

Ten ways to encourage mark making, drawing and writing.

Offer interesting things to draw with.

Try something other than crayons and markers...

- Soft chalk pastels
- Oil pastels
- Wet chalk
- White pencils or markers on black paper
- Black fine liners
- Water pencils (draw then paint)
- Oil pastels and oil (draw then turn it into paint)
- Add rulers and geometry tools.

Offer interesting things to draw on.

Get a reluctant drawer interested with something new, different or a little crazy!

- Get a clipboard and take drawing outside.
- Draw with water and a paint brush on the concrete.
- Draw with chalk on the trampoline.
- Draw on a really loooong piece of paper, or a really small piece, or round pieces...
- Draw on a balloon.
- Draw on your skin (with face paints or non-toxic markers)
- Draw on a big cardboard box
- Draw on foil.
- Draw on graph paper.

Give them lots of opportunities to draw without pressure or direction.

Some children shy away from drawing because they don't think they can 'do it right' so providing lots of opportunities to draw on their own terms, when it is not a special activity, when no one else is watching, can give these children the space to experiment and practise without pressure. Some children enjoy the security of tracing over pictures.

Have drawing implements and paper always freely available so your child can draw or write whenever they like, without having to ask and without the pressure of anyone 'watching'. Try setting up a drawing basket with lots of fun items in it.

Make it relate to something that interests them.

Add drawing and mark making opportunities to whatever activity they love best.

- Add a basket of drawing tools to block play for making signs and accessories.
- Include drawing in dramatic play - set up a post office or a shop that needs signs.
- Add drawing to Lego.
- Tape markers to the back of matchbox cars, trains or dinosaurs.
- Draw on a paper plane or other paper creation.
- Add drawing to loose parts play e.g. chalking a body on the ground then adding pebbles for features, feathers for hair etc.

Find meaningful reasons to draw and write.

Some kids need a good, practical, reason to draw.

- Send a letter to a family member (it's often good to get them to write first so you can write back).
- Draw your own postcards.
- Draw a list of things they'd like for their birthday or Christmas.
- Make a sign for their bedroom door, or a 'please don't break my Lego model' sign.
- Write and illustrate a book together.
- Create a sheet of wrapping paper for a special present.

Appeal to their senses.

Make it messy if they like getting dirty - draw in finger paint, shaving cream, or a salt or sand tray.

Or keep it clean if they tend to avoid messy play - put the finger paint in a snap lock bag, and offer pencils or markers instead of crayons or chalk that can leave hands feeling greasy or dirty.

Get their whole body involved.

Sitting still at a table to draw may be difficult for some kids, and just plain boring for others, but getting more than just their hands involved might help.

- Buy a big roll of paper and draw a HUGE picture on the floor.
- Draw around each other to make a life sized person.
- Put some paper under the swing and draw as you glide past.
- Draw a chalk maze outside on the concrete.

Make it easy to get started.

Sometimes it is just getting started that is difficult or overwhelming. Use collaborative doodle drawing for a fun beginning and activity that you can do together. There are loads of great books to encourage this currently in Tiger!

Make it about the process not the product.

Make your drawing activities about the doing and drawing, not about the how it looks in the end.

Notice and comment on what your child is doing when as they draw - "You are making lots of lines." "You've used lots of red and green." "It looks like you are enjoying creating". Try asking them to tell you about their drawing and follow their lead rather than trying to guess what it is or force them to talk about it. It's great if your child wants to show you their drawing or creation, but it's no big deal if they don't.

Accept that many of the same skills can be practised without using a pencil.

It really is ok if your child isn't into drawing right now. Instead offer lots of other opportunities to use those small muscles in the hands and fingers so they can build their skills, co-ordination and confidence, and realise there are many more ways to be creative than just doing art.

- Building with Lego and other construction sets with small pieces.
- Creating with play dough and clay
- Loose parts play
- Geo-boards
- Eye dropper/tweezer activities.
- Scissor activities.
- Threading activities.
- Take apart an old appliance.
- Peg boards, tap tap (hammer and shape sets), pattern blocks and other fine motor toys.