

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: stages of mark making

Mark making is a crucial foundation for children's writing skills. Through mark making, children learn to control their movements, develop hand-eye coordination, and understand the connection between spoken and written language. These early scribbles and drawings pave the way for more refined writing skills as children grow.

There are 4 stages of writing: preliteracy, emergent, transitional and fluent, with the first two being seen in the early years. All children are unique and will travel through these phases at their own pace.

Here are some tips to help you develop children's mark making into powerful writing skills:



- Offer lots of opportunities to develop fine motor skills with activities like manipulating play dough, dough disco, scrunching paper, and using tools such as big tweezers
- Develop gross motor skills with activities such as parachute games, ribbon twirlers, large brushes to paint on walls or floors outside
- Support strength and coordination with opportunities for crawling, throwing, jumping, running, hopping, skipping, climbing, hanging, pushing and pulling
- Invite children to explore making marks with their hands and fingers in a variety of different materials, such as sand, paint, flour, gloop, mud, rice etc.
- Provide children with time to explore making marks on large pieces of paper, such as rolls of old wallpaper or outside on walls, floors etc.
- Provide a wide range of resources like chunky crayons, chalk, feathers, sticks, pens and paintbrushes for children to experiment with inside and outside
- Model to children that we communicate through writing and that marks have meaning. Model writing with children as part of their play when an opportunity arises, e.g. label their work, make a shopping list for snack time or fill in their communication books together. It's a big moment when children's marks go from a physical, sensory experience to one where the marks carry meaning
- Enhance your provision to provide children with opportunities for purposeful mark making, for example, writing an order down in a role-play area set up as a café, clipboards in the construction

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area etc.

- Sing finger rhymes like 'Incy Wincy Spider' and encourage children to join in with the actions
- Show genuine interest in the marks that children have made and what the marks represent
- Display photos and examples of children's work to show that you value it; keep records of their mark making over time to track progress
- Celebrate mark making by sharing it with parents.

NDNA products to support you with these tips

- Online course – [Let's look at writing](#)
- Parent factsheet – [Getting ready for school: Developing literacy at home](#)

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