**Drawing skills**

Drawing of shapes, people and simple representational objects such as the sun, trees, flowers, animals etc are very important for the development of the visual motor and visuo-spatial systems in the brain. In Kindy and beyond the development of this area is a very significant predictor of later literacy levels. That is children who can manage to draw representational objects well in these early years show stronger literacy scores in the primary years and beyond.

Drawing usually starts with drawing a person and simple shapes such as circles, squares and crosses. Later in Pre-primary the child also learns how to draw triangles and more complex shapes and figures.

Children need to do two main "thinking" things when drawing:

1. they need to perceive the shape of the object and especially the component shapes that make up the object or the item. Most drawing is simply an amalgamation of shapes.
2. they need to think about what are the parts of that item or object that give it its characteristics. This also involves the context of the object or where you normally see it and find it. This is the very strong link to literacy and language.

Children then need to do two "doing" things when drawing:

1. they need to control their pencil to make it go in the same direction and shape that they perceive. This is a pencil control skill.
2. they need to make a plan of where they will start the drawing, stop change direction, and alter the size of the various parts of the object. This spatial and size control usually develops later towards the end of kindy and throughout pre-primary.

Children completing drawing tasks well will develop good writing skills as these two skills work on developing the same part of the brain. After all letters are simply a collection of shapes. One of the most significant things that we need to master later in school, is the sizing and the spacing of our letters. This is imperative because when we read we actually respond to the visual image of a word and we don't read each letter and sound. Proficient readers will instantly recognize the shape and find the perceptual match to that shape. This is why it is hard to read writing that has no size variation and where the spacing is out. Drawing helps the young child to develop their control with sizing so they can draw a bigger person to represent Dad, or the
large ears to represent an elephant etc. It also helps the child develop the spacing skills so that when they are drawing a flower for example the petals don't all bang into each other, or the carriages of a train don't all end up overlaid on top of one another. Many people believe that "some people just can't draw" and yes it is true some people do have more artistic talent than others but this is not the type of "art drawing" we are referring to. The type of drawing that everyone needs to be able to develop and can develop, is similar to simple representational drawings used in a Pictionary game and consists of line drawings and shapes. EVERYONE CAN DO THIS SIMPLE DRAWING.

**WHY?**

Because the brain is wired to process pictures before words and when we learn words and meanings they are laid over a picture or image that is stored in our brain. Descriptors such as adjectives are often connected to a "sensory image". It is this rich interplay between the image and the word that later develops good rich literacy and writing skills.

So if you want your child to write well in school one of the most powerful things you can do to support them and set them up for that is to draw with them and encourage their drawing skills.

**Mature drawing skills**

This does develop on a continuum but starts with basic representation of people, houses, animals and nature in the kindy year. Many children are not sure how to break the task down and where to start so they might need a strategy or step by step "ikea" picture guide to help them. Once they have done it they can usually recall how they did it and can draw the object by themselves. They are just like us if we were to put an Ikea flat pack together we would need to follow the step by step guide carefully and slowly but by the 10th one we would not need to follow the guide at all. This is why children often initially only like to draw what is in their repertoire and they repeat that ad nauseum. It is also why the 'how to draw books' have always been around. Often these books are too challenging for kindy and preprimary children. Children like simple breakdowns that help switch on their planning part of the brain. It is better if you keep it very simple so that they perceive they have a chance to try to do it the same.
Top tips for reluctant drawers.

Firstly keep it short, interactive and fun. Make sure at least initially when you are trying to engage them it isn't too high level and you reduce the expectations and aim for engagement. If you are not a capable confident cook you wouldn't attempt a highly complex three course meal for a dinner party you would choose something less complex with less steps. Kids are no different. Use whatever interests they have for example if they are into cars use that, if they enjoy animals develop drawing around that, if they like gross motor games and sport use that, if they like TV you can even use that as the task.

Eq Ideas

- Give them about 10 sticky coloured dots and get them to stick them anywhere on a blank page. Then give them a texta and get them to join them up and give it to you. Your challenge then is to draw and turn it into a picture for them.
- Get your child to draw a large target on a paper so you can stick it up on the wall to be a throwing target for their ball. Try to get them to draw a "darts style target in different colours and then you can help write some numbers so they can score. Play the ball game with them too!
- Get them to draw some faces on several different coloured balloons. Then hang them up on the back line or tie them to the pergola and either throw bean bags at them, squirt them with water pistols, or hit them with a t-ball bat. You can use this idea to write letters or numbers on the balloons or objects and the throw to the letters h,m,s or the numbers 4,8,2.
- Put masking tape down on the garage floor or footpath out the front. Get them to draw the small lines on the tape like there are in the middle of the road. Then get them to ride their bike or scooter on the "road" and attempt to stay on.
- Draw in shaving cream. Kids love this and you can do it in the bath before they have their bath and then give them the flannel to clean it up and wipe it off.
- Put the magna doodle back in the car.
- Try a whiteboard attached to the inside of the pantry door or on the inside of the cupboard door. It keeps it out of sight when not in use and means you can keep and eye on them and they can be around you. Get them to draw a
reminder to pick up their favourite cereal or ice cream by
drawing on the whiteboard.

- Try buying a large plain paper pad from the $2 shop and
every night get them to draw their own placemat. For very
reluctant drawers give them an empty plate to trace around.
Try to get them to draw a place for their drink and maybe
some "food" on the plate. You can extend this to drawing the
cutlery and even later just drawing a picture placemat.
Maybe they need to draw a bowl of ice cream and then they
can get one!

- Large butchers paper can be drawn on to turn into roads and
with a police station, the shops, the beach etc represented
and then lay it on the floor to play dinky cars. Later add
trees traffic lights etc.

- You half draw something and then get them to finish it off
for example a house with no door, a car with no wheels, a
person with no eyes, a bike rider with no hat. Get them to fill
in the what's missing bit.

- Draw on the outside of a cardboard box to make the bars
for a cage for zoo creatures. Let them try to throw their
soft toys in from a distance to play zookeepers.

- Try the above activity but make it a jail and they can throw
their action figures into the "Jail"

- Draw around Dad by tracing around his body. Then draw his
face. Is he big? Get Dad to draw around them how big are
they?

- Draw around their favourite toys and then use it as a sign
for which box their toys go in. All action figures in here, all
cars in this box.

- Use templates as these give good results and help to define
part of the picture. Make them from ice cream lids as they
can be made to fit with your child's interest. Often the
commercially available ones are too tricky.

- Try different media kids like highlighters, chalk, scratch
art, colour explosion markers Crayola, overwriters by
Crayola, changeables etc.

Remember for reluctant drawers shift the element away from the
drawing and to a bigger picture or different task so that the drawing
section is paired with a pleasurable activity. Keep it short, fun and
repeated frequently.