

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 (2 of 3)

Using repeated gestures to make marks

In this next phase, children use repeated gestures as a form of expression. You may see plenty of circular forms as well as straight lines. Children can be very purposeful in this phase.



Using marks and shapes to represent the world

At about three years old, most children begin to draw with a clear intention to represent a person or object. They may say at the outset what they are going to draw, although **the finished result may not be recognisable to you!**

Children may also decide during the process to relabel what they

have produced if it looks more like something else that is familiar to them or they think that you will be interested in it. The first representational attempts are usually people – often without arms, legs or even torsos.

Some recognisable representations of people and familiar objects

From about four and with drawing experience, children increasingly produce more representational drawings, especially of people. People start to have legs and arms, although they may at first sprout from the head. Eyes and hair are often an afterthought.

Children may talk aloud as they are drawing, to guide themselves through the process and bring the drawing to life. Again, they may also change their minds if they realise that they cannot represent what they originally intended.

Increasing skill, but also awareness

From five years, children start to be able to draw with increasing skill. They may choose colours carefully, try to represent objects according to size and also attempt to put more detail into pictures.



Between the ages of five and seven, children also become more aware of gaps between their intentions and what they have produced and this can lead them to become frustrated or to ask for help. Some children also start to compare their drawings and painting to other children and become disheartened.

ORGANISATION

Children are much more likely to enjoy drawing and painting if they are comfortable. Choose items that are easy for them to manipulate, and **if you can see your child struggling to make a mark think about using another resource.**

It is also worth checking that your child is physically comfortable. They may need to stand to draw or paint at a table or may choose to draw or make marks while crouching on the floor. As children often enjoy painting 'large scale', think about whether you can put up paper, using masking tape, onto wipeable cupboard doors or even outdoors.

FIVE TIPS for ENJOYING DRAWING AND PAINTING

1. Join in

One of the best ways to encourage your child is to role model painting and drawing by simply joining in alongside them. Sitting or standing next to your child and drawing or painting your own pictures or patterns can often boost children's interest. You may also find that your child will copy what you do and how you use materials.

2. Don't ask lots of questions

It is helpful to show interest in what your child is doing, but avoid asking too many questions, especially when your child is just starting to draw and paint. This is because some of their efforts will be exploratory and they may have no aim in mind.

It is usually better to ask children about whether they enjoyed their drawing or painting and to wait and see what comments they make.

3. Be relaxed

It is important that children are able to choose when and if they draw and paint, and that they keep experimenting and making marks in different ways.