

Especially for practitioners working with infants!

Infant Scribbling Activities

Pre-Emergent Writing

The infants in your care may be starting to try to feed themselves with a spoon. This often happens around the same time infants show an interest in how other kinds of tools and instruments can be used. Infants can become fascinated with writing instruments and how to mark and scribble with them. This practice guide has some ideas for how you and parents of children for whom you care can encourage infants to experiment with early writing.

What is the practice?

Crayons, pencils, pens, or any other writing instruments that are easy for young children to grasp and hold will work best. Making marks and scribbles comes naturally to most children. Try showing children how to use drawing and writing instruments to scribble. It is often all it takes for them to try to do it on their own.

What does the practice look like?

A child is seated on her father's lap with paper spread out on the table in front of them. The little girl's father picks up a crayon and starts scribbling while saying "Swish, swish! Look at what Daddy is drawing." The girl reaches for the crayon and takes it from her father. Her father points to the paper and says "Sweetie, scribble here." He gently guides his daughter's hand to the paper where she tries to make a mark. Dad puts just enough pressure on the top of the crayon so that his daughter's efforts are successful. The little girl keeps trying and trying until she finally does it on her own.



How do you do the practice?

There are many different ways of providing young children opportunities to scribble and draw. Here are some ideas you might find helpful for the children with whom you work.

- Find a place that is comfortable for the child where her hands are free to hold a writing instrument. Try having the child sit on your lap. Sitting in a high chair and sitting by herself on the floor are a few other positions that you may want to try.
- Big crayons, fat pencils, and adapted writing instruments are generally the first objects young children will use to scribble. Search the Web for adapted handles. You will find a host of ideas about how to make it easy for the child to hold writing instruments.
- Nontoxic felt-tipped markers are generally easy for infants to hold and use. You might even try big pieces of chalk. The easier it is for a child to hold onto a writing tool, the more likely she is to be successful.
- Pick the right surface for the kind of writing instrument the child is using. Provide paper for crayons and pencils, a white board for magic markers, and a blackboard or sidewalk for chalk.
- Try turning the scribbling activity into a conversation. Talk about what the child is doing and show how excited you are by her efforts at writing.

How do you know the practice worked?

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

Take a look at more scribbling activities

Shopping List

Anytime Courtney's mother is writing a note or making a shopping list, 9-month-old Courtney reaches and grabs the pencil out of her mother's hand. She then proceeds to try to "write" like mom and in the process makes scribbling marks on the paper. Courtney's home visitor suggests that, based on this interest, Mom could give Courtney her own pencil and paper so she can finish her own writing. Mom experiments with different writing instruments to find ones that Courtney can easily hold and use to make scribbling marks. Courtney's mother has turned this activity into a conversation time. While they write, Mom talks about the person to whom they are writing and what needs to be on their shopping list.



Stick With It!

Sixteen-month-old Mika loves being outside and playing. One of her favorite places lately is the vegetable garden area her caregiver Tani is preparing in her back yard. Mika loves to dig, dump, move, and squeeze the cool garden soil. Tani notices that Mika has gotten pretty good at trying to dig in the garden plot with a small toy shovel. Tani decides to see what Mika will do if she pretends to write in the soil. She smooths out the soil and tells Mika that she is going to write their names. She uses a stick and prints their names while repeating each letter. Mika is fascinated by what she sees and takes a stick and starts to "write" in the soil. She does her best and has fun making all sorts of scribbles and lines. Tani shows her excitement by saying, "Mika, you spelled your name. You are such a good writer!" Mika beams with delight.

Mouse Magic

Fourteen-month-old Joshua is not able to hold onto writing tools like pens and pencils because of his motor impairment. His early interventionist told Joshua's mother about a special computer mouse that allows young children to draw and write on a computer screen. Mom sits Joshua on her lap in front of the computer. She places his hand on the mouse and moves it about to show him how it makes scribbles and marks on the computer screen. Joshua is fascinated, making lots of noise and pointing excitedly to the screen. In no time he is scribbling and making all kinds of marks. As soon as Mom clears the screen, Joshua is at it again.

