

STAGES OF EARLY WRITING DEVELOPMENT

Between the ages of 2 and 6 children observe written messages as they become aware of signs, labeling in their classrooms, watching their parents and teachers write as they make lists, write memos, thank you notes, letters and the like. Children begin to experiment by making marks on paper. Sometimes their marks will run horizontally across the page as if they were writing a letter or memo. Sometimes they will “make a list” and write their marks vertically.

There are 5 stages of writing.

Stage 1 – this usually happens between the ages of 2 and 3. Children make random scribbles on the paper and exhibit very little muscular control. It is important to encourage their exploration with a crayons and chalk. Part of this learning process is the strengthening of the fine motor muscles, so do not give the children markers; it takes little to no effort to make a satisfying mark with a marker.

Stage 2 – controlled scribbling at age 3. At this point the children will scribble in an organized fashion repeating patterns over and over. There is increased muscular control. Playing with blocks, puzzles, tweezers, squeeze bottles and self-care tasks allow development of arms, hands and wrists.

Stage 3 – between the ages of 3 and 4 children engage in mock writing. They make letter-like forms and may arrange them in groups. Some “letters” may include characteristics of letters, but may be backwards, inverted and misshapen. There is a distinction between drawing and writing. Help children use a proper writing grip. Easel painting and stringing beads help develop fine motor skills.

Stage 4 – between 4 and 5 children name and write recognizable letters, although some may frequently be reversed. They may also write words that have personal meaning such as *Mom, Dad or I love you*. These writers are aware that letters match sounds. Demonstrate letter formation and continue encouraging the use of a good writing grip.

Stage 5 – between 5 and 6 children use lots of invented spelling and group letters to make words. They are better at using a mature grip and are able to write lower case and upper case letters. Writing practice may include play dough and Wikki Stix®