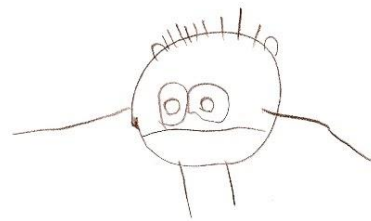
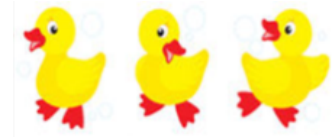


Mark making in the nursery



Mark-Making

What is mark-making?

Mark making is a term used for the creation of different patterns, lines, textures and shapes. This may be on a piece of paper, on the floor, outside in the garden or on an object or surface. It could be a simple dot or a line across a paper, all of this contributes to mark making and fundamentally is the basis of developing the writing skill.

Mark making doesn't just refer to squiggles made with stationery, children are still mark making if they use their hands, paintbrushes, sticks, leaves, feathers and so much more!

Mark making is much more than just a scribble! Babies and toddlers learn and begin to make sense of the world through mark making. It is the beginning of a child's journey towards writing and is an important step in a child's development for handwriting, creativity and coordination. Initially children take pleasure from the physical activity of mark making, but as they develop, they realise that they can control their marks and their creativity starts to thrive.

Why is mark-making important?

- Mark-making is not just about early writing; it is a sensory and physical experience which can be enjoyed by all ages and abilities.
- As well as early writing, mark-making can develop into mathematical representation and creative expression.
- Mark-making in all forms needs to be valued, encouraged and discussed.
- Mark-making can contribute to all the areas of learning and development.



Why is mark making so important?



Mark-making is a step towards writing...

- Research has shown that mark-making is crucial for a child's development and learning. It not only teaches young children how to hold a pen correctly, but it also prepares them for writing and develops their handwriting skills.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- The early stages of writing is called mark-making. These attempts should be praised and encouraged and not referred to as just scribbling.
- Confident mark makers can become confident writers.
- We want all children to feel confident to pick up a writing tool: pen, pencil, chalk, paint, crayon, pastels and draw lines, circles, patterns, squiggles, dots etc.

Physical development

- When children are making these early marks, they are practising to hold a pencil and are attempting to control their marks with their muscles. This enhances their physical development by improving their fine motor skills and helps to develop their hand-eye coordination.

Creative representation

- Mark making can also represent a child's thoughts and ideas. It gives children the opportunity to express themselves creatively and allows them to communicate their feelings through their drawings or even use their marks to tell a story! As they develop, their marks become more complex and sophisticated and their creativity blooms.

Brain and language development

- By giving children the opportunity to explore different mediums of mark making, it engages them in sensory play and allows them to discover new exciting materials. This helps to enhance a child's critical thinking, brain development and language development, which gives them the ability to build towards more complex learning tasks in the future. These marks can also support emerging concepts of maths, developing into mathematical representation and enhancing learning.

Motor Skills

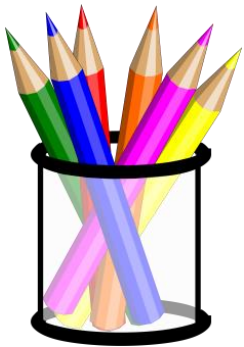
- At nursery we talk a great deal about developing your child's motor skills – these are the skills a child needs to manipulate and control a range of tools and materials.
- A **motor skill** is simply an action that involves using your muscles.

Fine motor skills are the small precise thumb, finger, hand and wrist movements used in coordination with the eyes. Fine motor skills are used when:

- **Grasping** – using crayons, pencils, paintbrushes, glue sticks, blocks etc.
- **Manipulating** – plasticine, playdough, clay, scissors etc.
- **Developing hand and eye coordination** – mark making, writing, cutting, threading, swiping and clicking on an iPad, tablet or phone, throwing and catching etc.

Children need to have developed the necessary strength and dexterity in their hands and fingers before being asked to manipulate a pencil on paper.

- The more children use their hands the finer these movements become.
- We try and support this through our 'Funky Fingers' activities.



What does a fine motor skill look like?

Playdough – rolling, squeezing, pinching, twisting etc.



Cutting with scissors 

Threading beads or pasta



Sticking/gluing



Manipulating tweezers



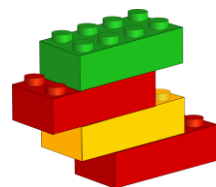
Using writing tools



Finger/hand painting



Lego and small construction



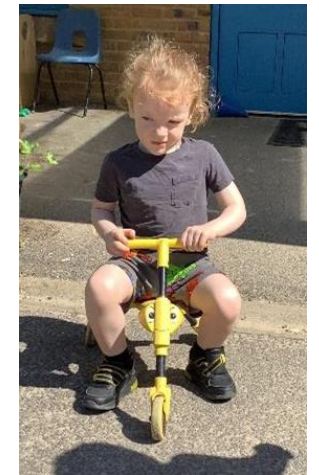
Fine motor skills are the small precise thumb, finger, hand and wrist movements used in coordination with the eyes.

Children need to develop strong muscles and good levels of control of their muscles in order to become good writers.

Trying the above activities at home and at nursery will help your child gain the strength and control and the ability to hold and manipulate mark-making tools.

What are Gross Motor Skills?

Gross **motor skills** are larger movements made with arms, legs, feet, or your entire body. Usually large muscles develop before smaller ones, so gross motor skills can be seen as the foundation for developing skills in other areas such as fine motor skills.



Trying gross motor skills at home or in the park

Walking

Running

Hopping

Jumping

Tiptoeing

Crawling

Striding

Stamping

Running

Climbing

Throwing
e.g. balls

Kicking
e.g. balls

Scooting

Peddalling
a tricycle

**Colour in the star
once you can do the
gross motor skill!**

Vacuuuming

Digging

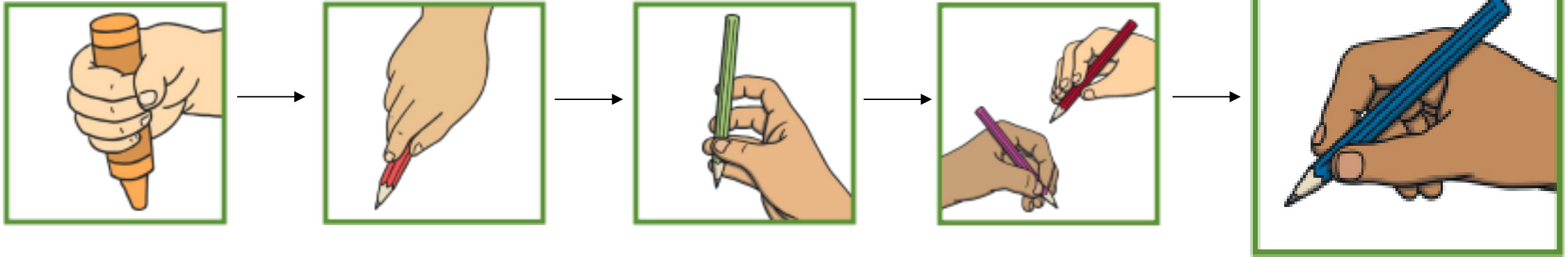
Sweeping

Using a
balance bike

How should my child hold their pens or pencils?

We monitor each child's pencil grip in nursery.

Children often develop through the stages shown below:



**This grip is called a tripod grip.
This is the grip that we are
eventually aiming for.**



Some children hold their pencil in their left hand.



Some children hold their pencil in their right hand.

Some children swap their pencil between their right and left hands and take a little longer to settle on a dominant hand.

How can you help your child to become a writer?

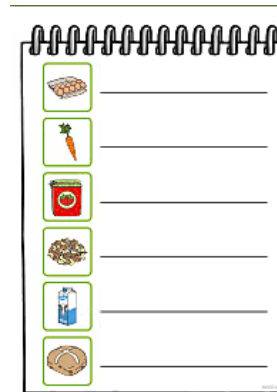
Early stages:

- Digging in the mud or sand pit.
- Hanging out the washing.
- 'Painting' outdoor surfaces with water and a large brush.
- Picking up grains of rice with fingers or large plastic tweezers, which all help develop the grip needed for writing.
- Helping them to make marks on paper with their fingers, brushes, crayons, pencils, pens etc.



Later stages:

- Helping them to write labels, birthday cards and invitations
- Modelling different forms of writing e.g. a shopping list or a notice
- Modelling the correct letter formation and upper/lower case- e.g. Sarah (Capital letter at the beginning followed by smaller letters)
- Talking with your child and writing down what they say.
- Make a scrapbook, add labels, captions or speech bubbles



How does mark-making support a child's learning in other areas?

Mark-making allows a child to:

- Investigate a new concept
- Represent thoughts and ideas
- Develop their understanding of the world
- Tell a story
- Solve problems
- Express their feelings
- Create a gift for someone
- Relive an experience
- Record what they see.

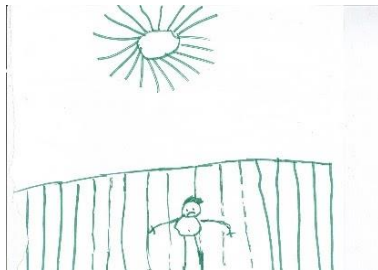
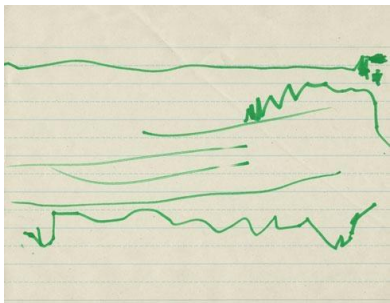
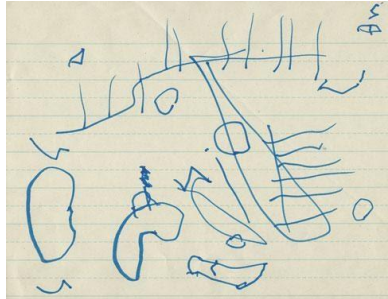


What might my child's marks look like?

The journey towards writing begins in making marks and early marks happen when fingers make patterns in food on high chair trays! Mark making skills develop rapidly as children explore materials and learn that they can make marks.

Learning to create the letter shapes of the child's name or the letters of the alphabet takes time.

A child can not really achieve this until they have had plenty of opportunities at making marks at home and at



Children like to draw lines, circles, shapes, numbers and make pictures.

Children start to show an interest in having a try at writing their names. They begin to form their letter shapes. Capital letter at the beginning, the rest of the letters need to be lower case (little letters.)

Children start to show an interest in letter shapes and attempting to represent some of the letters they know. They are beginning to display an understanding that their marks convey meaning. You may be asked by your child "What does this say?" Discuss what you can see and ask them to tell you about their marks.