

The Power of the Pen: Drawing and Scribbling



When young children draw or scribble, they are using the skills they will need for writing. You can support preschoolers' first efforts to write in several ways. (See Illinois Early Learning and Development Benchmarks 5.A.ECa, 5.A.ECb, and 19.A.ECe.)

Encourage young children to draw.

- Make sure children have drawing materials and plenty of time to use them.
- When a child has made a drawing, print her name in one corner. You might say each letter: "A-V-A spells Ava. I wrote your name!"
- Pay attention to a child's effort to copy his name. "Oh, you worked on writing your name, Alex. There is the A, and there is the L."
- Remember that children express ideas and tell stories with their drawings. You can help a child connect print with spoken words when you invite her to dictate something about her picture while you write what she says on a piece of paper. Having trouble getting started? You might ask, "What's going on in your picture?" or "What name do you want to give your drawing?" Point to each word as you read back her dictation.

Let children scribble!

- Keep in mind that a scribbler isn't just creating random lines and loops. He is practicing what it's like to communicate on paper. He might not want to let others see his efforts if, for example, an older sibling talks about scribbling in an insulting way. You can help by talking about his scribbles as "working on your writing."
- Encourage scribbles to use their scribbling skills during dramatic play to make signs, play money, or pretend mail.
- Talk to a child about her scribbles. You might ask, "How did you get the crayon to make that line?" "What did you think about saying?" Comment about marks she has made: "That one looks like the D in De'andre's name." "Did you enjoy making all those swirls?"
- If a child shows you some scribbles and asks you, "What did I write?", you might try asking him, "What do you want it to say?" or "What were you thinking about when you were working on it?"

Display children's drawings and scribbles.

- Label children's artwork with descriptions dictated by the children.
- Talk to parents about the important role that drawing and scribbling play as a child learns to write.

For related Web resources, see "The Power of the Pen: Drawing and Scribbling" at <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tips.htm>.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



29 Children's Research Center
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
51 Gerty Dr. • Champaign, IL 61820-7469
Telephone: 217-333-1386 • Fax: 217-244-7732
Toll-free: 877-275-3227
Email: iel@illinois.edu
Internet: <http://illinoisearlylearning.org>

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Board of Education