

Mark making is a meaningful form of communication, in imitation of another person's marks, and helps the child to learn to use eye-hand coordination skills.

Developing the ability to use visual skills with graded action of the upper limbs are separate skills that develop together in a more coordinated manner, through play activities.

Developing the motivation and interest in attending to writing or drawing activities

- Use different tactile pre-writing media: sand, finger paints, play dough, shaving foam to reinforce learning and keep the child interested.
- Experiment with painting using stubby brushes on sandpaper or textured wallpaper
- Chalk marks on slate for additional visual contrast (black and white)
- Initially use large movements for all scribing and mark making, to develop whole arm action
- Drawing with crayons or crayon rocks (they will need to apply more pressure with these) or chunky easy flow wax or water colour pencils will provide the necessary feedback to give the child the idea of cause and effect in drawing.
- Use a wide range of mark makers and surfaces and again encourage large movements to create simple repetitive contained shapes or marks to paper, with patterns emerging such as:



Developing a dynamic pencil grip

The use of dynamic pencil grip depends on the stage of hand dominance and hand grasp development. Usually a child will progress from one type of grip to another, see below:



1). 1-1½ years Palmer supinate grasp

With thumb on top



2). 2-3years Digital pronate grasp

Tips of fingers or thumb on pencil



3). 3½-4 years Static tripod grasp

With a closed web space

(Curve between the digits where the pencil rests)

4). 4-6yrs Dynamic tripod

Held in finger tips with open webspace

It is important to note that the development of a functional pencil grip has to follow the above pictured stages 1-4.

Therefore when using hand over hand method to teach pencil skills, consider how you encourage the child to grasp their pencil.

Additional adult support will be required to help with increasing tolerance and acceptance of unfamiliar or new activities for sensory skill development, to facilitate **prewriting skill** by using **hand over hand techniques** to teach the coordinated use of hands in functional grasps and with greater resistive force and control with pencil use.

Once the idea is laid down – allow them the freedom to explore their creative development at their own pace or method and enjoy working to their own satisfaction.

The opportunity to practice daily will be needed, to consolidate learning new strategies or techniques.

Equipment or strategies to help with skill development.

- Use shorter crayons or small pieces of chalk to encourage a more precise tripod grasp.
- Greater success will be achieved with short chunky length pencils, which you can buy readily or modify existing full length pencils by cleanly cutting and filing down rough edges.
- Try to make sure that the child is holding a pencil properly before starting drawing, to prevent poor habits developing.
- It may be easier to start with a board writer or marker pen (as children love pens with lids) and doodle on a large sheet of lining paper.
- Working on a vertical surface helps to develop strength in shoulder and wrist muscles, which are needed for writing. It also allows you to feel the weight of the arm as it moves up and down and across the paper. This gives more sensory feedback and helps to gain a better understanding of the movement. The child may need some support in their arm while doing this at first.
- Colouring in pictures or book with thicker black contained areas to focus contained marks in.
- As pencil control develops, progress to making circles or draw a circle and encourage the child to add marks to create the sun, flowers, add facial features faces, etc.
- Children learn first through imitation. Demonstrate first tracing a maze with your index finger and then encourage the child to trace a maze with their index finger. Hold a child's finger if necessary while tracing. After tracing with a finger, encourage a child to trace a maze with his crayon.
- Use verbal and sounds cues with voice intonation, to encourage the child to look at what you are creating on the page eg, 'Wee, Zzzzip' as you line draw across the page. Change the frequency of the sound from high to low as you draw a line 'down' the page.

Mazes: Use physical walking along stepping stones or raised and taped lines along the floor.

Drive toy cars or trains along road or track lines.

Then encourage drawing between a horizontal and vertical path using simple bold marker lines on soft coloured paper.

Vary the positions used (sitting, lying, standing, kneeling) and **add additional sensory experiences** to motivate and support sustained skill attainment.

Ask the child open ended questions about their work, to describe their picture e.g. “that’s lovely...tell me about your picture”.

Frequency of use: Complete up to 10 minute sessions every day.

Monitor the child’s level of response (interest and motivation) in the task and adjust accordingly (to simplify or increase) to obtain the ‘just right fit’ and grade challenges (less challenging to more challenging). Keep the task positive and reward and praise all marks made.