

*Especially for parents of young children!*

# Infant Finger Drawing

*Scribbling and Drawing*

Before a child can mark or scribble with a crayon or pencil, he can use his fingers to draw and “write.” This handout is filled with ideas for helping your baby build pre-writing skills.

## What is the practice?

A variety of fun activities can help infants learn to use their fingers to draw, paint, and scribble. These activities will help your child see how what he does with his fingers can result in interesting marks and scribbles.

## What does the practice look like?

Beginning writing happens any time your child uses his fingers to scribble or mark. Babies running their fingers through pudding or squeezing whipped cream between their fingers are examples of pre-writing activities.



## How do you do the practice?

Finger paints aren't the only way to finger draw. All sorts of unusual “media” are perfect for finger drawing. Among them are dry rice, water, whipped cream, pudding, sand, play dough, and flour or cornmeal. Recipes for a variety of infant-safe, homemade “finger paints” can be found on the Web by searching **homemade finger paints**.

- Figure out which finger-drawing materials will be most interesting to your baby. “Messy” infants might love playing with pudding or whipped topping. “Tidy” infants are more likely to play happily with play dough or water. The more fun and enjoyable the activity is to your child, the more he will benefit from the activity.
- Find an appropriate place to do finger drawing activities with your baby. “Finger painting” with whipped topping, pudding, or other foods can be done on a clean highchair tray. Try finger painting in the bathtub before your child's bath. “Painting” the sidewalk, deck, or other outdoor surface with water dripping from your child's fingers is easy and there's no need to clean up afterwards! Cut a box down to size to make a makeshift sandbox. Try filling it with flour or cornmeal instead of sand.
- Encourage your child to use his fingers to “draw” by showing him how to make different types of marks and scribbles. Let your own enjoyment show! If you show you like the activity, chances are he will like it too!
- Show your child he did well by smiling and commenting on his efforts and successes. A little bit of praise will go a long way in keeping your child playing. Try not to overdo it!

## How do you know the practice worked?

- Is your child using his fingers more often to “draw” or “mark” on things?
- Does your child seem pleased about or intent on trying to mark something?
- Has your child shown interest in trying to do different things with his hands and fingers?

# Take a look at more infant finger drawing

## *Play Dough "Drawings"*

One-year-old Gloria's mother has found a fun way to let her daughter use her fingers to make her mark! She fills the baby's walker tray with play dough. Gloria pokes and squeezes it, enjoying the interesting shapes and marks she sees. Mom mashes two or three different colors of play dough to nearly fill the tray. At first, she shows Gloria how to dig her fingers into the play dough, but now Gloria has developed her own way of drawing! She loves to push her fingers into the play dough and look at her "drawings." After doing this for a few times, she grabs a handful of play dough and squeezes it between her fingers. Gloria delights in seeing the play dough ooze out of her hands.



## *Making a Joyful Mess!*

Sammy's middle name might as well be Messy! The more this busy 9-month-old can get into things, the happier he is. His mother figured out as soon as he was able to sit in the bathtub that it was an opportunity to introduce Sammy to finger paints. Before filling the tub with water, she smears finger paints on the tub bottom between Sammy's legs and in front of him. That's all it takes! He just loves to run his fingers through the paint and make big swooping motions back and forth. Sam-

my's mother joins in and adds different vocal sounds to the hand motions. "Swoosh!" More and more, Sammy tries to repeat the sounds his mother makes and says a few of his own.

## *Getting the Feel of Things*

Maggie's parents know that their 15-month-old daughter will need to learn Braille when she gets older. Mom and Dad play different kinds of drawing games to help Maggie use her fingertips to "get the feel" of different textures and shapes. Maggie's father seats her in her highchair and gets her to reach into three containers—one filled with rice, one filled with cornmeal, and one filled with water. Dad describes what Maggie is doing and waits for her to "tell him" what she is doing. Maggie and her mother play a game of drawing in pudding on her highchair tray. It is clear that Maggie has figured out that different kinds of hand movements produce different kinds of effects. She often squeals and vocalizes with delight in response to what she is doing.

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