly forming letters it is a skill that children have to learn gradually.

What can we do to help?

- Be interested in your child's mark making and drawing, talk about what has been written or drawn.
- Provide writing materials e.g. pencils, pens, crayons, chinks, paint and paper. E.g. rolls of old wallpaper.
- Model the writing process- write with your child, e.g. a shopping list, a greeting card, a message.
- Talk about 'environmental print' - print you see all around us e.g. road signs on the way home, shop signs, posters, bus timetables.
- Share books/ magazines or newspapers together.
- Try not to keep correcting your child's handwriting or worry about how it looks.
- Do not worry about how your child holds a pencil.
- Be patient, give your child time and support.
- The most important thing is not to make your child write if he/she does not want to!
- Remember it is a developmental process and your child will write when he/she is ready.



How do children develop their mark making skills?

Learning to write is very much a physical skill. Before your child can control the muscles in their hands they need to control their large, whole body movements. This is called 'gross motor skills'.



Also your child will have to develop their hand eye coordination and their small muscles in their fingers to actually be able to hold and use a pen/pencil with control. This is called 'fine motor skills'.



Developing the pencil grip.

- Developing the pencil grip, referred to as a tripod grip, also takes time.
- Children need to develop the strength in their hands, fingers and wrists.
- They need to be able to move their fingers separately, using their thumb and index finger.
- Their wrists and thumb need to be strong.
- Finally they need to learn to rest their wrist on a table and to use their non-dominant hand to hold the paper still.
- To actually successfully write, the side of the hand needs to slide along the paper too!

