

Parent Guide



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games



crafts



puzzles



experiments



word searches



What is this resource and how do I use it?

Print or view this guide on a mobile device and use it to help improve your understanding of early writing. This guide explains what early writing is, what developmental milestones are needed for children to engage in the activities and some ideas to get you started.

What skills does this practise?

Fine Motor Skills

Literacy

Creativity

Further Activity Ideas and Suggestions

You can find lots more information and guidance on common early childhood education terms and other parenting ideas in our [Parent Guides](#) section.

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Parents Hub

A Parent Guide to Early Writing

What is Early Writing?

In early childhood education, the term 'early writing' is used to describe the different ways that children can build up the skills necessary for writing letters and words. Many of these skills won't involve actually putting pen to paper (or, when they do, the marks made are just scribbles).

The idea is that children **practise using their hands or tools**. They learn how to hold things properly, build up their strength and coordination, and make marks using things like pencils. This teaches them that they can have an effect and eventually that they can make marks that mean something to other people, such as drawings or letters.

Sometimes the activities will focus on making marks and other times it's all about building fine motor skills (the strength and coordination in the fingers, hands and wrists). Your child may just draw for the feel of it or because they're trying to communicate something. **All lines, scribbles and gibberish are welcome!**



When should my child start writing?

There is no definitive age by which a child should begin writing - many of the play experiences (particularly in art and literacy) they engage with during their first five years will be refined and built on when they start school.

In fact, the latest government guidance for early years children (called the EYFS Statutory Framework), which is what most nursery and reception practitioners follow, has done away with most of its age bands altogether. This was done so that those looking after the children can focus on giving them fantastic play and learning experiences instead of worrying about ticking off their abilities from a list.

However, there are a few physical development milestones that will help your child engage with writing more fully. This table talks about some key skills your child will need to develop to get involved with writing - you can adapt activities to suit your child's needs.

A Parent Guide to Early Writing

If your child can...

...then you could try...

hold up their head

lying them down on their tummy or back to kick their arms and legs to make marks in materials (e.g. paint).

sit up independently

sitting them in a large activity tray or plastic container to explore materials inside.

grasp or hold a tool loosely
(e.g. pencil, paintbrush)

sitting them at a table to try activities like mark making and fine motor games.

hold a tool (e.g. pencil, paintbrush) confidently

using an easel or table to set up a writing area and let your child make choices about which activity they would like to try.

Twinkl Tip:

For younger children, start on a bigger scale, such as chalk on a pavement or 'painting' the fence with water and a big brush. This gives children time to develop their large-muscle coordination. Once this is developing well, children can then work on building small-muscle coordination, such as in their hands and wrists.



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Early Writing Activities:

Why not try some of the following early writing activities at home with your child? Remember, it's all about building fine motor skills first, then learning proper pencil grip, then learning to write letters last. If your child isn't able to do all of these activities, that's okay - find a way to adapt it to suit your child wherever possible.

- Draw outside on a wall, fence or pavement with chunky chinks - any lines or scribbles are great!
- Use a finger, paintbrush or stick to trace into a tray filled with sand or another fine material like glitter, sugar or rice. For a dinosaur or farm theme, you could even use dirt!
- 'Paint' a garden fence, patio or wall with large paintbrushes or rollers dipped in water.
- Pinch pegs and attach them to a hung line or a piece of card to help build fine motor skills.
- Follow a line on a page using a pencil. If this is too tricky, you could scale up the size with pavement chinks, a whiteboard or similar.
- Roll playdough into long sausages and use it to form letters or numbers.
- Try potato or apple stamps dipped in paint and printed on paper or other surfaces.
- While out on walks in natural areas, use sticks to draw in the dirt or lay them down to form letters.
- Even actions that don't leave a lasting mark can be classed as early writing activities - tracing onto a steamy window, dragging items through puddles or using a squirt gun on paper or a fence.
- Using a whiteboard and dry wipe pens is a very different sensation - even wiping it off with a whiteboard rubber or piece of tissue is mark making.
- Dab glue (white glue or a glue stick) on paper or card and stick craft items (e.g. pom-poms, pipe cleaners, etc) or scrap paper to it.

Some ingredients and/or materials used might cause allergic reactions or health problems. You should ensure that you are fully aware of the allergies and health conditions of those taking part. If you have any concerns about your own or somebody else's health or wellbeing, always speak to a qualified health professional. Activities listed within the resource should always be supervised by an appropriate adult. Children should be supervised when using sharp items such as scissors or other tools. Please make sure you are aware that children may put craft items into their mouths, and that they should wash their hands afterwards. By using this resource, you acknowledge that it is the responsibility of supervising adults to ensure the safety of children in their care and that we will accept no liability as a result of the activity.