

Especially for parents of toddlers!

Art of Writing

Scribbling and Drawing

Before young children start learning to write, they learn that making marks on a page has meaning that others understand. To help your child learn this, give him plenty of engaging materials to use for drawing and scribbling. Talk with him about what he is doing as he uses them.

What is the practice?

Many everyday activities can help your toddler build skill and interest in scribbling and drawing. Having opportunities to draw/write—especially with parents joining in the fun—helps toddlers develop early writing abilities.

What does the practice look like?

Using markers to draw on a white board. Making designs with water or chalk on a sidewalk or fence. Sketching squiggles in a sandbox with a stick. These are activities that help young brains and hands prepare for writing. Such activities are most powerful when you give praise and ask questions to further your child's experimenting and interest.



How do you do the practice?

Every day is filled with natural opportunities for toddlers to scribble, draw, and “write.” Focus on what captures your child's interest, and start there.

- Supply your toddler with plenty of different drawing materials to use. You can include markers, crayons, pencils, paints, and chalk, as well as a variety of surfaces to try out. Craft paper, lined paper, chalkboards, and even the bathtub are interesting surfaces where your child can make her mark. Let her try painting with common household or craft items. Fun painting tools are drinking straws, feathers, cotton balls, cotton swabs, toy cars, and empty spools. Encourage your child to use her imagination and be creative.
- Let your child's artwork and scribbling be a source of pride. Mount and display his work at home and ask for his help in your own everyday writing tasks. Toddlers love to “sign” their own pictures, or “write” their names on a letter to a relative or friend.
- Help your child understand that drawing can carry meaning by asking him to tell you about his pictures. Show interest in what he is working on. Ask questions about the colors he is using, the shapes he is making, and what his picture is about.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Is your child eager to draw on his own and display his work?
- Does he show curiosity about what will happen when he uses different kinds of art materials?
- Is he using scribbling in a purposeful way to “write” his name, tell a story, or draw a picture?

Take a look at more of the art of writing

Water “Paint”

Charity and her mom are working in the garden on a hot day. Charity seems to be getting a little bored pulling weeds. “Do you want to play with water?” Mom asks. Charity agrees with delight. Together they fill a pail from the outdoor faucet and find a few old paint brushes in the garage. “You could use these brushes and water to paint the deck,” Charity’s mom suggests. “You can make it really pretty!” Charity loves painting the wooden deck floor, then the sidewalk, and even the house with water. She loves watching the darker colors of the wet spots fade as they dry in the sun. Then she paints some more!



Finger Paint Gift List

Two-year-old Rafael’s mom is writing a list for a Christmas shopping trip. It isn’t easy to think with Rafael bouncing around the room. “Come help me, Rafi,” calls Mom. She sits him down beside her at the kitchen table with colorful felt-tipped markers and an extra-large piece of paper. Mom tells him, “This will be your Christmas list, Rafi. Draw what you want Santa Claus to bring you.” “I want trucks,” Rafael starts, “and boots and a puppy and...” “Great,” his mom says. “Draw them for Santa so he’ll know what to bring you.” Each time Rafael finishes a drawing, his mom stops her work and he tells her what he drew. “This is beautiful,” she tells Rafael. “Look at all this orange! Santa will be so impressed. I’m going to hang up your picture list so everyone can see how hard you worked.”

Bath Paints

Leslie, a 34-month-old with fine-motor delays, likes playing with toys that feel interesting to the touch. Some examples are play dough and finger paints. When Leslie takes a bath, her mom gives her bath paints that wipe away easily with water. Bath paints encourage Leslie to use drawing skills without worrying about getting too messy. “What color do you need today?” Leslie’s mom asks. “Blue,” Leslie says, and her mom squirts some into her palms. She makes big circles on the side of the tub. “I’m drawing water,” Leslie says, “I’m drawing a big rain storm.” “How does rain look coming down?” Leslie’s mom asks. Leslie makes long streaks with the sides of her hands. Her mom helps guide her fingers to make smaller raindrops. “That’s beautiful rain,” her mom says. “Maybe you can also draw some flowers growing in the rain.” Leslie looks forward to her bath time with paints every day.

