

Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Top tips: Mark-making to writing: How do we get there?

Mark-making is the foundation of writing; it begins to develop into writing as children acquire the necessary physical skills, an understanding of symbolic representation and a desire to express themselves.

The exact age at which this transition occurs will vary, as it depends on individual children and their unique developmental progress.

However, there are some common milestones to indicate when mark-making starts to evolve into writing, as described below, along with some suggestions to help develop children's mark-making into powerful writing skills.

Common milestones include:

1. Controlled scribbling – as children gain better hand-eye co-ordination and muscle control
2. Intentional mark-making – marks that represent something, e.g. a circle to represent a person
3. Pre-writing skills - lines, shapes and symbols that resemble letters or numbers
4. Letter formation - as motor skills are refined, letter formation improves, although size and proportion may not be consistent
5. Emergent writing - letters are used to represent specific sounds or words.



Top tips for developing writing skills:

6. Build strength and coordination: Physical play, including activities that promote fine and gross motor skills, e.g. carrying containers, lifting, climbing, hanging off bars, running, jumping, grasping, throwing, etc.
7. Support fine motor skills: Provide activities in your continuous provision that strengthen the muscles in the shoulder, arm, hands and fingers, such as manipulating clay, cutting with scissors, threading and using tweezers or tongs
8. Provide a variety of mark-making materials, e.g. pencils, crayons, chalk, assorted sizes of paintbrushes, sponges, cotton wool, paper straws, paint rollers, combs, cotton buds, lolly sticks, spray bottles, wheeled vehicles, etc. Outside, encourage children to use sticks, stones, grass and leaves to make patterns in puddles or soil. Spark curiosity and experimentation for creating different marks and textures

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9. Introduce different surfaces: Including paper of various sizes, textures and colours, as well as easels, sandpaper, fabric, boxes, chalkboards, whiteboards
10. Provide multi-sensory experiences: Enhance engagement and focus through scented markers, textured paper, paint mixing, using fingers or other body parts, mud, gloop, sand or snow. Play music or sounds in the mark-making area to stimulate imagination and creativity
11. Offer guidance/support when needed: Suggest, demonstrate, model, collaborate and inspire children to develop their skills
12. Make it meaningful: Connect mark-making activities to real-life experiences and children's interests. Encourage children to write about their experiences, draw pictures, create stories, write letters or postcards to family or friends.

NDNA products to support you with these tips

- [Let's look at writing – online course](#)
- [Supporting literacy skills at home – factsheet.](#)

And more resources at www.ndna.org.uk/hub/myndna