

Pre-Writing Skills

Information for Parents and Carers

What are Pre-Writing Skills?

Pre-writing skills are the basic skills that children need to develop before they will be ready to learn to write. To be able to hold a pencil and form letters, children first need to develop:

- **Hand-eye co-ordination** - the ability to use eye movement and hand movement together in order to reach and grasp;
- **Fine motor skills** - the co-ordination and movement of small muscles in fingers, hands and forearms;
- **Hand dominance** - a preference for using one hand over the other;
- **Upper body strength** - shoulder strength and stability is necessary to be able to hold and control a pencil;
- **Ability to cross the midline** - the midline is an imaginary line down the middle of the body. Crossing the midline is the ability to reach across from one side of the body to the opposite side and is essential for using both sides of the body together;
- **Bilateral integration** - the ability to use both sides of the body together;
- **Visual perception** - the way in which the brain processes and interprets what the eyes see;
- **Pencil grasp** - how a pencil is held. This will go through different stages as the child develops;
- **Object manipulation skills** - moving or using an object with the hands or feet for a specific purpose, for example, kicking a ball or fastening a button.

Children need to be given time and opportunities to develop these skills before they will be ready to learn to write.

How Can You Support Your Child to Develop Pre-Writing Skills?

The best way to help your child to develop pre-writing skills is to encourage them to play.

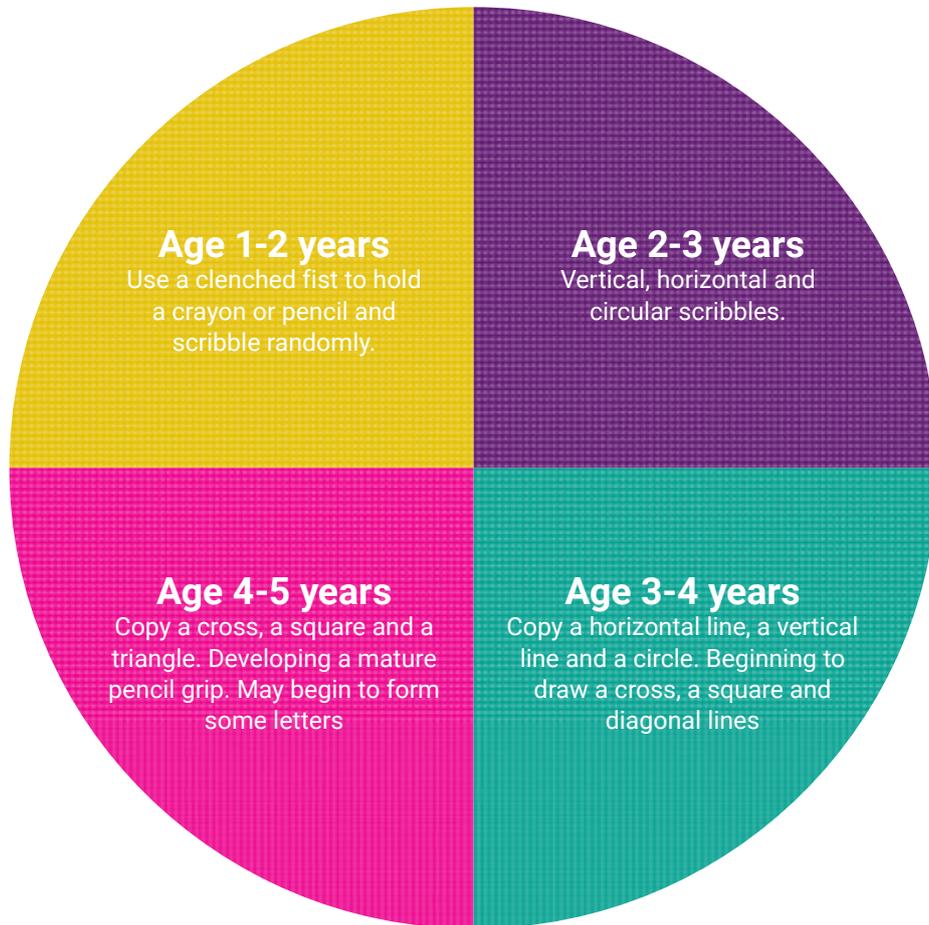
Jigsaws, playdough, finger painting, threading, finger songs, using scissors, picking up small objects with tongs, turning pages in a book and building with bricks are all fun ways for your child to develop their fine motor skills, hand-eye co-ordination and visual perception.

Encourage self-help skills like dressing, doing zips and buttons, spreading butter and pouring drinks. These will help children to develop bilateral integration and object manipulation skills.

Energetic outdoor play will allow children to practice crossing the midline and develop their gross motor skills and upper body strength. Give your child frequent opportunities to throw and catch a ball, climb, run, jump, try monkey bars, push a wheelbarrow and dig.

Typical Development of Writing

Just as children will learn to walk at different ages, children will develop their writing skills at their own pace. The information below is a guide to what typical writing development might look like, but some children will achieve this before these ages and others will achieve this at an older age.



Try not to worry if your child is not yet showing an interest in drawing and writing. Remember that children will develop and learn at their own pace and every child is different. Through play children will naturally develop the skills that are the building blocks for writing.