

# COACH'S CORNER

*Coach's Corner is a DIEEC blog dedicated to providing fresh ideas for all early childhood education professionals.*



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## Literacy in the Early Childhood Environment

### Part 3 of 3 in our 2025 Literacy Series: Writing

This will be our final Coach's Corner article in our "Literacy in Early Childhood" series. In [April, we discussed ways to create a literacy-rich environment](#), and in [May, we covered activities to support the different areas of emergent literacy](#), including oral language, alphabet knowledge, and phonological awareness. This month, we'll focus on incorporating early writing skills into your daily experiences.

Writing is an important aspect of emergent literacy that tends to receive less attention due to the abundance of technology in our everyday lives. Years ago, children witnessed their parents, teachers, and other adults in their lives writing frequently. Today, children are more likely to see adults emailing, texting, and using smartphone apps for to-do lists. As a result, educators must be intentional about providing children with opportunities to observe and practice writing in their programs.

There are many ways to support pre-writing skills as early as infancy! Engaging in playful activities, from stacking blocks to lacing beads, naturally builds the foundational fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination essential for later writing, in ways that are enjoyable and perfectly suited to their developmental stage.



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## Supporting Emergent Writing

- Introduce writing as a form of communication. Reading books out loud, or modeling writing lists or notes are all ways to show children that writing is a way to communicate stories or ideas.
- Development of the fine motor skills that are essential to writing begins as early as infancy.
  - **Tummy time** builds core and shoulder strength that is essential for arm control later on.
  - **Banging on toys** develops wrist and forearm muscles as well as hand-eye coordination.
  - Playing with materials such as **stacking rings and blocks** allows babies to practice pincer and whole-hand grasps.
  - When toddlers work on **simple puzzles, interlocking blocks, pegs/pegboards, and simple lacing toys**, they are further refining these skills and increasing their dexterity and coordination.
- **Drawing and scribbling are important precursors to writing.** Children are beginning to demonstrate how signs and symbols have meaning and are used to communicate. Provide plenty of appropriate tools and surfaces for these early explorations of writing.



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## Writing Activities

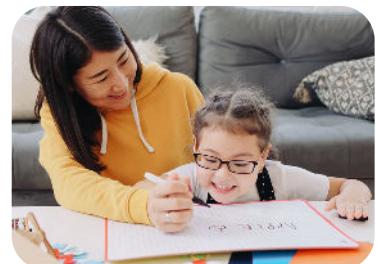
As children approach preschool age, we can start adding in writing activities. Below are just a few examples that can be added into your daily experiences.

- **Encourage children to use their fine motor skills** to create letters out of play dough or clay. Try putting some sand on a baking sheet, then let the children “write” letters with their fingers.



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- **Linking drawing to writing-** When children draw a picture, ask them to tell you something about it. Write their words on the paper, saying each word as you write it. This shows the connection between words and pictures, as well as the connection between spoken and written language.
  - As children begin learning to sound out words, have them try to write out their own sentence about their picture. Keep in mind that the process is more important than the product. The goal is not to spell or form letters perfectly, but rather to understand the connection between spoken words and written words.
- **Add a variety of different writing tools** and mediums to your space to encourage writing. Try adding chalkboards/chalk, dry erase boards/markers, and different types of paper.
- For your outdoor space, **add clipboards with paper or notebooks**. Children can draw pictures or write about things they find in nature. Sidewalk chalk is another great addition.



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These are just a few ways to incorporate writing concepts into your day. We would love to hear about fun and engaging ways you are encouraging literacy in your program! Email your thoughts to [ecinstitute@udel.edu](mailto:ecinstitute@udel.edu).

## Resources:

- [Emergent Writing \(HeadStart\)](#)
- [Emergent Writing \(NAEYC\)](#)
- [Learning to Write and Draw | ZERO TO THREE](#)

