

Stages of Early Writing Development

Drawing and/or Scribbling

About the Student

To young writers, drawings and scribbles are meaningful and purposeful. Students “read” their drawings and scribbles as they would read conventional writing. Scribbling shows that students are beginning to distinguish between writing and drawing. When retelling their stories, students who point to where their story begins are showing beginning awareness of directionality.

Characteristics

- Students tell a story through drawing.
- Students write lines, shapes, or other marks in an attempt to convey meaning.
- Students may begin to attend to directionality when retelling their stories (left-to-right, top-to-bottom).



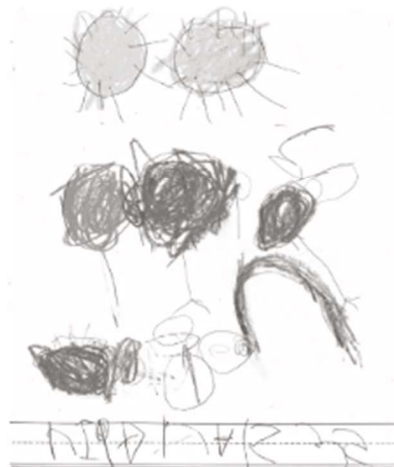
Letter-like Symbols

About the Student

Students who begin writing letter-like symbols show that they are beginning to understand that symbols convey meaning. These students are starting to recognize environmental print and are trying to reproduce it in their own writing.

Characteristics

- Students might be making shapes that resemble (but are not) letters or numbers including lines, zig-zags, and loops.
- Students might insert some letters among letter-like symbols.
- Students may attend to directionality when writing (left-to-right, top-to-bottom).



Stages of Early Writing Development *(continued)*

Pre-phonetic Writing and Writers

Strings of Letters

About the Student

Students who begin writing strings of letters show that they understand that letters are consistent and purposeful. Strings of letters usually appear in students' writing when they are learning the alphabet. Letters in a student's name and capital letters may appear more frequently. Students who are using strings of letters are attending to directionality and in later efforts may show evidence of one-to-one correspondence between a letter they have written and a spoken word. Students might attempt to produce familiar forms of writing (lists, stories, messages) and read back their own writing. Students may continue to use familiar methods of writing (letter-like symbols or scribbling) as their writing tasks become more complex.

Characteristics

- Students might write strings of letters or numbers in random order.
- Early efforts may include scribbles and letter-like symbols as students experiment with using letters.
- In later efforts, students may begin attending to letter-sound correspondence and spacing.
- Students might string together a series of high-frequency words or words seen in their environment (e.g., words that appear on bulletin boards, calendars, or morning messages).
- Students attend to directionality when writing (left-to-right, top-to-bottom).



Stages of Early Writing Development (*continued*)

Beginning Sounds

About the Student

Students who begin to attend to the beginning sounds of words show that they are developing letter-sound correspondence. They are continuing to develop directionality in their writing and may begin to attend to spacing after words. They are also experimenting with known forms of writing and writing sentences.

Characteristics

- Students might represent words and/or syllables within words by their beginning sounds, but representation might not always be accurate (e.g., *j* = *giant*, *bk* = *because*).
- Students may begin to intentionally incorporate uppercase and lowercase letters in their writing and experiment with using ending punctuation.
- Students might continue to insert random letters and strings of letters in their writing.
- Students might attempt to write sentences that express a complete thought.
- Students may begin to pay attention to spacing.
- Students continue to develop directionality in their writing.



Stages of Early Writing Development (*continued*)

Ending and Medial Sounds

About the Student

As students continue to develop letter-sound correspondence, they begin to incorporate ending consonant and medial sounds in their writing. They may use letter-name strategies to spell words (e.g., *ras* = *race*, *da* = *day*, *nit* = *night*) and may also attempt to apply familiar spelling patterns to their writing (e.g., *fat*, *cat*, *bat*). They continue to experiment with known forms of writing and writing sentences.

Characteristics

- Students continue to develop directionality in their writing.
- Students attend to spacing and writing sentences that express a complete thought.
- Students might continue to insert random letters and strings of letters in their writing.
- Students begin to include ending and/or medial sounds in addition to beginning sounds to represent words or syllables within words, but representation might not always be accurate (e.g., *jt* = *giant*, *bkz* = *because*).
- Students may spell high-frequency words correctly.
- Students may begin to write multiple sentences.
- Students may begin to use capital letters and ending punctuation in a conventional way.



Stages of Early Writing Development *(continued)*

Conventional Writing

About the Student

By this point, students are becoming comfortable with the process of writing. They have mastered directionality and spacing and have a sense of when to use capital letters and punctuation although consistency of use may vary with the complexity of the task.

Characteristics

- Students use capital letters and punctuation.
- Students are writing multiple sentences.
- Students are beginning to spell grade-level appropriate words conventionally and use approximated spelling to spell unfamiliar words.

