

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 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.

