

PRE-PRINTING STRATEGIES

What is it?

Before a child will be successful with learning to print letters and numbers, time should be spent building the foundation for printing skills. Certain strokes, geometric shapes and forms which contain essential components of letters and numbers are learned prior to printing.

Children generally learn to draw by:

- **Imitating:**
Child watches what a person's hand does and then makes the same stroke
- **Copying:**
The child sees an existing stroke and reproduces it without watching how it was made
- **Drawing/Independent Formation:**
The child can make the stroke when asked or from memory

The typical progression for pre-printing marks are vertical line, horizontal line, circle, cross, diagonal in both directions, square, x, and triangle:

–, |, O, +, /, □, \, X, △

How can I help the child?

Here are some strategies to help promote learning of pre-printing skills.

Strategies

- Keep sessions short. 5 – 10 minutes of practice is ideal to ensure your child leaves with a sense of success.
- Have your child practice drawing at many different surface heights. For example, as well as practicing drawing while seated at a table or desk, also have your child stand up and practice drawing on paper taped to the wall, practice scribbling at a blackboard, or practice drawing while lying on his/her tummy on the floor.

Use a Multi-Sensory Approach

Provide a multi-sensory approach to practice pre-printing strokes. Using multiple senses when learning helps us to remember how different shapes are formed. Combining several senses will provide different sensory experiences to help your child learn.

Activities

Visual activities:

- Model the formation of a shape for your child.
- Use various tools e.g. paintbrush, chalk, crayons, markers, aqua doodles, magna doodles, grease pencils or transparencies.
- Workbooks in which the colour appears when children paint with water or finger paint.
- Use a variety of different kinds of paper, e.g. regular, coloured, foil, brown, and construction.
- Use placemats with images of shapes at dinner time.
- Try forming shapes and strokes with eyes opened and closed.

Verbal activities:

- Give verbal instructions as you model the shape formations. For example, a square is “*line down, line across the bottom, line up, and line across the top*”.
- Ask the child to repeat the verbal instruction when he/she tries the shape.

Tactile activities:

- Practice formations in sand, paint, or gel in a Ziploc bag.
- Use a plastic page protector and wipe-off crayons, wax pencils, or dry-erase markers.
- Practice forming shapes out of different materials, such as plasticine, play-dough, pipe cleaners, Wikki stix, wooden blocks, and yarn.
- Use different types of paper (i.e. sandpaper, construction paper, watercolour paper, etc.) to make the shapes.
- Cornmeal, flour, rice, salt, whipping cream, sugar, shaving cream, lotion, or pudding on a baking sheet.
- Place paper on top of different textures: sandpaper, rubbing templates, leaves.
- Make shapes on your child's back and have him/her name them.
- Different tools to practice with: vibrating pen, toothbrush, paintbrush, finger, sponge.
- Draw with cheese spread out on crackers.
- Use liquorice to form shapes.

Motor strategies:

- Draw large shapes with sidewalk chalk and walk the correct formation. Again, make sure the starting point and direction of formation is the same as when forming shapes on paper.

- Have your child form the shape on a piece of paper mounted to a vertical surface (e.g. taped to the fridge or on a wall), or flat on the ground with the child on their belly.
- Use a stick in the sand to form shapes.
- Dip a sponge or paint brush in water and practice forming the shapes on a black board.
- Have the child form the shape in the air using their whole arm. First have him/her try with their eyes open, then try with eyes closed.

Scent Strategies:

- Scented markers.
- Add scented flavours (vanilla, cherry, mint) to yogurt or pudding and practice formations.
- Scented lotions on a baking sheet.
- Form scented play-dough into shapes.