

Mark-making

What is mark-making?



The skill of writing begins with mark-making. It is easy to dismiss the different lines and circles children create on paper as mere 'scribbles', but actually, children are mark-making, the first step towards writing. As well as enabling a child to learn to write, making marks can benefit a child physically, and also help to develop their imagination and creative skills. Mark-making opens the door for children to express themselves in a completely new way, offering them the opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts without relying solely upon verbal communication.

Pen/pencil grip

Holding a pen and controlling it with precision takes a lot of skill and involves hand-eye co-ordination and muscle control in our hands and fingers. Making marks enables children to develop their hand eye co-ordination and fine motor skills through practicing to hold a pen, deciding what grip suits them best, which hand feels most natural and through making small controlled movements using the pen.

Activities we have enjoyed at Kindergarten/ things you can try at home

- Mark making with brushes in glitter/flour/shaving foam
- Chalking on the ground
- Painting pebbles with water and paint
- Using the paint programme on the computer
- Painting bread with a mixture of milk and food colouring and then toasting!
- Using clipboards
- Mark making in the sand with sticks



Some common worries

- **Back to front letters:** children have to rely on their memory to write letters until they become good readers. This means that nearly all children will reverse their letters early on, or miss letters out of words.
- **Children who are not interested:** mark-making must be fun for children. Try putting out 'real' pens and paper and provide opportunities for interesting activities. Try hard not to pass critical comments about how your child's writing looks as this can put some children off. And remember that children need to see the adults around them writing.
- **Pencil grip:** children develop their pencil grip as a way to control their movements. The grip used by young children will usually improve as their hand movements become more controlled.

How you can further develop your child's learning at home

- Be ready to join in with drawing and painting
- Show your child how you write
- Write notes and letters to your child
- Avoid 'teaching' and 'correcting' your child
- Children develop the hand skills needed to hold and control a pen or pencil as they make everyday movements. Activities such as folding clothes, wiping up spills and learning to dry up cups all strengthen their hands and build hand-eye coordination.
- As well as everyday skills children may also enjoy playing games that encourage good fine motor control such as using jigsaws or threading beads.