Writing is a complex perceptual, motor and cognitive skill. Pre-writing skills are the activities children take part in to prepare them for writing instruction. The following activities can support your child to develop their prewriting skills.

For a child to be able to write and form letters properly they need initially to learn how to copy and form simple shapes. The making of marks that imitate another person’s marks, is important because it helps a child learn eye hand coordination.

Pre-writing skills should not always be developed by sitting at a table and doing writing tasks. Movement is an essential way to teach children about shape, direction and other concepts associated with pre-writing.

Try to keep the movements large and talk to the child about what they are doing in order to draw their attention to the movement, for example: a square goes down, across, up, across.

**Strategies**

Always emphasise that work should be from ‘Top to Bottom’ and ‘Left to Right’.

- Try drawing on sandpaper, patterned wallpaper, in sand or mud
- Draw in lotions, pudding, whipped cream, icing sugar, chocolate spread and shaving foam
- Experiment with different colours of chalk, markers, crayons, pens, pencils and paints
- Draw in shallow trays of sand
- Make scribble drawings with the child. After allowing time for the child to make their own marks, demonstrate making marks such as - | O
- Draw on cakes with coloured icing tubes or draw with cheese spread on bread or crackers.
- Encourage activities such as fuzzy felt and making pictures out of shapes
- Try outdoor activities such as such as rubbing over different textures e.g. concrete, brick or bark
- Use thick paintbrushes and buckets of water to paint on outdoor surfaces.
- Praise the child if they look at the mark, as you make it. Praise any attempt they make that is approaching your example
- Use short regular pencils, small pieces of chalk, felt markers and crayons, this helps the development of finger control
Encourage large movements when making marks, this encourages use of the muscles of the whole arm and shoulder against gravity and helps to reinforce the ‘mental picture’ of the pattern. This is recommended at the early stage of learning letter formation.

Encourage the child to experience a wide range of different mark-makers and surfaces on which to make their patterns.

Start to make a link for children between prewriting shapes and marks and letters eg. A circle is the same as an ‘o’

Experiment with different colours of chalk, markers, crayons, pens, pencils and paints.

Make shapes with noodles or spaghetti

Draw large shapes in paint on an easel or paper pinned to the wall

Stencils

Maze activities: Start with getting the child to walk on large shapes/lines on the floor (masking tape or chalk) and drive toy cars through mazes, over crossing lines and diagonals. Then encourage drawing between a horizontal or vertical path. Gradually decrease the width of the maze to encourage increased control. These can be done with finger paints, crayons, pencils or paints on a table, at an easel or on paper on the floor or pined to the wall

Practice dot to dots. Encourage the child to stop on each dot. Use arrows to indicate the next dot to improve forward planning and direction.

Make shapes and lines out of rolled up play dough

Grade how much help you give the child. Initially you may need to use a hand over hand approach but try to reduce how much physical and verbal help you give the child so they become more independent

Don’t focus too quickly on forming letters, try to make drawing fun!