

Especially for parents of infants!

Infant Finger Drawing

Scribbling and Drawing

Before a child can mark with a crayon or pencil, he can use his fingers to draw and “write.” This handout is filled with ideas for helping your baby learn pre-writing skills.

What is the practice?

A lot of fun activities can help infants learn to use their fingers to draw, paint, and scribble. These activities will help your child use his fingers to make interesting marks and scribbles.

What does the practice look like?

This type of writing happens any time your child uses his fingers to scribble or mark. Babies running their fingers through pudding or squeezing whipped cream between their fingers are examples of pre-writing activities.



How do you do the practice?

Finger paints aren't the only way to finger draw. All sorts of unusual “media” are perfect for finger drawing. Among them are dry rice, water, whipped cream, pudding, sand, play dough, and flour or cornmeal. Recipes for infant-safe, homemade “finger paints” can be found on the Web by searching **homemade finger paints**.

- Figure out which finger-drawing materials will be most interesting to your baby. “Messy” infants might love playing with pudding or whipped topping. “Tidy” infants are more likely to play happily with play dough or water. The more fun and enjoyable the activity is to your child, the more he will benefit from the activity.
- Find a place to do finger-drawing activities with your baby. “Finger painting” with whipped topping, pudding, or other foods can be done on a clean highchair tray. Try finger painting in the bathtub before your child's bath. “Painting” the sidewalk, deck, or other outdoor surface with water dripping from your child's fingers is fun and easy. And there's no need to clean up afterwards! A box with low sides can be a makeshift sandbox. Try filling it with flour or cornmeal instead of sand.
- Show your child how to use his fingers to “draw” by you making different types of marks and scribbles. Let your own enjoyment show! If you show you like the activity, chances are he will like it too!
- Show your child he did well by smiling and commenting on his efforts and successes. A little praise will go a long way in keeping your child playing. Try not to overdo it!

How do you know the practice worked?

- Is your child using his fingers more often to “draw” or “mark”?
- Does your child seem pleased about or intent on trying to mark?
- Has your child shown interest in trying to do different things with his hands and fingers?

Take a look at more infant finger drawing

Play Dough "Drawings"

Gloria is 1 year old. Her mother has found a fun way to let her daughter use her fingers to make her mark! She fills the baby's walker tray with play dough. Gloria pokes and squeezes it, enjoying the interesting shapes and marks she sees. Mom mashes two or three different colors of play dough to nearly fill the tray. She shows Gloria how to dig her fingers into the play dough. It did not take long for Gloria to develop her own way of drawing! She loves to push her fingers into the play dough and look at her "drawings." After doing this for a few times, she grabs a handful of play dough and squeezes it between her fingers. Gloria delights in seeing the play dough ooze out of her hands.



Making a Joyful Mess!

Sammy's middle name might as well be Messy! The more this busy 9-month-old can get into things, the happier he is. As soon as he can sit in the bathtub on his own, his mother introduces Sammy to finger paints. Before his bath, she smears finger paints on the tub bottom between Sammy's legs and in front of him. That's all it takes! He just loves to run his fingers through the paint and make big swooping motions back and forth. Sammy's mother joins in and adds different vocal sounds

to the hand motions. "Swoosh!" More and more, Sammy tries to repeat the sounds his mother makes and says a few of his own.

Getting the Feel of Things

Chip's parents know that their 9-month-old son will need to learn Braille when he gets older. Mom and Dad play drawing games to help Chip use his fingertips to "get the feel" of different textures. Chip's father seats him in his highchair. He gets him to reach into three bowls—one filled with rice, one with cornmeal, and one with water. Dad describes what Chip is doing. He waits for him to "tell him" what he is doing. Chip and his mother play a game of drawing in pudding on the highchair tray. Chip has figured out that he can make different kinds of effects. He often squeals and vocalizes with delight while drawing.



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Scribble Scribble

 *Scribbling and Drawing*

About the same time infants use a spoon to eat, they often show an interest in trying to use crayons. Babies often become fascinated with writing instruments and how to mark and scribble with them.

What is the practice?

Crayons, magic markers, and other writing tools that are easy for young children to hold will work best. Making marks and scribbles comes naturally to most children. Showing a child how to use a crayon or magic marker to scribble is often all it takes! It won't be long before she tries to do it on her own.

What does the practice look like?

A child is seated on her mother's lap. Mom has been writing notes in her calendar. The baby girl's mother picks up a colored marker and starts scribbling. She says, "Swish, swish! Look at what Mommy is drawing." The baby reaches and grasps the marker. Her mother points to the paper and says "Sweetie, scribble here." She gently guides her daughter's hand to the paper. The baby tries to make a mark. Mom puts just enough pressure on the marker so that her daughter is successful. The little girl keeps trying until she finally does it on her own.



How do you do the practice?

There are many different ways to provide young children opportunities to scribble and draw. Here are some ideas you might find helpful with your child:

- Find a comfortable place for your child to sit where her hands are free. This will make it easier for her to grasp and move a writing tool. Sitting on your lap or in a highchair are some positions that you may want to try.
- Big crayons, fat pencils, and specially designed writing instruments are the things young children will use for scribbling. Search the Web for **adapted handles**. You will find ideas about how to make it easy for your child to hold writing tools.
- Child-safe magic markers are generally easy for infants to hold and use. You might even try big pieces of chalk. Make it easy for your child to hold onto a crayon or marker. The easier it is to hold, the more likely she will be able to use it to make marks.
- Pick the right surface for the kind of writing tool your child is using. Use paper for crayons and pencils, white board for magic markers, and blackboard or sidewalk for chalk.
- Turn the scribbling activity into a conversation. Talk about what your child is doing. Show her how excited you are by her efforts at "writing."

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your child show increased interest in scribbling and making marks?
- Is she getting better at picking up and holding a writing tool?
- Does she seem pleased at what she has done by smiling, vocalizing, and getting excited?

Take a look at more infant scribbling fun

Writing Just Like Mom

One-year-old Corrie's mother is making a shopping list. Corrie reaches and grabs the pencil out of her mother's hand. She then tries to "write" like Mom. Corrie makes scribbling marks on the paper. Mom now gives Corrie her own pencil and paper so she can do her own writing. Mom tries different writing instruments to find ones that Corrie can easily hold. Corrie's mother uses this activity to talk about who they are writing to and what they need to add to their shopping list.



Sand Writing

Rachel, 16 months old, and her father love being outside and playing. One of Rachel's favorite things is sand play. She loves to dig, dump, move, and squeeze the sand. Dad notices how much his daughter loves having her hands in wet sand. He decides to see what Rachel will do if he pretends to write in the sand. He smooths out the sand and says he is going to write her name. He uses a stick and prints her name while repeating each letter. Rachel is fascinated by what she sees. Using her finger, she tries to write in the sand just like Dad. She does her best and makes a bunch of scribbles and lines. Dad shows his excitement by saying, "Rachel, you wrote your name! You are such a good writer!" Rachel beams with delight.

Computer Scribbling

Nine-month-old Jonah isn't able to hold onto writing tools like pens and pencils because of his motor impairment. His mother learned about a computer program that lets young children draw on a computer screen using a computer mouse. Mom sits Jonah on her lap in front of the computer. She places his hand on the mouse. Mom helps him use the mouse as they watch scribbles and marks appear on the screen. Jonah nearly goes crazy with joy! In no time he is scribbling and making all kinds of marks. As soon as Mom clears the screen, Jonah is at it again.

