

*Especially for toddlers with disabilities*

# All...Write

*Scribbling and Drawing*

Most toddlers think scribbling or drawing are fun things to do. Toddlers with disabilities sometimes need extra help to do these activities. This practice guide shows ways to help children who have trouble holding a crayon, chalk, or pencil to use writing tools.

## *What is the practice?*

The idea of this practice is to help a toddler hold a crayon, chalk, or marker to scribble or draw. Think of crayons, chalk, markers, and pencils as tools. When it is easy to hold the tool, it is easier to scribble or draw.

## *What does the practice look like?*

Imagine a toddler who has difficulty holding a crayon or pencil but can hold a big piece of chalk. Also, imagine that this little girl likes imitating her mom who is sitting on the floor writing a shopping list. When her daughter shows interest in writing, Mom brings out their box of crayons and markers. She has wrapped each one in a soft material to make it easier to grip. The toddler happily marks and scribbles on a large pad of paper. Mom points to and talks about the marks her daughter makes.



## *How do you do the practice?*

There are many ways to make it easier for a toddler to scribble or draw. Here are some ideas you may find helpful as you encourage your toddler to learn to write.

- It is easier for a toddler to scribble or draw when she is in a relaxed and stable position. She needs to be able to move her arms and hands freely. This is especially true for a child who is not yet able to sit by herself. A high chair with rolled towels placed around her as supports to help her draw is one idea. Or a specially made support chair can make it easier for her to draw or write.
- Think about a 26-month-old girl who has difficulty holding a crayon or pencil. She likes sitting on her mother's lap while Mom works on the computer. Since she can hold the computer mouse, Mom helps her use the mouse to make marks on the computer screen. Her mother repeatedly points out that a mark shows up on the computer screen when her daughter moves the mouse. The toddler begins to understand that she is seeing her own marks on the screen.
- Making it easier for a toddler to hold a pencil, crayon, or marker is important. Sometimes extra-thick pencils, crayons, or markers are easier to hold. Put rubber grips or tennis balls on crayons or markers to keep them from slipping in your child's hand.
- Using different kinds of writing surfaces can make it easier for a toddler to scribble or draw. For some children it is easier to write on big paper. Tape paper to a table top so it will not move. For some children a slanted surface is easier to use. A 3-inch binder with clips to hold paper on it can make it easier for a child to scribble and draw.

## *How do you know the practice worked?*

- Is your toddler more eager to "write" on her own?
- Does your toddler "work hard" when she is trying to scribble or draw?
- Is your toddler making more and more marks when "writing?"

# Take a look at more scribbling and drawing

## Driveway Drawing

Sammy is a 26-month-old toddler who loves to draw with BIG chalk on the paved driveway at his house. Though he has good head control, he has trouble sitting unsupported. Sammy has a hard time sitting on the ground and leaning over to draw. A triangular foam cushion allows Sammy to lie on his stomach. At this angle, he is stable and his arms can move freely in front. Now Sammy can draw on the sidewalk with BIG chalk, just like his mom!



## A Great Way To Get a Grip

Sophia loves making “pictures” to give her grandmother each Sunday. It’s a fun activity that encourages scribbling and drawing. During the week, her mother sets Sophia at a table with crayons or markers. Sophia chooses what she wants to use. Sophia has trouble holding these writing tools. Her mother has made covers with soft material that she slips on them. Sophia usually makes three or four “pictures.” She and her mother talk about what she drew and her mother writes the words under the “picture.” Sophia chooses the one she likes best, and she greets her grandmother with it on Sunday.



## Joy Stick Writing

Computers not only capture the interest of young children, they can be helpful to young children with disabilities. Nathan has moderate vision and fine motor problems. The computer is helping him learn to write. Nathan’s grandfather adjusts the contrast and brightness of the computer screen so Nathan can see the marks. Grandfather helps him learn about writing by using a joy stick to mark on the computer screen. Nathan has fun taking turns with his grandfather, making marks and letters on the screen.



Especially for toddlers with disabilities

# Book Reading Made Fun for All

Storytelling and Listening

Listening to stories and looking at books are activities most toddlers enjoy. Some toddlers have trouble paying attention. They need help to enjoy and learn from book reading or story telling activities. This practice guide includes ideas to help a toddler with a disability enjoy listening to stories or reading a book.

## What is the practice?

This practice focuses on how to read books or tell stories in ways that include your toddler in these activities. You can change how you read a book or tell a story to encourage your child to join the activity.

## What does the practice look like?

This practice guide includes ideas for *where* you read, *when* you read, and *how* you read a book. These ideas make it easier for your toddler to be part of the activity. Children learn the most from book reading when they are part of telling the story.

## How do you do the practice?

Here are some things you can do to involve your toddler in book reading and storytelling.

- One good way to keep your child involved is to use stories about things your child likes. Think of all your child's interests and pick a book that is about an everyday routine or activity he enjoys.
- Toddlers who are easily distracted will find it easier to look at books in a room where it is quiet. Your child may find it fun to read in a darkened room with a flashlight. The flashlight beam can help focus her interest on the pictures. Your child might need to play with the flashlight before she settles to read.
- Sometimes changing *when* you read makes it easier for your toddler to stay "tuned in" to the story. The best time to read a book or tell a story is when he is rested and alert. If he needs to "get some energy out" first, plan to read after some outside time. When a child is alert, he will pay more attention to things you are doing and saying.
- If your toddler has vision problems, try books with interesting textures and books with clear text and pictures. Big pop-up books might help. If your child wears glasses, be sure she has them on looking at a book.
- One good way to involve your child in reading a book is to ask questions. If he only says a few words, ask him to point to a picture to answer a question. Or ask *yes* or *no* questions that he can answer by nodding his head.
- Toddlers who are distracted by noises around them can listen to stories using headphones. Many toddlers especially like hearing a story when you talk into a microphone.

## How do you know the practice worked?

- Is your toddler listening longer when you read to him?
- Is your toddler excited about reading a book or telling a story?
- Does your toddler recognize familiar pictures or familiar phrases?



# Take a look at more fun with books and stories

## *Stay Focused with Movement and Touch*

Jaime is a 32-month-old toddler with developmental disabilities that make it hard for him to sit and read a book. Jaime's mom wants him to learn about books and stories because later it will help him learn to read. She often chooses to read after Jaime has had time outside to run off some energy. She always has three or four of Jaime's favorite books on hand. If Jaime loses interest in the book they are reading, she has another favorite ready to read. Mom lets Jaime pick the book he wants to read and she reads it quickly. She often asks Jaime to answer questions about what was read, like, "Where did the ball go?" She sometimes asks Jaime to act out some part of the story so he can move around. Often Jaime holds or plays with a small toy that is part of the story while mom reads. She has noticed it helps Jaime stay focused when his hands are busy.

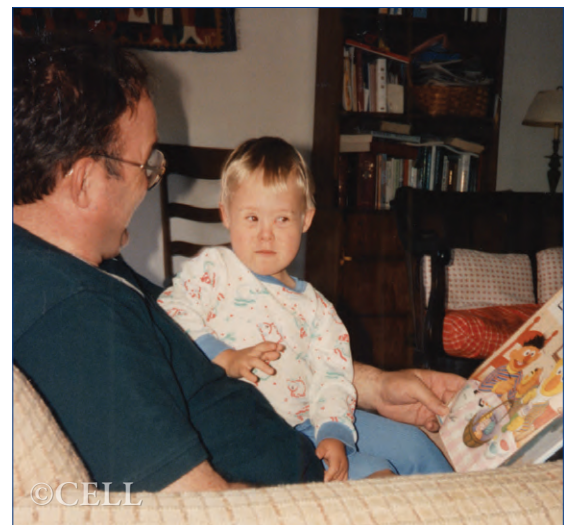


## *Look to the Library for Special Books*

Reading stories helps toddlers learn more words, but it also helps them learn about print and letters. David, who is 36 months old, has a vision problem and wears glasses. His mother uses books with black print on white paper and simple, uncluttered pictures and letters. This helps David begin to learn about print. The children's librarian at the local library helps David's mother find books that are good for him. David also enjoys books on tape and books with texture. When they visit the library, they pick out five or six new books with these special features to enjoy.

## *Taking Our Time for Reading Fun*

Nicky is a 30-month-old toddler with Down syndrome who enjoys reading books with his dad. Nicky's dad knows that young children learn a lot from reading books when they get involved in the reading. He asks Nicky to point to pictures or answer simple questions about the story they are reading. For example, he will ask Nicky to point to which house he likes. He then waits. He knows that Nicky needs extra time to move his arm and point to the house he likes best. When dad asks Nicky a question, he waits and gives Nicky plenty of time to answer it all by himself. Dad's reward for waiting is not just having Nicky answer the question, but seeing Nicky's big smile.



*Especially for preschoolers with disabilities*

# I See Signs

*Symbols and Signs*

Preschoolers enjoy seeing symbols and signs that are familiar. Young children with disabilities sometimes have a hard time recognizing familiar things. This practice guide includes ideas for making symbols and signs easier for preschoolers to recognize.

## *What is the practice?*

This guide makes it easier for preschool children to understand that symbols represent different actions and objects in their world. The practice helps preschoolers link what they see with the symbols that stand for those things.

## *What does the practice look like?*

Preschoolers ask for things with symbols or pictures. A child can ask to play a game by pointing to its symbol that's placed within his reach.

## *How do you do the practice?*

Here are some things you can try to make it easier for your preschooler to communicate using symbols and signs.



- Take photographs of your child doing things that are fun for him. Then let him use the photos to ask to do those things. This helps him link the pictures with the things he likes to do.
- Put drawings of things your child does daily in the rooms where your child does them. He can use the drawings to show you what he wants or wants to do.
- Help your child see symbols or letters clearly. Use pictures, symbols, or letters in a contrasting color on solid, open backgrounds.
- Using picture puzzles can be a fun way for preschoolers to link pictures with objects. Preschoolers who have difficulty holding small objects will find puzzles with extra-big pieces easier to do. Puzzle pieces with knobs can make it even easier for your preschooler to grasp them.
- Use a calendar with pictures to show activities. This is a great way to help your child use pictures to know “what happens next” in the day.

## *How do you know the practice worked?*

- Does your preschooler point to pictures or symbols to “tell” you what she wants?
- Does your preschooler recognize more symbols, signs, pictures, or letters?
- Does your preschooler enjoy playing with picture puzzles?

# Take a look at more fun with symbols and letters

## Snack-Time Signs

Noah likes to have fruit-gum bears or cheese snacks after his nap. Noah's mother has placed pictures of his favorite snacks, at his eye level, on the refrigerator. Because he has visual difficulties, the pictures are large and clear. The objects in the pictures are set against plain backgrounds. His mother has printed the words "bears" and "cheese" in large block print on a light background below each picture. Noah comes into the kitchen and points to the picture of the gummy bears. "Bear" he tells his mother. "OK, you want the gummy bears today," she replies. She reaches into the cabinet and gets him a small package of his favorite treat.



## You Can Puzzle It Out

Marcos and his grandfather are sitting on the floor of the living room with a letter puzzle. The puzzle has knobs on the pieces. That makes them easier for Marcos to handle. "Marcos, can you find the letter *M*?" asks his grandfather. "*M* for *Marcos*." Marcos looks at the pieces and points to a couple of them. "Let's see if those fit here," Grandpa says. He points to the spot for *M*. Marcos picks up a piece by the knob. He tries to place it in the spot. After trying for several seconds, he changes pieces and tries the second one. "Great job, Marcos! You found the *M*. Let's see if we can find the letter *G* for *Grandpa*." Marcos smiles and looks through the pieces again.

## "A Picture's Worth..."

Lissa loves to slide. Going to the playground and playing on the slides is one of her favorite things to do. One afternoon, her mom is busy straightening up the living room. Lissa watches her work for a few minutes and then goes to get the photo cards Mom made for her. Lissa puts on her warm jacket and shows Mom the card with a photo they took at the playground. "Slide," she tells her mom. "Oh, it's time to go to the playground, isn't it?" Mom asks. Lissa nods. "OK, put on your hood let's go!" Lissa claps her hands happily.



*Especially for preschoolers with disabilities*

# It's Story Time

*Book Reading and Storytelling*

Preschool children like to hear stories and look at books. Children with a disability often need help to be part of book reading and storytelling. This guide tells you how you can help your preschool child with a disability enjoy stories and books.

## **What is the practice?**

Change how you tell stories or read books so your child can take part in these activities. Vary how you read a book or tell a story so your child can enjoy being a part of things.

## **What does the practice look like?**

Where, when, and how you read a book or tell a story can help your child to share in it. Your child will get the most from reading or storytelling if he takes part in it. Making simple changes to things will help your preschool child tell stories and begin to read.



## **How do you do the practice?**

- Pick books and stories about topics you know that your child really likes. He'll soon know the stories by heart and will be able to talk about them. Use books with phrases that repeat (*"I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down!"*). Your child can fill in the phrases that he hears again and again.
- Change the stories and books to keep your child's attention. At this age, he may lose interest in "old favorites." He will like new stories and different books.
- Choose a place where there is not a lot going on. That will help your child pay attention to the story. If it is busy at home, go to a library or book store for a cozy, out-of-the-way nook for reading.
- Pick times when you know your child is really alert. Change the time you usually read to him, like bedtime, to a different time, like after a nap.
- Young children like to help turn the pages while an adult reads them a book. You can make it easier to turn pages by putting a dot of hot glue in the upper corner of each page. Let each dot cool. The hard glue dots hold the pages apart enough for him to slip his fingers in to turn them. You can also glue pieces of a foam sponge or small bits of Velcro to the page corners.
- Your preschooler might like to read pop-up books. Help by gluing elastic ponytail holders to the book's movable parts. He can more easily grasp and pull a holder to enjoy the pop-up.
- If your preschool child has vision problems, choose books with clear, uncluttered pictures to read together. Let him hold and touch examples of some of the objects in the story.
- A great way for your child to enjoy books and stories is to ask her questions. This will help her learn to put words together. Pause a moment to let her say any repeated words in the story.
- Preschool children with hearing difficulties can use headphones with stories on tape or DVD. They can have fun hearing the story while turning the pages when they hear the "beep" on the tape.

## **How do you know the practice worked?**

- Does your child listen for a longer time when you read to him?
- Is your child excited to read books or tell stories?
- Does your child want to start over once you've finished a book?
- Does your child take part in the reading by filling in words or anticipating what happens next?

# Take a look at more fun with reading together

## *Super Reading With Headphones*

Auntie Mira cares for Corrie while her parents are at work. One afternoon, Corrie brings her aunt a book she brought from home for their story time. They look at the book's cover. "Oh, today we have a book about berries and making jam," Mira says. "I love blueberries! Do you?" Mira asks Corrie to get her microphone. Happily, Corrie gets the microphone and headphones. They help her hear stories better than with her hearing aids alone. She slips on the headphones as her aunt begins reading to her through the microphone. Mira acts out the dialogue as she reads.



## *Hot Off the Shelf!*

Stevie and his father are in the children's section of the book store looking at a book display. Stevie picks up a book about fire trucks. "Let me see," says his father looking at the book. "That's a cool fire truck!" Stevie does not often use words to communicate, so he nods. His father takes the book to a nearby chair and pulls Stevie onto his lap to look at the pictures. "Let's check out this fire truck," says his father. "Show me where the flashing lights are." Stevie quickly points to lights in the picture. "You're right!" says his father. "And these are the sirens, right Stevie?" he asks as he points to the tires. Stevie smiles and shakes his head "no," then points to the sirens. "Do you think it can go fast?" he asks his son. Stevie eagerly shakes his head up and down and raises his arms in the air. "Yes, it probably does go really fast!" his father agrees.

## *The Cat's Meow!*

David loves animals, especially cats and dogs. One day, David's mother notices him watching the family cat closely as it rests on the couch. Since David has difficulty focusing, his mother picks that quiet time to read him a book about cats. They settle in together on the couch next to the sleeping cat. Mom places the book directly in front of David so it is easier for him to focus on it. As Mom reads the book, she pauses to ask David questions about things he sees in the pictures. After a few minutes of reading, Mom closes the book, knowing that David's attention will soon start to wander.





*Especially for infants with disabilities*

# Let Me Tell You What I Want

*Gestures and Signs*

Most infants use gestures to have people play with them or give them things. Some children with disabilities have difficulty using gestures to interact with others. This practice guide includes ways you can help your child communicate with others by using gestures or signs.

## *What is the practice?*

This practice guide includes different ways young children can interact with you or show you what they want without talking. Gestures and some simple sign language will help a child “tell” others what he wants.

## *What does the practice look like?*

Imagine an infant who opens her mouth to ask for something to eat when she sees food she likes. This kind of action is how children who do not speak “talk” to others. The main idea is to figure out which actions or signs can be used to mean different things. Remember to respond to the child to get her to continue to communicate.

## *How do you do the practice?*

Here are some ways young children can use movements, actions, and pictures to communicate with others.

- “Figure out” what kind of movements and actions your child associates with different people, activities, and materials. Pay special attention to different facial expressions or body movements that “tell you” **yes** or **no**. Or that tell you ***I want*** or ***I do not want*** something. Respond to these movements as if your child is trying to tell you what she wants.
- Most 1-year-old infants use gestures like holding out a hand to ask for things. Infants also use pointing to “tell you” they want something. Encourage your child to use whatever gestures she can make as part of play and other everyday activities.
- If your child really likes bite-sized foods, hold a piece of food in the palm of your hand so she can take it. It won’t take long for her to ask for more by holding out her hand.
- Children who are not talking at all can use sign language to “talk” to others. The best signs are ones that ask for things like a toy, drink, food, or a favorite story. The “Especially for Parents” *Gestures and Signing* infant practice guide includes the kind of signs that are easiest to make.

## *How do you know the practice worked?*

- Is your child more often using movements or gestures to “ask” for things?
- Is your child now using his way of “talking” to interact with others?
- Is your child able to “tell you” what she wants by pointing?



## Take a look at more communication fun



### Signs of the times

Chloe failed a newborn hearing screening test. She was later found to have a serious hearing loss. Her mother started to introduce sign language to Chloe using simple gestures and hand movements. Her first sign was *touching her mouth with her hand* to ask to **eat**. Another sign was *tapping her fingertips together* to ask for **more**. Mom repeats the signs Chloe makes and then responds to her requests. One of Chloe's favorite signs is **play** (*shaking the hand, fingers open, palm facing inward*). This gets her mom to play lap games like *Peek-a-Boo* and *I'm Gonna Get You*.

### My push-button words

Ty likes to play with toys that make different sounds. His father came up with an idea to help Ty tell Dad and Mom what he wants. Dad borrowed a simple communication board from an assistive technology center. The device produces a recorded voice that names things and describes activities when touched. Ty uses the device to ask for things by touching pictures of different objects and actions. He likes getting Mom and Dad to give him things and do things he wants to do.



### My meaning is within reach!

Jayden is a 15-month-old who still is not talking. But he is pretty good at letting others know what he wants by using different hand gestures. His mother and father made a list of things Jayden likes to do. Mom and Dad identified some gestures that he can use to tell them what he wants. Jayden really likes to eat dry cereal. His mom and dad give him more cereal when he points to the cereal box. One of his favorite games is dropping toys into a plastic bucket. Jayden's mom hands him things to drop when he holds out his hand to ask for "more."

*Especially for toddlers with disabilities*

# Look Who's Talking

*Rhymes and Sound Awareness*

Young children like vocalizing or talking. Some toddlers with disabilities do not make many different sounds. This practice guide includes ways to help your children learn to make sounds or "talk" more.

## **What is the practice?**

This practice is about making it easier for toddlers to hear and use sounds to make words. It involves creating opportunities for your child to listen to sounds, and for him to try to make new sounds and rhymes. Hearing words and sounds encourages young children to repeat them.

## **What does the practice look like?**

Sometimes a toddler is only using a few words or seldom repeats the words she hears. Materials like paper towel tubes and simple audio devices like a karaoke machine can be helpful and fun. These devices can encourage your child to speak. If she likes using them, they can help her pay attention. They can also help her understand that sounds and words have meaning.



## **How do you do the practice?**

Here are some things you can try to help your child become a "talker."

- Use any voice recording device (tape recorder, movie camera, etc.) and show your child how to talk into the machine. Using some of her favorite stuffed animals, ask her what sounds they make. Let her listen to her voice from the machine. Then encourage her to tell you what she likes about an animal. Repeat what she says and tell her something you like about her animal. Then play her voice back for her to hear. Stop when she gets tired of the game.
- Make up silly songs with silly sounds. Sing them with your child through the cardboard tubes from rolls of paper towels. You start by making a funny sound in the tube (*la-di-da*). Give your child the tube and ask him to make a sound in the tube. Be sure to give him plenty of time to make a sound, then you repeat it.
- From your library, get a recorded book of rhymes. Listen to it with you child, and say the rhyme while the recording plays. Using one of the rhymes she likes best, encourage her to say it with you as the tape plays it again. Or encourage her to say the rhyme with the tape while doing a little dance with you. The more fun it is the more she is likely to try and copy what you are saying.

## **How do you know the practice worked?**

- Does your child repeat new sounds or say new words?
- Does your child like to play silly sound "games"?
- Does your child make sounds or say words more often?

## Take a look at more rhymes and listening

### *Here, Spot!*

Aala is a 26-month-old toddler who loves her family's two pet dogs. Aala's language is delayed. Her mother looks for ways to encourage Aala to repeat new sounds and words. When it is time to feed the dogs, Aala wants to help put the food in their bowls. First, she must call the dogs' names—Tom and Spot. Aala cannot say the names exactly right. But when she says the names she gets to put the food in the bowls. They take the dogs for a walk. Mom gets Aala to call each of them by name. As they pet the dogs, Aala's mother barks like a dog and encourages Aala to "bark like Tom and Spot."



### *Recordings of Music and Stories*

Gabe is a toddler who was not increasing the number of sounds and words he said. Gabe's aunt, his primary caregiver, had his hearing checked. He did have a mild hearing loss that made it difficult to understand certain sounds. Though he now uses hearing aids, Gabe likes to listen to books on tape with headphones. Often Gabe wants to use headphones to listen to his favorite songs and rhymes too. His aunt sits with him as he listens. When he finishes listening, they look through the book and sing his favorite songs together. Sometimes they make up silly songs or rhymes. Gabe says the first word and his aunt adds the next word or two.

### *Again and Again!*

One of Diego's favorite children's videos has a few simple songs and stories. Diego's dad notices how few new sounds and words his son is making. He uses the video to encourage Diego to use more words. Watching the video with his son, Dad sings the songs with the video to encourage Diego to sing along too. He talks about what the person in the song is doing. At the end of a story, Dad stops the tape and encourages Diego to talk about the story. He asks questions like, "What was the dog doing?" He will then repeat what his son says adding on a little more detail.



*Especially for infants with disabilities*

# Making Noise Is a Lot of Fun

Sound Awareness

Most young children like making lots of noise by squealing or vocalizing. Some children with disabilities need help to make sounds. This practice guide includes ways to encourage young children who have difficulty vocalizing to make sounds. Children are more likely to vocalize when their parents respond to their cooing and squealing by smiling and imitating their sounds.

## *What is the practice?*

This practice will make it easier for a young child to make sounds. Make it easier for a child to make sounds and listen to what he is hearing with these simple things.

## *What does the practice look like?*

Imagine a young child who cannot make sounds loud enough to hear herself or for others to hear. You can use devices like sound amplifiers, computers, and karaoke machines to make a child's sounds louder. Making her own cooing or other infant sounds "louder" will likely capture your baby's interest!

## *How do you do the practice?*

Here are some things you can try to help your child make "lots of noise."

- Start with a comfortable and quiet place so there are no distractions. Use whatever sound amplification device you have to show your child how to make sounds "louder." Encourage your child to make sounds by making sounds yourself that you know your child already makes. Turn the activity into a "my turn/your turn" game—you say something and then your child says something.
- Record whatever sounds your child makes. Play them back to him a little louder to get him to listen and repeat his own sounds. Sometimes it encourages a child to "say more" if you have him wear headphones while listening to or making sounds.
- Listening to a favorite nursery rhyme will often get a child to make different sounds. Computer software that has cartoon characters reciting nursery rhymes often increases a child's interest in making sounds.
- Try voice-activated devices that turn on favorite music or a video when sounds are made into a microphone. The more your child likes the music or video, the more she will make sounds to make something fun happen.
- Gently bouncing a child on your knees or a bed while making familiar sounds will help her vocalize. Play the bouncing game where sound echoes to get the child to repeat what she hears.

## *How do you know the practice worked?*

- Are your child's sounds becoming easier to hear?
- Does your child try to say or repeat sounds more often?
- Does your child seem to enjoy saying and listening to sounds?



# Take a look at more FUN with sounds

## *Sing Out!*

Julia makes sounds like *ah-ah* and *goo* but she is hard to hear. She especially likes it when her mother or father repeats the sounds she makes. Julia's father has found a fun way to make his daughter's vocalizations louder. Dad uses a children's karaoke machine Julia's brother received as a gift. He places the microphone near Julia's mouth to be sure her sounds are "picked up." The first couple of times she hears her own voice, Julia is a little startled. But soon, just the sight of the karaoke machine gets her excited. Louder and louder sounds pour out of her the more she gets to "sing."



## *I Made It Happen!*

Damon is a 12-month-old child who makes few sounds and not very often. His mother and Damon's teacher have come up with a way to get him to make more sounds. Damon loves lap games like peek-a-boo. Mom places him on her lap and begins the game. Damon crows with glee when Mom uncovers her face and says, "Peek-a-boo!" Mom asks Damon if he wants to play some more. She waits patiently until he makes a sound, then the game begins again. Damon has figured out that his voice makes the fun happen again and again.

## *Turn Up the Sound*

Emilio likes to "sing along" when he sees his older brother use earphones to listen to music. Emilio has a hearing loss, but his brother's loud singing catches Emilio's attention. Mom has found a way to use Emilio's interest in his brother's activity to get Emilio to listen to and be part of nursery rhymes. She uses a microphone to "turn up the sound" of her voice and a head set—just like his big brother uses to listen to music—for Emilio to listen to her say rhymes. As she recites a nursery rhyme, Emilio says some words or makes some sounds. They go back and forth. Mom says something, Emilio says something. He is now saying more and more.



*Especially for infants with disabilities*

# Mark My Word

*Marking and Scribbling*

Shortly after their first birthdays, most infants show an interest in marking and scribbling. Children with disabilities sometimes need extra help to do this activity. Make it easier for a child to hold a magic marker or crayon to mark or scribble using these ideas.

## *What is the practice?*

Holding a crayon or magic marker comfortably and securely makes it easier for a child to use it. This practice guide includes ways to make it easy for a child to mark or scribble.

## *What does the practice look like?*

Babies often become interested in holding a pen or crayon when they see someone else drawing or writing. Imagine a young child sitting on her mother's lap while mom makes a shopping list. The child reaches for the pen to "help." Mom knows her daughter has difficulty wrapping her fingers around small objects. She gently places her daughter's fingers around the pen so she can "write." While holding her daughter's hand, she provides just enough support for her to make marks on the paper.



## *How do you do the practice?*

There are many ways to make it easier for a young child to mark or scribble. Here are some ideas you may find helpful to encourage your child to start to become a "writer."

- It is easier for a child to draw when she is in a comfortable position. This is especially true for young children who are not yet able to sit upright by themselves. Put pillows or rolled towels on each side for support while in a high chair. This will make it easier for a child to freely make marks and scribbles.
- Make it easier for a child to mark or scribble by using different kinds of writing tools. Thick bingo markers and rubber stamps with stamp pads are fun and easy to grasp. Be sure they have non-toxic ink. Add a rubber grip or a foam hair curler to a crayon or pen. This way it will not slip out of the child's hand.
- A change of writing surface can make it easier for a child to mark or scribble. Try taping paper to a table top so it will not move. Hold a small white board in a slanted position to make it easier for the child to scribble. Adjustable slant boards can make it much easier for a child to mark and scribble.
- Young children with motor control problems often have difficulty keeping a crayon or pen on a piece of paper. A small whiteboard with raised edges will help make "writing" easier. You can glue small pieces of  $\frac{1}{2}$ " x  $\frac{1}{2}$ " balsam wood around the sides of the board to make edges.

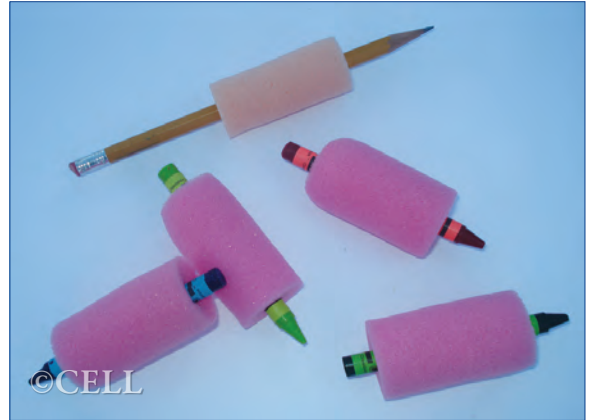
## *How do you know the practice worked?*

- Is your child more eager to mark or scribble on her own?
- Does your child "work hard" when she is trying to make marks or scribbles?
- Is your child making different kinds of marks when trying to "write"?

## Take a look at more scribbling and writing fun

### *Snack-Time Signs*

Megan is a 14-month-old child with cerebral palsy. She is very interested in trying to use crayons to make marks on paper. The trouble is, the crayons keep falling out of her hand. Her mother got an idea from another parent who used foam curlers to help her child mark and scribble. Mom pushed six crayons in Megan's favorite colors through the holes in the soft tubes from some plastic curlers. Now Megan finds them simple to hold. It made Megan's interest in scribbling a much more successful activity.



### *Making Our Mark Together*

William has just begun to learn to sit with some help. He especially likes to sit on his mother's lap while Mom is doing crossword puzzles. William has started to reach for and grab Mom's pen. He bangs it on the paper, making marks. He gets so excited that he starts to lose his balance and falls to the side. Mom sits William on a pillow on her lap. This provides her son just enough support to sit without falling. Then William makes more marks. He really looks forward to this parent-child activity.

### *This White Board's Just Right for Me!*

Sam really likes to pretend to write, but he has trouble managing the hand movements needed to mark or scribble. Mom and Dad use a white board with raised edges to make it easier for Sam to make marks. Putting the white board on a slanted angle makes it even easier for him to scribble. Sam especially likes it when he makes lots of different colors, using all his wipe-away markers.





*Especially for infants with disabilities*

# Picture This

*Symbols and Signs*

Young children especially enjoy seeing pictures of people and things they like. Some children with disabilities have difficulty recognizing even familiar pictures. This practice guide also includes ideas for helping a child use pictures to tell someone what she wants.

## *What is the practice?*

This practice will help your child recognize people, objects, and actions in pictures. Using pictures as part of everyday activities will make it easy for a child to tell you he notices things.

## *What does the practice look like?*

This practice uses pictures of people and things a young child is familiar with to communicate recognition. Take diaper changing for example. A mom puts a picture of herself changing her baby's diaper on the wall by the changing table. While changing her baby's diaper, she points to and talks about the photo. The baby smiles and gets excited. Mom responds, showing how pleased she is about her daughter's effort to communicate.

## *How do you do the practice?*

Try these things to make it easy for a child to show you she recognizes pictures of people and things.

- Take pictures of people, things, and actions your child knows and likes. Try non-glossy pictures or photographs that have little or no glare. Show the pictures to her as part of activities like looking at a book. This will encourage her to “tell you” she knows what she sees by vocalizing, getting excited, or making gestures.
- If your child has trouble seeing, use large pictures or drawings to make it easier for her to see them. Try using real objects rather than pictures to make it easier for the child to recognize familiar things.
- Make a homemade book of four or five pictures of familiar people. “Make up” a story about the people as you show your child the pictures. Try using pictures of your child's favorite toys.
- Use pictures of activities like eating, drinking, and bath time to show your child what is about to happen. It will not take very long for her to know what is about to happen.



## *How do you know the practice worked?*

- Is your child beginning to recognize more and more pictures?
- Is your child “telling” you what she sees in pictures more often?
- Does your child “know” what is about to happen next when she sees familiar pictures?

## Take a look at more fun with symbols and signs

### *Snack-Time Signs*

It is hard for Christopher to tell someone he is hungry or thirsty, or when he wants to do something. His mother uses four different sets of “picture cards” for the kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, and living room (play area). The picture cards for the kitchen have pictures of foods, drinks, and Christopher eating and drinking different things. Mom shows him the pictures and says, “Show me what you want.” Christopher points to or touches a picture. Mom says the name of what he is asking for (for example, “Do you want milk to drink?”). Christopher has gotten better at asking for things. He also tries to repeat the words his mother uses.



### *“Ruff, Ruff!” says the dog.”*

Hannah just had her first birthday. She sometimes gets confused and mixes up things she sees. Her mother and father have found a fun way to help Hannah know the differences between things. Using sounds with pictures helps Hannah see how pictures mean real things (like “meow” for cat and “woof” for dog). Mom and Dad show Hannah a book of animal pictures. They name what is on a page and say the sounds the animal makes. This has helped Hannah see the differences among animals.

### *“A Picture’s Worth...”*

Nora is a 12-month-old child with low vision. Mom uses a fun way to help Nora notice the differences between everyday objects. At meal times, for example, Nora picks the right object to ask for something to eat or drink. Mom sits Nora in her high chair and asks, “Do you want something to drink?” She then puts the baby’s cup and bowl on her high chair tray and says, “Give me your cup.” Nora touches both the bowl and cup to “figure out” which one to give her mother. She has learned to recognize many different objects by doing these activities.



*Especially for infants with disabilities*

# Show Me the Funny

*Stories and Listening*

Most children enjoy looking at books with pictures of fun and interesting things. Some children who have sensory or developmental difficulties need extra help to benefit from looking at books. This practice guide includes ideas to make it easier for a young child with a disability to enjoy book reading.

## *What is the practice?*

This practice is about changing the way book reading is done so an infant can participate in this activity. Changing or modifying how you show a child a book can encourage him to be part of the book-reading activity.

## *What does the practice look like?*

*Where*, *when*, and *how* you read a book make it easier for your child to be part of the activity. Infants benefit most from looking at books when they see pictures of familiar things. The more actively involved your child is in book reading, the better.



## *How do you do the practice?*

Here are some things you can do to involve your child in book reading.

- Be sure the book is about something your child likes and includes pictures of fun and interesting things. Think of all your child's interests and pick a book that is about what she likes or prefers.
- Children are sometimes easily distracted. Encourage your child to look at books when there is not much else going on around him. Be sure the TV and radio are turned off. Show your child a book in a quiet place. The fewer distractions, the better.
- Changing when you read to your child can make it easier for him to stay "tuned in" to the activity. It's best to read books together when your child is alert. When a child is alert, he will pay more attention to the book you are showing him.
- Choose a book with large pictures if your child has vision problems or difficulty focusing on the pages. When looking at a book with a child who wears glasses, be sure he has them on. Try books printed on non-glossy paper so the pictures are easier to see. Try books that have only one picture on a page with no other background to reduce distractions.
- Try pointing to the pictures in a book while you describe or talk about what she is looking at. Be sure to hold the book in a position that makes it easy to see where you are pointing.
- Does your child have difficulty sitting or holding her head up? Try holding her on your lap so she can look at the book held in front of her.

## *How do you know the practice worked?*

- Is your child looking longer at a book you show him?
- Is your child excited about looking at a book or listening to a story?
- Does your child recognize familiar pictures in a book?

# Take a look at more FUN reading together

## ***Read all about me!***

Lili is an on-the-go 11-month-old who is interested in everything—but not for very long! One thing that seems to keep her attention is pictures of herself and her brother and sister. The best pictures are ones showing things Lili really likes to watch or do. Her mother has made books for each child with about 10 photographs showing them doing their favorite activities. Lili loves to play in the bathtub. Her own special book, *My Bath Is Fun*, has photos of Lili getting into the tub. Other photos show her splashing in the water, playing with bubbles, and doing other fun bathtime things. Mom tells Lili her story, “making a big deal” of everything Lili is doing in each photo. This keeps the little girl’s attention for a long time.



## ***Stick around for a real page-turner!***

Nico loves sitting on his mother’s lap while she reads and shows him his favorite books. He reaches for the books and tries to turn the pages. Nico’s motor problems make it hard for him to lift one page at a time. His mother glues wooden craft sticks to each page of his board books in a stair-step manner. This makes it easy for Nico to turn the pages. He has become especially good at putting his fingers under the stick and turning to the next page.

## ***All the better to see you with!***

Nine-month-old Micah has difficulty seeing. He holds things close to his face to see what he is holding. Micah really enjoys having his mother read to him. But he finds it hard to see the pictures in some storybooks. Any story about animals always captures Micah’s attention. His mother borrowed some oversized picture books about animals from their local library. The pictures are just the right size for Micah to see. He enjoys getting to listen to a story and see pictures of each animal his mother is reading about.



*Especially for preschoolers with disabilities*

# Sounds Good to Me

*Rhymes and Sound Awareness*

Young children enjoy making sounds with their voices, whether they are saying words or just making sounds for fun. Sometimes, preschoolers with disabilities need help to make sounds and words. If your preschooler has a hard time making words loud enough to hear, this guide will show how to help him talk louder.

## *What is the practice?*

The practice is to help your preschool child make words that he and others can hear. Making and hearing words helps preschool children learn to say and repeat the words that they hear around them.

## *What does the practice look like?*

Some preschool children with disabilities cannot make words loud enough to be heard. Using simple things that make words louder can help a child hear herself and be heard by others. These machines are often made for young children and can be found in many stores. They include microphones, speech amplifiers, computer games that increase sound, and home karaoke machines.

## *How do you do the practice?*

Here are some ways that you can help your child make words that she and others can hear:

- Choose a machine that you think your child will enjoy using. Some children like talking into tape recorders and playing their words back on high volume. Other children have fun talking into microphones on home-karaoke machines and hearing their words coming from the TV.
- Pick a quiet place so your child will not be distracted while making words. Show her how to use the machine to make words that can be heard. Have her say words she already knows into the machine. Make a game of it; take turns saying a word and then have your preschooler say a word. Preschoolers enjoy rhyme play, so use songs with rhyming sounds and take turns saying each line with your child.
- Record words your child says and play the words back so she can hear herself. It may help her to hear if she wears headphones while listening to the words. By hearing her own words, your preschooler will likely be excited and want to say more words.
- Find recorded nursery rhymes or stories that your child likes and encourage her to “talk” along with the recording. If it has words she already says, she may try to say some new ones, too. Computer games or “sing along” DVDs that show favorite characters as they play may get your child to say words.
- Use players that play your child’s favorite music or video when she talks with a microphone. When your preschooler likes the music or video, she is likely to repeat the words. Songs like “Wheels on the Bus” encourage preschoolers to say words and make sound effects. Singing is a fun way to help children be confident in saying words out loud.
- Play with sounds using empty paper towel rolls or homemade or purchased megaphones to amplify your voices.



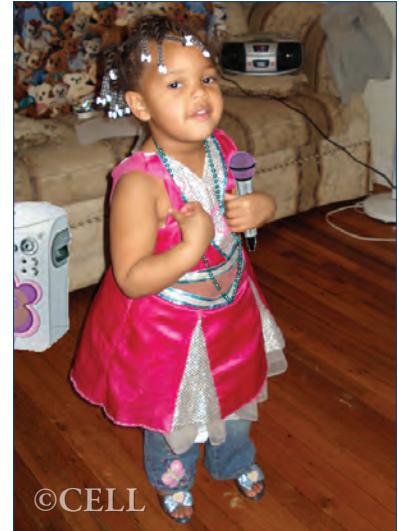
## *How do you know the practice worked?*

- Does your preschooler try to say more words?
- Does your child enjoy playing sound games?
- Is your child making words that others can hear?

# Take a look at more fun with rhymes and sounds

## *I Hear Myself Singing!*

Leesa has trouble saying words loud enough to hear. She has become shy about trying to speak to others. Leesa loves to listen to music and play dress-up as a princess. Her mother bought a children's karaoke machine with princess characters on it and set it up. Leesa happily watched the princess videos on the television as the music played. Her mother showed her how to say words into the microphone. Leesa danced around excitedly when she heard her voice come through the television speakers. She spent the rest of the afternoon saying different words and "singing" along with the princesses in the video. She couldn't wait to perform for the rest of the family when they came home later that day.



## *Crank It Up!*

It is a challenge for Sam to put enough energy into making his voice loud enough to hear. Sam is an active child with lots of imagination. His father bought him a voice recorder that's small enough for him to easily hold. Sam can record his voice and play it back with the volume on "high." Now others can hear what he says. Sam plays with his cars on the living room rug with his brother. He records noises for the cars. "Vrooommm," "Beep, Beep," "Mmmm." Sam plays the sounds and words on high volume so his brother can hear them as they roll the cars along. Sam adds new sound effects as he goes.

## *"Hi, Daddy!"*

David watches his mother talk to his Dad through the microphone on the computer. Mom notices his curiosity and pulls David onto her lap in front of the computer. "Daddy is away on his business trip," she tells David. "He is far away, but he can hear me when I talk to him with this microphone. I can hear him talk to me, too. Why don't you say something to Daddy?" David shyly puts his mouth right next to the microphone. He says the word "Hi." "Well, hi, David!" exclaims his dad. David is happily surprised to hear his dad's voice through the computer speakers. He leans toward the microphone again. He is more confident this time. He says, "Hi, Daddy!" His dad tells David how happy he is to get to hear him and talk with him.



*Especially for toddlers with disabilities*

# Speaking Without Words

*Talking and Listening*

Most toddlers use words to get adults to give them the things they want. Sometimes toddlers with disabilities are not able to use words to talk. This practice guide includes different ways toddlers can communicate with others without speaking.

## *What is the practice?*

This practice guide is about ways to help toddlers interact with others and ask for things without using spoken words. This is called alternative and augmentative communication.

## *What does the practice look like?*

Toddlers can communicate in different ways. A toddler can hold up her cup to say she wants more milk. A toddler can point down to ask his dad to help him down from his high chair. A toddler can show her dad a picture of a swing to “say” she wants to go outside to swing. These non-speaking toddlers are “asking” for what they want without using speech. The main idea is to encourage your toddler to “talk” in the way that works best for him.

## *How do you do the practice?*

Here are some ways young children speak without talking.

- Young toddlers who use few words often communicate by pointing to or showing the adult what they want. For example, a child might point to juice when wanting a drink or get a ball when wanting to play. Be sure to notice, say the word, and respond to these requests whenever possible.
- Young toddlers who are able to move their hands and fingers can use sign language to “talk” to others. A child can learn new signs that increase the number of things he can “talk” about. To get your toddler to use more “words,” use signs for his favorite activities, people, and objects. Be sure to say the word when your child signs it.
- Pictures of favorite foods, toys, and people make it possible for a young toddler to “talk” without speaking. Place a few picture cards in various parts of your house. Let your child show or point to a picture to let you know what she wants. When your child points to a picture, name what’s in the picture. Encourage, but don’t force, her to say it too. Regularly add new pictures for her.
- Simple switch devices that “say” one or two words when touched can make it easy for a child to “talk.” Words like “yes,” “no,” or names of favorite toys or people, are a good way to start.



## *How do you know the practice worked?*

- Is your child asking for things more often?
- Is your child learning new “words” to ask for what he wants?
- Is your child using this way of “talking” to interact with others?

# Take a look at more communication fun

## Let's Talk About Toys

Briscoe was born prematurely. As a young toddler, he does not use many words yet. His mom decided to paste pictures of his favorite toys on a picture board. She started with one picture of his favorite toy tractor. She kept showing him the picture when handing him the tractor. She put the board in the living room where Briscoe plays, so he would see it often. Every time she saw him playing with his tractor, she showed him the picture. One day Briscoe saw the tractor picture and took it to his mom. She immediately found the toy tractor, said “tractor,” and gave the toy to Briscoe. Since this happened, they have slowly been adding new pictures of other favorite things to the picture board.



## Favorite Manual Signs

Lee is a 35-month-old toddler who uses only two or three words. But he knows 10 to 15 signs for his favorite things and people. Since he loves his family's cat, Clarice, he and his dad have a special “sign” for Clarice. In the morning when they feed the cat, Lee helps his dad. Dad encourages Lee to combine two signs (words) by asking him questions that he can answer with signs he knows. Lee's signs include **food**, **Clarice**, **water**, **bowl**, **eat**, and **get**. Dad asks Lee, “What do we need first?” Lee signs back, “Food.” His dad continues, “Where does Clarice's food go?” and Lee signs, “bowl.” Dad responds with another question, “Your bowl or Clarice's bowl?” Lee laughs and signs, “Clarice.”

## Device Is Nice

Pablo is a 35-month-old toddler who does not use any words to communicate. He has a simple adaptive communication device that says words or simple phrases when a switch is touched. He likes to have his mother read him stories. Pablo's device is set so he can make it say “yes,” “no,” “turn the page,” “my turn,” and “read more.” When they are ready to read, Pablo's mother makes sure the device is close by. She gets three or four of her son's favorite books and asks him which one he wants to read. Pablo points to his first choice. Mom begins reading the story. She stops often to ask Pablo questions, and he answers by pushing labeled pads on the voice box. When they finish the first book, Mom says, “I guess we are finished reading.” Pablo quickly responds with “read more” from his device and points to another book to read.





*Especially for preschoolers with disabilities*

# Talk to Me

*Talking and Listening*

Most young children use words to get others to play with them or to get things they want. Some preschoolers with disabilities are not able to use words to talk with others. This practice guide includes different ways preschool children can communicate with others without speaking words.

## *What is the practice?*

This is about helping young children ask for things and communicate without saying words. This is called alternative and augmentative communication.

## *What does the practice look like?*

Imagine a preschooler who makes the motion of flipping over a pancake when he wants to have pancakes for breakfast. Or a child who shows a picture of a book to ask to be read to. Being able to say what he wants without speaking words is how a non-speaking child talks to others. The main idea is to find ways your preschooler can tell you what he wants to “say” without speaking words.



## *How do you do the practice?*

Here are some ways you can help your preschooler speak without talking.

- Place pictures of his favorite things in different parts of your house, or in a homemade book. Your child can use them to ask for or to “talk” about things.
- Make small laminated pictures for community outings and place the pictures on a key ring. The key ring can be clipped to a bag, belt loop, or stretchy wristband. Then your child can take it everywhere.
- Preschool children who can move their hands and fingers can use sign language to “talk” to others. The best signs are easy for your child to make. He can use them to ask for things he wants, such as toys, food, or stories.
- A communication board with everyday pictures lets your child show you what he wants to say. Use a few pictures if your preschooler is young. Depending on your child’s skills, you can use a few pictures, as many as 15 to 20. You can change or add pictures as your child’s interests change.
- Devices that say words at the touch of a button make it easier for your child to “talk” and tell what he wants. Some devices let you record a phrase so that your child can then “say” it. There are many kinds of devices available for young children. Your child can use the device to take part in shared reading or to repeat a phrase in a story.

## *How do you know the practice worked?*

- Is your child asking for things more often?
- Is your child using his way of “talking” to speak with others?
- Is your child better at communicating what he wants?

# Take a look at more fun with talking and listening

## Tell Me With Signs

David has difficulty speaking so he uses signs and gestures to “talk” with his family. One day, while he’s downtown with his mom, he sees a puppy in the pet store. Excitedly, David pulls Mom by the hand to the store window. He points at the puppy and makes the sign for “dog.” “Yes, David, that’s a really cute dog,” says Mom. He pulls her again by the hand toward the entry to the store. “Wait,” she says. “Tell me what you want instead of pulling me.” David lets go of her hand and points to the store doorway. He makes the signs for “in” and “dog.” “I see,” says Mom. “You want to go *in!*” Together they go into the pet store to see the puppy up close.



## Keeping Up With Conversations

Delia is a creative preschooler who is unable to say words. Her parents make sure that she can talk as much as her sisters by using a speech box. Delia’s parents program her speech box so that it communicates lots of her wants and needs. When the family is having dinner, Delia joins the dinner-time conversation by pressing picture buttons on the device. She is a full member of her family’s conversation. As the family talks about new topics, Delia’s parents add more words to her speech box so that she can keep up with her sisters.

## Making a Point With Pictures

One Saturday morning when he comes in from playing, Javier’s mother asks if he is thirsty. Javier nods “yes.” His mother asks him what he wants to drink. Javier runs to the kitchen table for his homemade picture book. He flips to the picture of orange juice and shows it to his mother. “You want orange juice?” his mother asks. Javier nods “yes.” His mother opens the refrigerator and sees that there is no more orange juice. “I’m sorry, Javier,” she says. “We don’t have any orange juice left. We have apple juice and milk. Which would you like?” Javier thinks about this for a second and points to the picture of apple juice.



*Especially for toddlers with disabilities*

# That Sign Means 'Ice Cream'

*Symbols and Letters*

Toddlers enjoy looking at pictures and symbols. Children with disabilities sometimes have trouble learning that symbols and pictures stand for things they see every day. This practice guide includes ideas to help toddlers understand that pictures and symbols stand for real objects or people.

## *What is the practice?*

This practice guide is about making it easy for toddlers to learn that pictures or symbols represent familiar objects. This practice helps a toddler link a favorite food, a banana he wants, with a picture of a banana.

## *What does the practice look like?*

The focus of this practice guide is to help a child learn that objects, pictures, and symbols have a meaning. This can be done by helping your child learn that a picture stands for a real object. Think about a toddler who does not seem to notice pictures or symbols, but who especially likes ice cream. Place a picture of ice cream on the refrigerator. When you get him ice cream, say the words "ice cream," and point to the picture on the refrigerator. Show him the ice cream in the bowl and the ice cream in the picture to help him understand.



## *How do you do the practice?*

Try some of these ways to make it easier for your child to communicate using pictures and symbols:

- For a toddler to understand that a picture has meaning, show him a real object along with its image. If your child has a vision problem be sure to use a clear, uncluttered picture with contrast.
- Take pictures of your toddler doing things she thinks are fun. Use the pictures to have her "ask" to do the activities. Encourage her to show you the picture to get what she wants. Also encourage her to use words to ask for the activity. As she makes the link between pictures and her activities, change the photographs and use a drawing of the object. Help her ask for the activity with the drawing and her words.
- Make a homemade book with four or five pictures of familiar people, toys, or other favorite objects. Have several of the real objects with you when you are looking at the book with your child. Ask your child to point to the real person or pick up the real object and then find its picture.
- You can help your toddler understand that an object (cracker) can be represented in pictures. You show the picture of his favorite cracker on the box and say "cracker." Then give him a cracker. Repeat this each time you give him a cracker. When he begins to understand, give him some new information. Show him the cracker box and point to the word "cracker" on the box. Point and tell him that the first letter in the word "cracker" is "C."

## *How do you know the practice worked?*

- Is your toddler using pictures or drawings to "tell" you what she wants to do?
- Is your toddler recognizing new symbols or pictures?
- Is your toddler using pictures or drawings to ask other people for what he wants?

# Take a look at more symbols and letters

## *Making a List*

David's mom wants to help her 30-month-old son learn that symbols and signs have meaning. She knows that for David to learn to read, he will need to know that symbols have meanings. Mom has been pointing out the signs for David's favorite stores. His learning delay makes it hard for him to understand that pictures and symbols in the community have meaning. Mom takes a picture of the store signs at his three favorite places. His favorite stores are a toy store, a pet store, and an ice cream shop. When they go to one of the stores, she shows him the picture and the sign on the store. David learns that these pictures represent his favorite places. After he gets the idea, Mom asks David where he wants to go and she shows him the pictures of the signs. David chooses which store he wants to visit.



## *Point It Out*

For some children with vision problems, it may be hard to learn that symbols, signs, and letters have meaning. Zane's grandmother has been reading books with uncluttered, clear pictures to him since he was six months old. Recently, she realized that Zane may not be learning that the letters on the page represent the words he hears. She selects some of his books with textured letters and clear pictures. When his grandmother reads, she points to the letters and helps Zane touch them as she reads.

## *I'm Having a Ball!*

Carlos is a 34-month-old toddler with development delays who really likes what he likes. What he likes most are different kinds of balls and his baseball glove. His mom used his interest to help Carlos learn that pictures and words can represent the things he likes. Mom cut out pictures of a baseball glove and the balls her son has (baseball, beach ball, kick ball, etc.). When Carlos wants a ball, Mom shows him the pictures and asks him to point to what he wants. Mom gives him the ball or glove and shows him how the picture looks like what he is holding.



*Especially for preschoolers with disabilities*

# Write On

*Drawing and Writing*

Most young children think it's fun to draw and write. A preschool child with a disability may need extra help to do these things. This guide shows ways to help a child who has a hard time holding things how to use writing tools.

## ***What is the practice?***

Make it easier for a child to hold a pencil, crayon, or other tool to draw or write. The easier it is to hold the tool, the easier a child can use it.

## ***What does the practice look like?***

Think of a child who can't hold small things like crayons, but who can hold big things like cups. Help her learn to draw or write using large-handled paint brushes or pencils made wide for her hand.



## ***How do you do the practice?***

Here are some ideas to help a preschool child draw or write:

- Your child can hold a pencil, pen, or other tool when she is comfortable and stable. If she has a hard time sitting alone, place pillows or towels on each side of her. Secure in her seat, she can pay attention to drawing and writing.
- Give your child big pencils or crayons to write letters and draw. Add rubber grips or foam hair curlers to a crayon or pencil. It will not slip out of her hand. Markers with square barrels, instead of round ones, do not roll and will stay where she sets them down.
- Tape sheets of paper to the table top so they do not move. Let your child make a book by making letters on the paper. She can draw pictures for each page. Staple the pages together or tie them with string. You can also tape sheets of paper to a wall or door to provide a vertical writing experience.
- Hold a small white board so it's easy for your child to use markers or crayons. A slant board, or a 3-inch binder turned sideways, are angled surfaces. They can make it easier for your child to draw and write.
- A fun activity is making a greeting card for someone. Use big crayons or markers that are easy to hold and let her draw on a note card or paper. You can print her message in words under her drawing. Making e-cards on a computer is also fun for young children.
- Let your child write with her fingers in sand, shaving cream, or finger paint to try "writing."

## ***How do you know the practice worked?***

- Does your child try to "write" on her own?
- Does your child "work hard" to draw or write?
- Is your child making letters or trying to make letters when writing?

## Take a look at more fun with drawing and writing

### Word Walks

Miguel and his older brother sometimes go for “word walks” in their neighborhood with their parents. Since Miguel has limited mobility, his brother likes to pull him in a wagon. The brothers have fun trying to find words on things in the neighborhood. Miguel uses easy-to-grasp crayons to make marks and scribbles on the paper on his clipboard. He “writes” many of the words he sees. Whether the words are on mailboxes or service trucks, Miguel and his brother add new words every day.



### “Free Rein” Writing

Julie likes horses. One afternoon, she and her mother go to visit her uncle’s stable. Julie has fun petting the horses and feeding them oats. She leaves the stable happy and excited. When they get home, Julie’s mother asks if she wants to make a book about her visit. Julie eagerly agrees. Julie has difficulty with fine motor control. Her mom puts a foam curler around a pencil so Julie can easily grip it. She tapes a large sheet of paper to the table so that it won’t slide. Julie draws and makes marks on the paper as she tells her mother the story she’s “writing.” Her mom prints Julie’s words at the bottom of the page.

### Get on the Stick!

Traycee and her family are at the park. Traycee is a 3-year-old who has trouble drawing or writing with a pen or pencil. While she’s playing on the baseball field, Traycee draws large circles in the soft clay with a big stick. Mom notices what Traycee’s doing. She leans over next to Traycee and makes the letter *T* in the clay. “Look!” she says. “It’s the first letter in your name. *T* is for *Traycee!*” Traycee watches her mom and copies what she does. She makes broad strokes with the stick. Traycee is really proud that she can draw the letter *T*.

