

# Parent Guide



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## What is this resource and how do I use it?

Print or view this guide on a mobile device and use it to help improve your understanding of mark making. This guide explains what mark making is, what developmental milestones are needed for children to engage in the activities and some ideas to get you started.

## What skills does this practise?

Fine Motor Skills

Gross Motor Skills

Creativity

## Further Activity Ideas and Suggestions

You can find lots more information and guidance on common early childhood education terms and other parenting ideas in our [Parent Guides](#) section.

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# A Parent Guide to Mark Making



## What is mark making?

In early childhood education, the term 'mark making' is used to describe children's pre-writing skills and can encompass all sorts of marks on a wide variety of materials, not just pencil and paper.

The idea is that children practise using their hands or tools to make any kinds of marks - this practise teaches them that they can have an effect and eventually that they can make marks that mean something to other people, such as drawings or letters. As children learn and develop, they will begin trying to represent their ideas through making marks, even if it's a few scribbled lines that they call 'daddy'.

Sometimes children engage in mark making just for the joy and the feel of it - they like how it feels to drag the pen over the whiteboard, for example - and other times they're trying to communicate alongside their play. All lines, scribbles and gibberish are welcome!

## When should my child start mark making?

There is no definitive age by which a child should be mark making to a certain level - as the whole concept is very free and undefined, the idea that someone is 'good' at mark making doesn't really exist.

In fact, the latest government guidance for early years children (called the EYFS Statutory Framework), which is what most nursery and reception practitioners follow, has done away with most of its age bands altogether. This was done so that those looking after the children can focus on giving them fantastic play and learning experiences instead of worrying about ticking off their abilities from a list.

However, there are a few physical development milestones that will help your child engage with mark making more fully. This table talks about some key skills your child will need to develop to get involved with mark making - you can adapt activities to suit your child's needs.

If your child can...	...then you could try...
hold up their head	lying them down on their tummy or back to kick their arms and legs to make marks in materials.
sit up independently	sitting them in a large activity tray or plastic container to manipulate materials inside.
grasp or hold a tool loosely (e.g. pencil, paintbrush)	sitting them at a table to try mark-making activities.
hold a tool (e.g. pencil, paintbrush) confidently	using an easel or table to set up a mark-making area and let your child make choices for what activities to try.

## Twinkl Tip:

For younger children, start on a bigger scale, such as chalk on a pavement or 'painting' the fence with water and a big brush. This gives children time to develop their large-muscle coordination. Once this is developing well, children can then work on building small-muscle coordination, such as in their hands and wrists.



## Mark Making Activities

Why not try some of the following mark-making activities at home with your child? Remember, if your child isn't able to do all of these activities, that's okay - find a way to adapt it to suit your child wherever possible.

- Use a finger, paintbrush or stick to trace into a tray filled with sand or another fine material like glitter, sugar or rice. For a dinosaur or farm theme, you could even use dirt!
- 'Paint' a garden fence, patio or wall with large paint brushes or rollers dipped in water.
- Use tools like biscuit cutters, sticks or stamps in playdough to make imprints.
- Try potato or apple stamps dipped in paint and use them to print on paper or other surfaces.
- Draw outside on a wall, fence or pavement with chunky chinks - any lines or scribbles are great and will wash off in the rain!
- While out on walks in natural areas, use sticks to draw in the dirt.
- Even actions that don't leave a lasting mark can be classed as mark making - tracing onto a steamy window, dragging items through puddles or using a squirt gun on paper or a fence.
- Using a whiteboard and dry-erase markers is a very different sensation - even wiping it off with a whiteboard rubber or piece of tissue is building fine motor skills.
- Dab glue (white glue or a glue stick) on paper or card and stick craft items (e.g. pom-poms, pipe cleaners, glitter, etc) or scrap paper to it.

