

## Learning to Draw Shapes



Below are some general “Rules of Thumb” or strategies in helping your child to learn to make shapes. Learning to draw shapes can often be very frustrating for children and takes time, practice and patience. While helping your children – **remember to have fun!** Children’s skills develop fastest and best when they are motivated to try and don’t think of drawing shapes as “work”.

**Imitation comes before copying.** Children learn shapes first by watching how they are made and then trying to draw them on their own. This is called **imitating**. Show your child how you are making a shape you are working on with them. Using words to describe what you are doing with your marker or crayon also provides your child with extra information. For example, when making a square, you might say “Go down, then stop, across-stop, up-stop, close the box”. **Copying** which involves having your child make a shape from a predrawn picture, usually comes after your child learns to imitate.

**Practice imitating and then copying simple shapes using an index finger** in sand, with Cool Whip on a plastic garbage bag, finger paints, making a pretend line on the desk, with a wet finger on a chalkboard, etc. Children learn to control their fingers before they have really good control of a writing tool, like a marker.

**Large lines and shapes** are easier to practice first because they require less precise finger or arm control.

**Tracing within lines** you have drawn, are also good ways to practice making lines and simple shapes. You could also try **gluing yarn on**

**the paper** to make borders to draw within. This provides a physical cue to stop, if your child is going outside of the area. **Making a template or stencil to trace** within is also often successful. A good material in making templates is old vinyl placemats.

**Tracing over lines/shapes you have drawn** is also a good way to practice pencil skills. Try drawing a shape in white chalk on a blackboard – then have your child trace over this line with coloured chalk. This is also really fun with **“Changeables Markers”**, where the line you draw changes colour as your child traces over it with the “special” marker.

*If you have any questions, please contact your Occupational Therapist.*

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You can also help your child be more aware of straight line shapes by **practising these with playdough or popsicle sticks**. For example, make a vertical line with playdough and have your child do the same. This is a good way to practice orientation needed in slanted lines as well as shapes like crosses or triangles.

In order to encourage proper line formation (e.g., starting at top and moving to bottom for a vertical or slanted line or making spiralling circles) **try using cues like a green dot for “start” and a red dot for “stop”**.

**OVERALL, general practice** with painting, colouring and drawing, is one of the most important ways to help develop the fine motor skills needed to draw shapes.

Some ways to do this are:

Colouring on different types of paper: Try aluminum foil, coloured construction paper, paperbags, waxed paper, colouring books, etc.

Use different materials to draw with. Aside from markers and crayons, try fat pencils, pieces of chalk, finger paints, brush paints, lotions, pudding, whipped cream, bath tub crayons (use your imagination!)