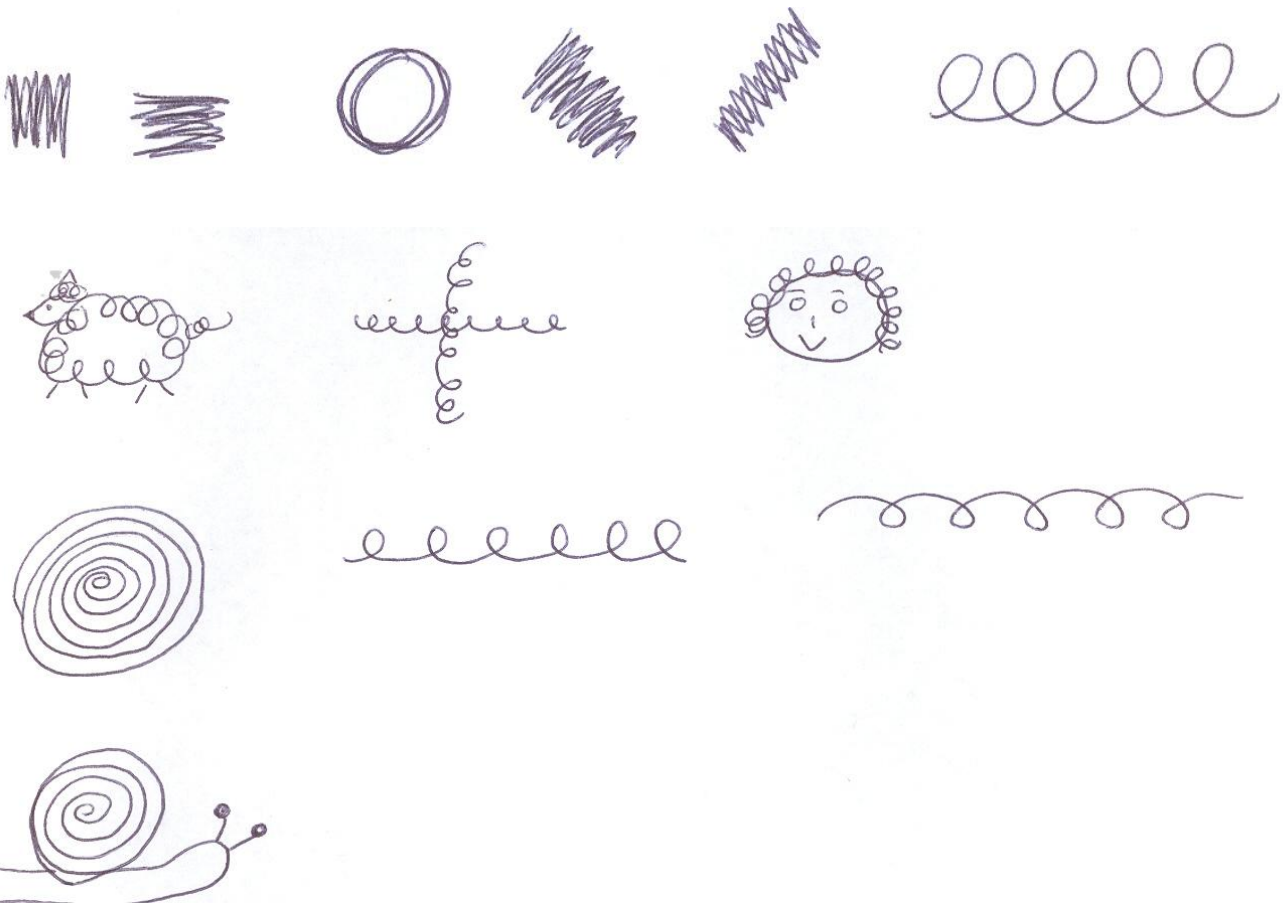




EARLY YEARS – GETTING READY TO WRITE

Developing interest and attention for writing / drawing activities

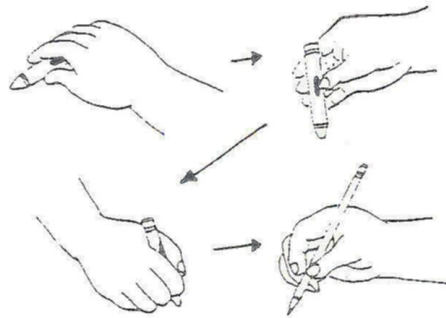
- Use different tactile pre-writing media; sand, finger paints, play dough, shaving foam
- Painting with stubby brushes and large movements and scribbling
- Drawing with crayons (will need to apply more pressure with these). This can be done later but for the present continue to use crayons to give the child the idea of making marks on paper.
- Finger painting. Encourage large movements of the arm.



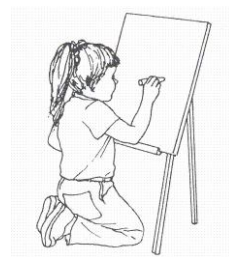
Movements can then become more refined by scribbling up and down and from side to side, while their hand is resting on the paper. This strengthens the small muscles of the hand. Other patterns are shown above.

Developing a functional pencil grip

- The development of a functional pencil grip depends on the stage of hand dominance and hand grasp development. Usually a child will progress from one type of grip to another, see below:

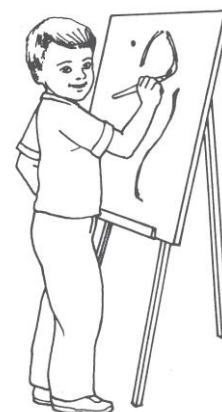


- Use shorter crayons or chalk to encourage a tripod grasp. Sometimes triangular shaped pencils or crayons help.
- There are a wide range of wide barrelled felt tip pens available commercially, many of them with a non-slip grip area for your finger. The handhugger range of pens, crayons and pencils by Berol are usually available in larger WH Smith stores and Early Learning Centres.
- Always make sure that a child is holding a pencil properly before starting drawing.
- It may be easier to start with a board writer/marker pen and do doodles on a large sheet of lining paper. Working on a vertical surface helps to develop strength in shoulder and wrist muscles, which are needed for writing. It also allows you to feel the weight of the arm as it moves up and down and across the paper.



- As pencil control develops progress to making circles for flowers and the sun etc.

- Children learn first through imitation. Demonstrate first tracing a maze with your index finger, and then encourage a child to trace a maze with their index finger. Hold a child's



finger if necessary while tracing. After tracing with a finger, encourage a child to trace a maze with their crayon.

- Many children would also benefit from doing drawing and writing tasks in a variety of positions. The picture below shows a child lying on their tummy leaning through their elbows and drawing. This improves shoulder strength and stability which is important for handwriting. A child could also benefit from drawing or colouring whilst in a crawling position on hands and knees.



Children should be able to draw the following shapes which are components of letters of the alphabet before they are ready to start letter formation:

