

PRE-PRINTING SKILLS

Many skills are required to prepare a child for the task of printing. Good posture and balance is needed to maintain an efficient position of the arm and hand. Grasp strength and coordination is needed for good motor control, as well as visual perception and memory.

When a child is learning the various strokes necessary prior to printing letters, it is easier to imitate rather than copy. Imitation is when the parent makes a mark while the child is watching, and then the child makes the same mark. Copying is when the parent shows the child a line or shape that has already been drawn and the child is asked to make the same mark. When the child does not see the line being drawn, it is harder, particularly with those children with motor planning problems. Therefore, it is important to progress from imitation, to copying, and finally to independent writing from memory.

Pencil Skill Progression

The general trend for pencil skill progression is that a child progresses through simple to complex designs. Children generally start by drawing horizontal and vertical lines. Next a child learns to draw circular lines and intersecting lines, crosses, and right to left diagonals. They may then attempt diagonal lines and combining lines to form simple geometric shapes



The child who does not have these basic skills will likely have difficulty learning to print letters or to print their name.

Pencil skill progression can also be seen when a child is attempting to draw a person. As a child's skill improves, they are able to add more body parts and details to their drawings.

Holding the Paper

Left-handed and right-handed children need to hold the paper in different directions so that their arms and hands can work efficiently. If your child is left-handed, the upper left corner of the paper should be higher than the right. If your child is right-handed, the upper right corner of the paper should be higher. The other, non-dominant hand should be holding the paper steady.

Pre-Printing Strategies

1. Encourage your child to form letters from top to bottom and left to right. This will assist them in the later transition to cursive writing.
2. Provide regular, supervised practice sessions of 10 - 15 minutes per day with lots of repetition and review.
3. Try to make practice sessions enjoyable to sustain interest in learning.

4. Keep activities simple with a gradual increase in complexity so that your child will experience success as they learn pencil skills.
5. Use a "talk-through" learning approach for printing and drawing. Adult can "team" a "partner" draw with child by taking turns. The child has to tell the adult what to draw (e.g. "draw a circle, put two dots in the middle for eyes and straight lines on top for hair"). This encourages the child to visualize and verbally direct the correct motor response. Now take turns by changing roles (e.g. now adult tells child what to do).
6. Have your child trace the line or shape with their finger once or twice before they attempt to copy it.
7. Encourage your child to take their time and watch their pencil as they attempt an activity. Provide verbal cues if necessary.
8. Watch for appropriate posture and pencil grasp during printing tasks and monitor accordingly.

Pre-Printing Activities

- use a chalkboard or whiteboard and have your child copy simple lines and shapes as you draw them or have them trace over your shapes
- use simple dot to dot exercises to practice forming shapes; make your own simple shapes with lots of dots and work toward less dots
- simple mazes found in preschool activity books can progress from straight vertical to horizontal paths, and then to curved mazes (your child can first trace the path with their finger to assist in feeling the direction of the maze)
- activities similar to printing, such as brush painting, coloring, using chalk and finger painting
- color by labelling the parts of the picture, tracing parts with a finger, and by coloring different parts certain colors
- stencils of simple geometric shapes (these can be homemade out of thick cardboard) and have them trace inside stencil first and as skill improves provide stencils that are traced along outside edge -progress to more complex shapes (stencils require more motor control than free drawing)
- playdoh shapes and letters can assist in increasing your child's skills during a play activity; try having them copy your shapes or vice versa; try bread or cookie dough to make cookie letters or pizza letter for example
- bathtub crayons can be a fund way for your child to practice their skills
- printing skills can also be reinforced by activities such as Magna Doodle
- in the winter snow or a sandy beach, have your child "draw" shapes or letters in the snow with a stick or use their feet to make giant ones

Prewriting skills

Definition

The skills involved in learning to write are called prewriting skills. These include the sensorimotor skills that contribute to a child holding and using a pencil, and the ability to draw, copy, and colour.

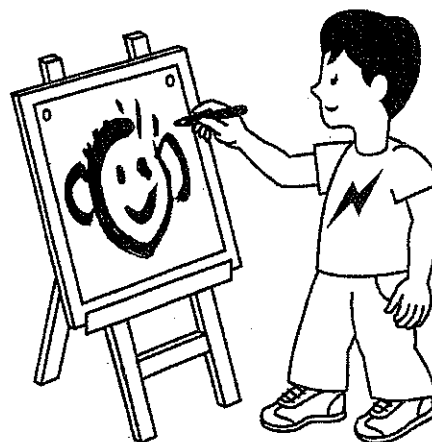
The ideas in this handout have primarily been developed for children aged 4 years and older. If your child has difficulty holding a pencil for drawing, please refer to the handout titled 'Developing a pencil grip'. If your child changes the hand that he holds his pencil with while drawing, please refer to the handout titled 'Hand Preference'.

Helpful strategies

- ▶ Encourage your child to do prewriting activities by specifically setting up an area with a child size table and chair, and a range of fun and interesting texts, crayons, coloured pencils and paper.



- ▶ Drawing and doing activities on a vertical surface is important for this age group as it helps to develop your child's arm and hand skills. For example, encourage your child to draw on a blackboard, paint at an easel, stick magnetic letters to the fridge or put stickers on a piece of paper taped to the wall.



- ▶ Do not be too eager to teach your child how to write letters. Instead have fun drawing together, copying shapes and colouring in.
- ▶ Praise your child as her skills develop, as this will encourage her to have a positive attitude to prewriting activities and experience the feeling 'I can do this'.
- ▶ Many commercially printed activity books, such as colouring, dot to dot or mazes, are available from some newsagents, post offices, book or toy shops. Make sure they are simple and suitable for your child's age. Your child may need your help to understand what to do on each page.
- ▶ Encourage your child to do fine motor activities, as this will help your child develop good hand skills. For example, art and craft activities, playing with playdough, building with blocks.

Please talk to your occupational therapist if you have any queries about the above information.

Prewriting activity ideas

Pencil and paper activities

Drawing

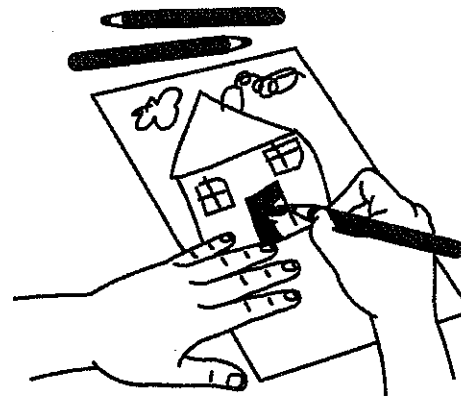
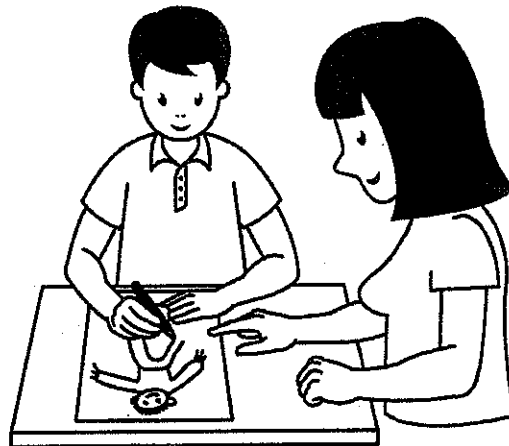
- ▶ Encourage your child to do a drawing and then ask him to tell you about it when he has finished.
- ▶ Draw on a Magnadoodle or Megasketcher.
- ▶ Duo drawing – draw dots or squiggles for your child to join up and make a picture, or draw the outline of a person and get your child to draw the eyes, nose and mouth.
- ▶ Encourage your child to draw a person – if he needs help give him some verbal prompts such as “what about the arms”, “what about hair”, etc.
- ▶ Draw simple pictures such as houses, snakes, flowers, trees, spiders.
- ▶ Make birthday cards or special occasion cards.
- ▶ Make a book.

Copying

- ▶ Show your child how to draw simple lines and shapes and then get him to do it. Start with horizontal and vertical lines then progress to a circle, square and triangle. Then see if your child can draw the shape by himself.
- ▶ If your child is interested in writing his name show him how you write each individual letter and get him to copy one letter at a time. It may be easier to start with capital letters.

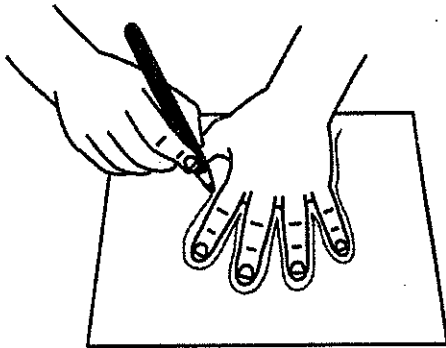
Colouring in

- ▶ Colour in shapes and pictures. Start off with simple pictures then progress to pictures with more detail. Try to colour in within the lines.
- ▶ Draw around your child's body on a large piece of paper and get him to colour in his clothing.

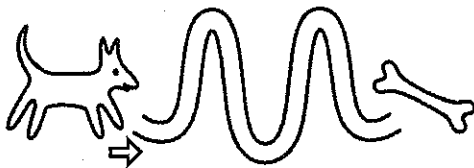
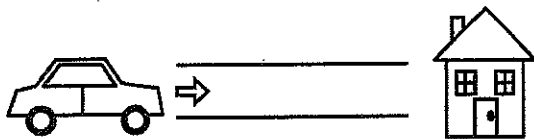


Tracing, mazes and dot to dots

- ▶ Trace around hands and feet.



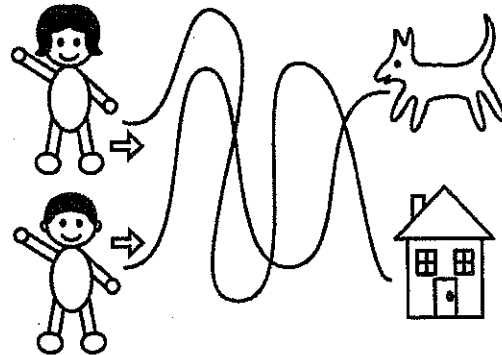
- ▶ Rainbow drawing – draw lines, shapes or simple designs. Ask your child to trace the line using different coloured pencils, textas or chalks.
- ▶ Draw simple pathways for your child to draw along. For example a straight lined road so that a car can get to a house or a dog can get to a bone. Start with straight, wide paths and progress to narrower curving paths.



- ▶ Draw simple mazes for your child. Always start on the left hand side of the paper.



- ▶ Draw single line overlapping pathways for your child to trace over.



- ▶ Try tracing lines, patterns or shapes with a finger then a pencil.
- ▶ Join dots or dashes of shapes, simple pictures or letters of your child's name.

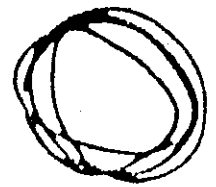
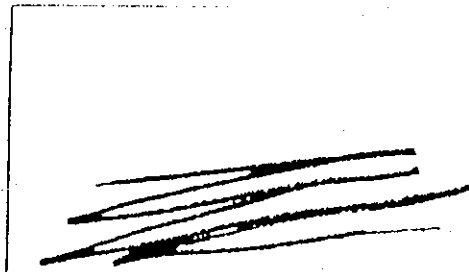


- ▶ Trace around stencil shapes made from cardboard or old ice-cream lids. Then try drawing the shape without the stencil.
- ▶ Do simple dot to dot and mazes from activity books.
- ▶ Try using changeable textas when doing the above activities. Repeated practice will help your child to develop his skills.

Please talk to your occupational therapist if you have any queries about the above activity ideas.

Developmental Progression of Pre-Printing Skills

1. Imitates a Horizontal Scribble Direction
2. Imitates a Vertical Scribble Direction
3. Imitates a Circular Scribble Direction



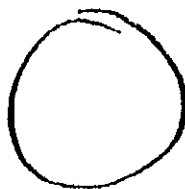
4. Imitates a Horizontal Line



5. Imitates a Vertical Line



6. Imitates a Circle



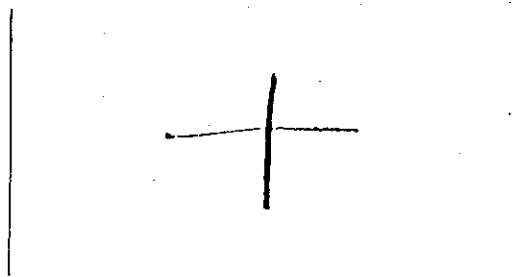
7. Copies a Horizontal Line

8. Copies a Vertical Line

9. Copies a Circle

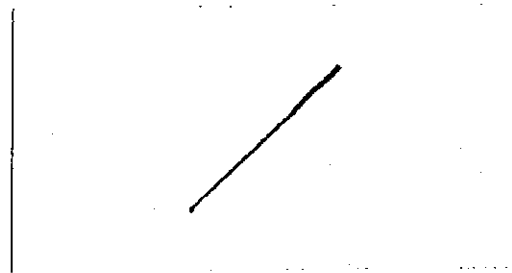
10. Imitates a Cross

11. Copies a Cross



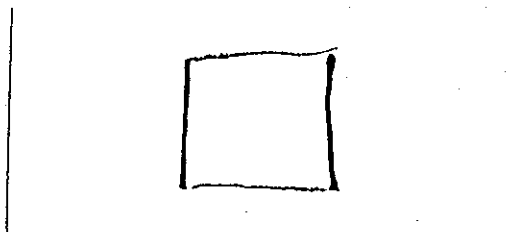
12. Imitates a Right/Left Diagonal Line

13. Copies a Right/Left Diagonal Line



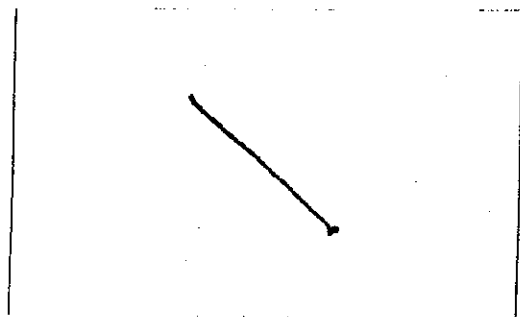
14. Imitates a Square

15. Copies a Square



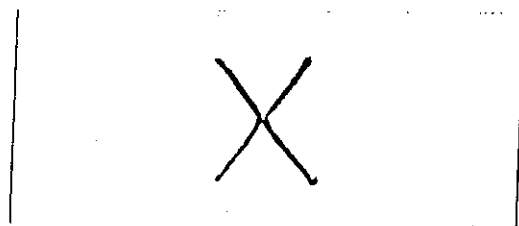
16. Imitates a Left/Right Diagonal Line

17. Copies a Left/Right Diagonal Line



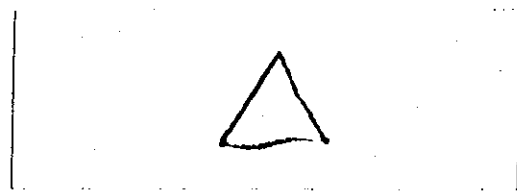
18. Imitates an X

19. Copies an X



20. Imitates a Triangle

21. Copies a Triangle



22. Imitates a Diamond

23. Copies a Diamond

