

A Parents Guide to Drawing and Painting

What are the benefits of children creating visual works? And how can you encourage them to do so? Penny Tassoni offers advice (1 of 3)



In some ways, you could argue that there is a **golden age of drawing and painting that occurs when children are between two and five years old.** In these years, most children love to make marks and draw with total abandon, leaving parents with a sizeable collection of artwork. It makes this a wonderful period to observe children's creativity, and their view of the world.

FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT DRAWING AND PAINTING

1. An innate skill

As humans, we appear to be primed to make marks and drawings. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that from very early on babies are interested in the marks that they make with food and their hands and that **toddlers love to scribble on walls.**

2. Emotional development

While adults often focus on what children are producing, drawing and painting supports children's emotional development. It allows them to release and express feelings.

It is also a way in which very young children can gain confidence, as making a mark on something can feel empowering. **Drawing and painting can also help them to process feelings and ideas.**

3. Links to early writing

Many children who enjoy drawing and painting feel positive about early writing. **Early writing is inseparable from children's early drawing and painting.** Both skills require children to enjoy making marks and to develop an understanding that marks can be used as symbols to represent ideas. The key difference is that children later learn that marks can be used to symbolise the spoken word. There is often a period when their drawings have letter shapes within them.

4. Interests and knowledge

As young children's drawings and paintings develop, they increasingly represent the world as children see it. They sometimes portray, for example, adults as having long legs.

What children choose to draw and paint often reflects what is important or interesting to them. This why children will often try to represent their family members.

5. Maintaining confidence

Young children enjoy drawing and painting without being too self-critical, but this changes as they become older. The focus for adults in **children's earliest years should be about building confidence** and enjoyment, so that when children become self-critical they don't decide to give up completely.

STAGES IN DRAWING

Most children seem to find drawing easier to master than painting because they can gain greater control using felt-tip pens, crayons and pencils. But they also enjoy the physical and sensory experience of painting, so **it is important they have the chance to explore paints too.**

How quickly children go through these stages is linked to other areas of development, such as hand movements, and also their interest in drawing. Most children are able to represent a person or familiar object such as a house in a recognisable form between four and five years old.

Exploration of materials

In this first phase, you may find that your child simply enjoys exploring and seeing what paints and marks can do. **If children enjoy the materials that they are using, they may fill up the paper.**