



## Getting Ready to Write

Writing is both a way to communicate and a physical act. A child's scribbling and drawing are steps to building the strength, dexterity, and hand-eye coordination she will need for writing.

When toddlers are ready, they will begin to understand that the marks they make mean something to someone else. Let children know that writing is an important and valuable skill. Have them watch as you write notes, labels, charts, emails, etc. Invite them to "write" along with you. Help them read the signs and labels inside and outside your setting.

- **Prepare babies and toddlers for writing.** Give them activities that develop their trunk, arm, hand, and finger muscles. Let them have up-close experiences with print and letters. Create opportunities that encourage them to practice telling stories and "writing" in their own ways.
- **Play games that get children using their fingers, hands, and arms.** Help children practice large and small movements. Have them reach for objects, cross over their middles to pick things up, point at objects, push buttons, or wiggle their fingers to songs and poems.
- **Give babies lots of tummy time and encourage them to crawl** when they are ready (in a traditional or untraditional way). This builds arm and trunk muscles they will need for writing.
- **Give children toys and sensory materials that require them to use hand and finger movements.** Have them squeeze, twist, pinch, or push things. As they are ready, introduce tools that require precise movements, such as eyedroppers, keyboards, and crayons.
- **Help children learn to use their hands to do things for themselves.** Encourage them to practice tasks such as eating with fingers and utensils, putting toys away, opening doors and containers, putting on shoes and socks, and zipping or buttoning clothing.
- **Encourage babies and young toddlers to make marks on a piece of paper all by themselves.** Attach a chunky crayon to a small clipboard with a piece of yarn for them to use.
- **Display meaningful print in the languages of all children in your setting.** Include children's names, food packaging, signs, useful lists, messages, and labels.
- **Let toddlers play with toys that have letters or words on them.** Name the letters for children who show interest.
- **Give all children a variety of "writing" experiences each day,** such as back-and-forth conversation, storytelling, hand and finger play, playing with writing tools, dictating stories, and "writing" for different purposes.
- **Give children lots of chances to tell you "stories."** Watch and listen carefully when children show or tell you about something that happened or something they imagine or want to talk about. Give them words, pictures, and props that help them retell their stories.