

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 ½" x ½" 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.

