

# Early Writing in Pre-school

**Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> January**

**6:30pm – 8pm**

**Laurie Johnson**

Education Quality Improvement and Learning Co-Ordinator  
– Early Years

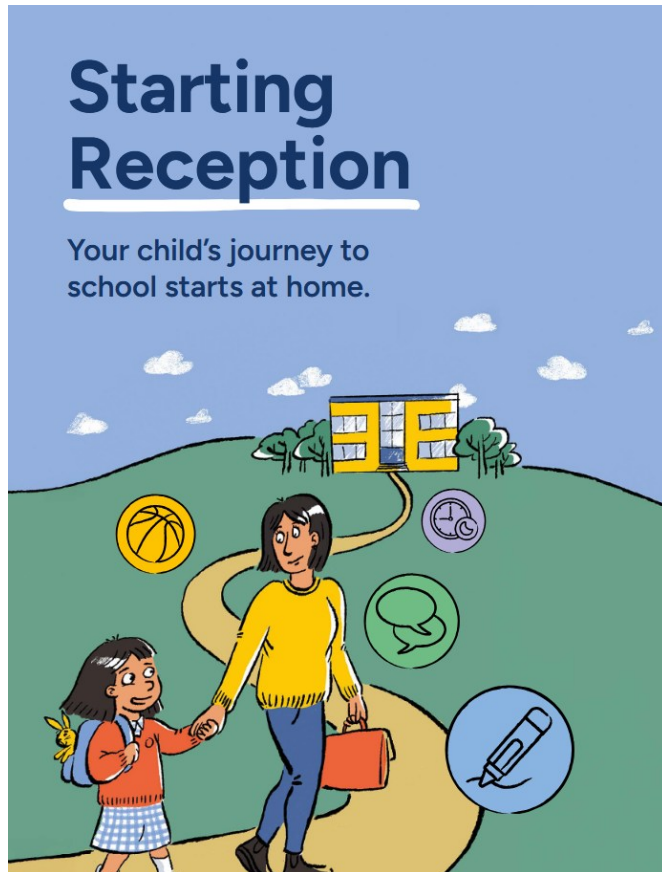
A copy of these slides can be found on the  
Shropshire Learning Gateway

## Aims:

- To explore the importance of mark making and emergent writing and the progression to writing.
- To consider the provision for mark making and emergent writing in your setting.
- To encourage parent carers to understand how they can help their children to be ready to start school.



## Why now?



[Home - Starting Reception](#)

National target of 75% of Reception children to have a good level of development by 2028.



## The writing framework

July 2025

“Teaching handwriting and spelling (transcription) from the reception year is crucial to ensure that these skills become automatic for children. This will free up their working memory for composition.”

[Writing framework: summary - GOV.UK](#)

# Early Literacy

Approaches and practices to support literacy in the early years.



“Learning to be a reader and writer relies on three broad underlying skills or areas of learning:

- speech, language, and communication skills;
- physical development, particularly fine motor skills; and
- executive function skills, including working memory and speed of retrieval from memory.”

Education Endowment Foundation

# Expectations in Pre-school:

“Pre-school children are not expected to achieve conventional spelling patterns, it is the attempt that counts, and the realisation that **marks have meaning.**”



[Help for early years providers : Writing](#)

# Expectations at the end of Reception:

## **Early learning goal: writing**

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.
- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters.
- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

[Early years foundation stage statutory framework for childminders](#)

[EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers](#)

## Pause for thought ...

- What is mark-making?
- What is emergent writing?

Put simply.....

Mark making is the creation of different patterns, lines, shapes and textures.

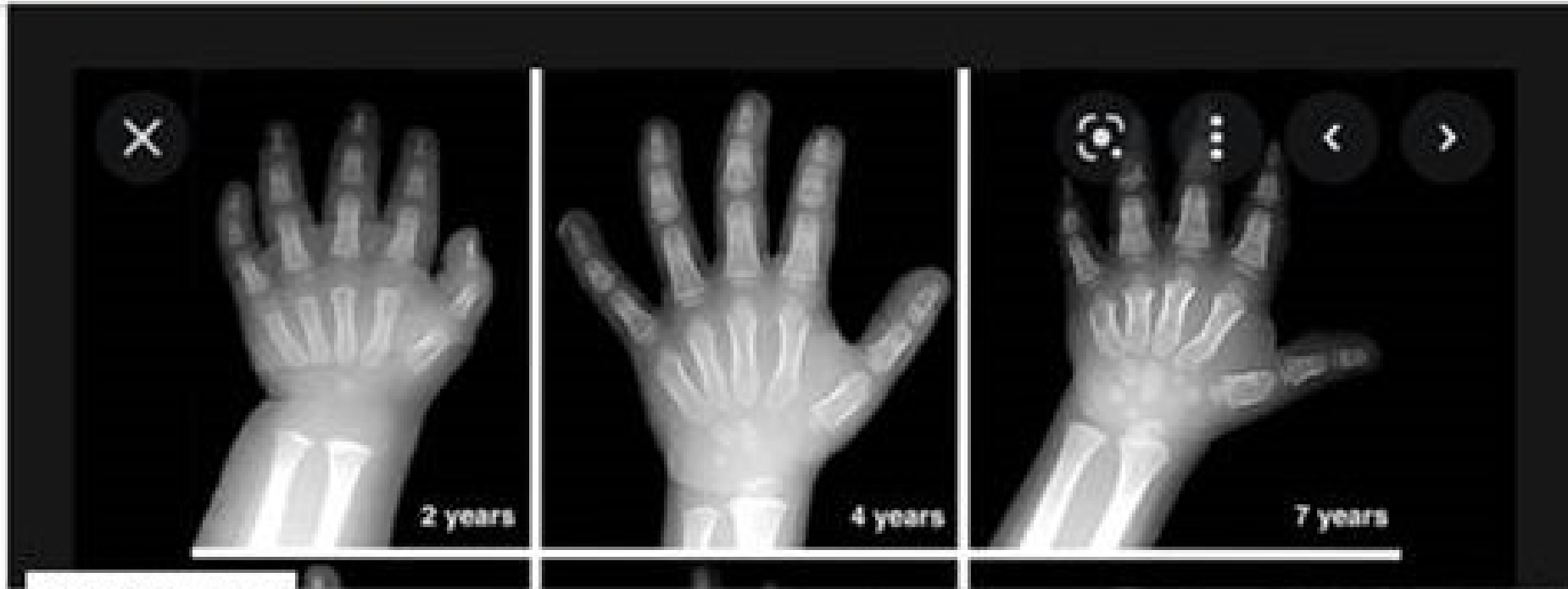
Emergent writing is a child's first attempts at writing.



## Why is emergent writing important?

Vygotsky emphasized that writing begins as a social, communicative tool and children's early marks are meaningful steps in that process.





Google images

## The road to writing



EYFS – Physical development – Gross motor skills



Share

# Gross motor skills



MORE VIDEOS



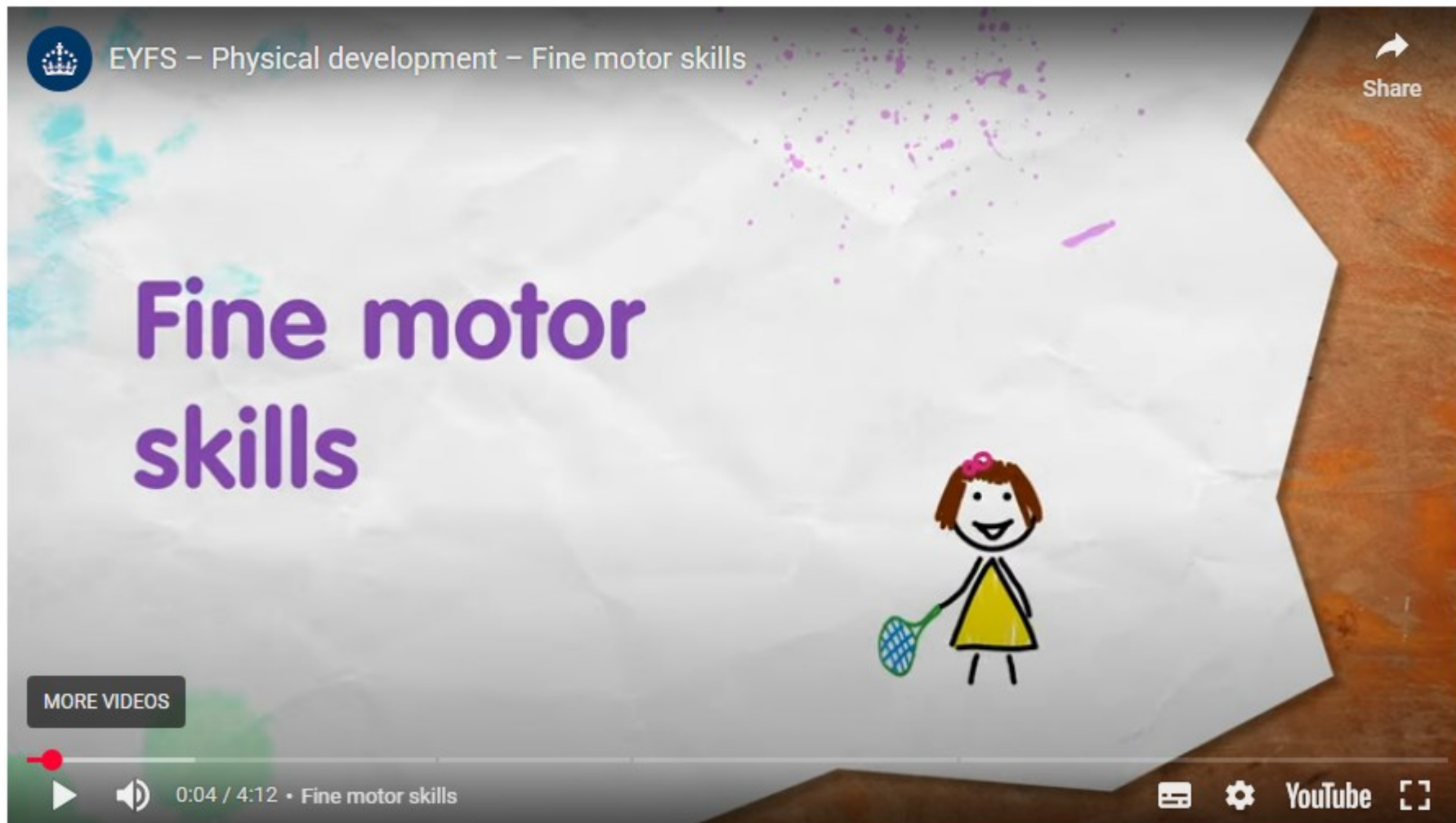
0:02 / 4:28



YouTube



[Help for early years providers : Gross motor skills](#)



[Help for early years providers : Fine motor skills](#)





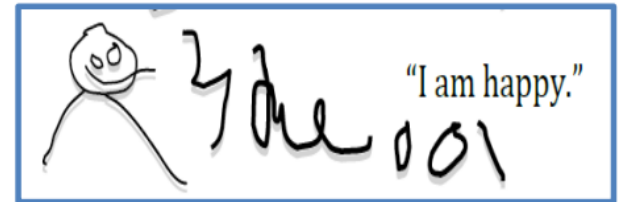
## Mark Making

# Developmental Stages of Writing



### Pre-Literate

Stage	Stage Description
Scribble	Starting point any place on th page, resembles drawing large circular strokes and random marks that do not resemble print or communicate a message.
Symbolic	Starting point any place on page, pictures or random strokes/marks with an intended message
Directional Scribble	Scribble left to right direction, linear, intended as writing that communicates a meaningful message/idea.
Symbolic / Mock Letters	Letter-like formations that may resemble letters but isn't intentional, interspersed with numbers and spacing is rarely present.



## Mark Making

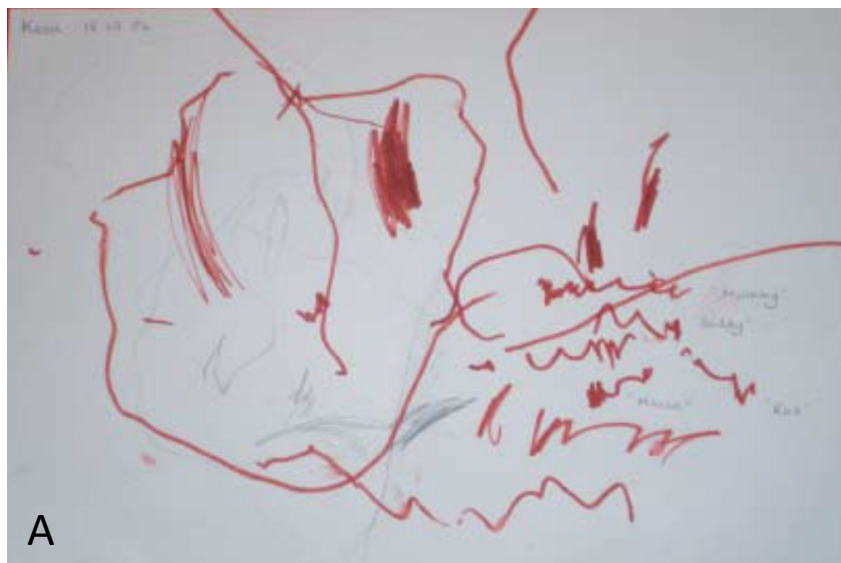
# Developmental Stages of Writing



Emergent	
Stage	Stage Description
Strings of Letters	Long strings of various letters in random order, may go from left to right, uses letter sequence perhaps from name , usually uses capital letters, may write same letters in many ways.
Groups of Letters	Groupings of letters with spaces between to resemble words
Labelling Pictures	Matching beginning sounds with the letter to label a picture
Environmental Print	Copies letters/words from environmental print, reversals common, uses a variety of resources to facilitate writing. This may include own name.

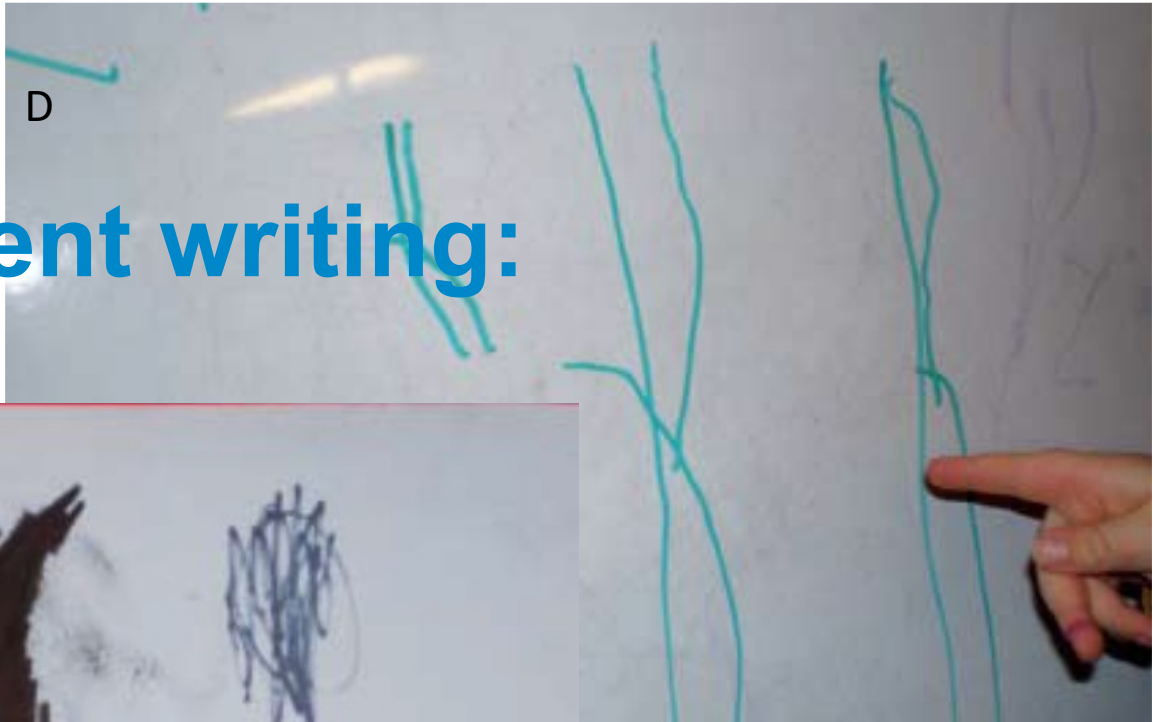


# From mark-making ...





... to emergent writing:



# What's in a name?

Children's earliest mark-making will often involve their name or age as these are of particular significance to them.

Often begins with lines and curves moving to an initial letter.





# Emergent writing opportunities:





# Block play



[Quality Interaction](#)

# Deconstructed role play



Further information can be found at:

[Deconstructed Role Play: Reimagining Early Years Spaces for Imagination!](#)



### 3 and 4-year-olds will be learning to:

### Examples of how to support this:

Use some of their print and letter knowledge in their early writing. For example: writing a pretend shopping list that starts at the top of the page; writing 'm' for mummy.

Write some or all of their name.

Motivate children to write by providing opportunities in a wide range of ways. Suggestions: clipboards outdoors, chalks for paving stones, boards and notepads in the home corner. Children enjoy having a range of pencils, crayons, chalks and pens to choose from. Apps on tablets enable children to mix marks, photos and video to express meanings and tell their own stories. Children are also motivated by simple home-made books, different coloured paper and paper decorated with fancy frames.

Write some letters accurately.

Help children to learn to form their letters accurately. First, they need a wide-ranging programme of physical skills development, inside and outdoors. Include large-muscle co-ordination: whole body, leg, arm and foot. This can be through climbing, swinging, messy play and parachute games, etc. Plan for small muscle co-ordination: hands and fingers. This can be through using scissors, learning to sew, eating with cutlery, using small brushes for painting and pencils for drawing. Children also need to know the language of direction ('up', 'down', 'round', 'back', etc).

# Early learning goal: writing

Children at the expected level of development at the end of Reception will:

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.
- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters.
- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

[Early years foundation stage statutory framework for childminders](#)

[EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers](#)



# Starting Reception

Your child's journey to school starts at home.



## The definition: skills to practise before starting Reception:

New skills take time to learn. Practising at home will help your child move into school more easily and with confidence.

Home - Starting Reception

## Transition document from setting to school:

Name of main setting and contact details:				Name of Key Person: Date completed:	
Child's name:			D.O.B.		Start date at setting:
<b>ECHNA:</b> - Request in - No to assess - Yes to assess	Date:	<b>EYPP:</b> Yes / No	Sessions attended and timings:		
			Monday		
		Tuesday			
		<b>Contact with other professionals:</b> Please list and see last page for more details:	Wednesday		
			Thursday		
			Friday		
Please highlight the age band the child is currently working in, commenting in the areas where there maybe concerns.					
CL	0-3 3-4	Comments:			
PSED	0-3 3-4	Comments:			
PD	0-3 3-4	Comments:			

September 2025



[EYFS Documentation and Links | Shropshire Learning Gateway](#)

## Transition document from setting to school (cont:)

Please discuss the statements below with parent carers. These are taken from the Starting Reception website and will support parent carers and children in their readiness in transferring to reception class.

Skills / activities:	Comments:
<p><b>Growing Independence:</b></p> <p><b>Taking care of themselves</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Putting on / taking off their coat and shoes</li> <li>-Using the toilet and washing their hands</li> <li>-Getting dressed with little help</li> <li>-Using cutlery and drinking from an open cup</li> <li>-Spending time away from you, learning they can be looked after by caring adults.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Play, creativity and curiosity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Taking part in imaginative play (e.g. role play)</li> <li>-Drawing, painting, colouring and sticking</li> <li>-Sharing story books with caregivers, looking at pictures and talking about the characters</li> <li>-Exploring the world around them (e.g. looking closely at the natural world or playing safely with objects at home).</li> </ul>	

## Transition document from setting to school (cont:)

Please discuss the statements below with parent carers. These are taken from the Starting Reception website and will support parent carers and children in their readiness in transferring to reception class.

Skills / activities:	Comments:
<p><b>Building relationships and Communicating:</b></p> <p><b>Being with others</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Practising sharing and taking turns with toys</li> <li>-Talking about feelings and reasons</li> <li>-Discussing storybook characters' emotions</li> <li>-Beginning to recognise others' feelings</li> <li>-Encouraging self and peer boundaries.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Communication and language</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Singing songs and nursery rhymes</li> <li>-Talking about activities, experiences and the world around them</li> <li>-Clearly asking for help</li> <li>-Recognising the pattern of time.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Listening and engaging</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Paying attention for short periods of time</li> <li>-Listening to and following simple instructions</li> <li>-Carrying on with a task even when it is difficult and bouncing back if things go wrong.</li> </ul>	

## Transition document from setting to school (cont:)

Please discuss the statements below with parent carers. These are taken from the Starting Reception website and will support parent carers and children in their readiness in transferring to reception class.

Skills / activities:	Comments:
<p><b>Physical Development:</b></p> <p><b>Getting moving</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Walking up and down steps</li> <li>-Climbing, running, jumping and playing</li> <li>-Catching a large ball</li> <li>-Sing simple puzzles and craft activities; strengthening grip with cutting and sticking.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Healthy routines</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Maintaining a regular bedtime and wake-up routine</li> <li>-Limiting screentime to recommended amounts</li> <li>-Eating a healthy diet and trying new foods</li> <li>-Brushing teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice daily.</li> </ul>	

## Transition document from setting to school (cont:)

All About Me @ 4		
<b>All about me:</b>	My friends:	
	My family: who are special to me?	
	Things I am good at:	
	Things I find difficult:	
<b>Things I like to do:</b>	What do I like to do at home?	What do I like to do when I am in my setting?
	Where do I like to play, indoors and outdoors? Where are my favourite places?	
	Comments:	

## Transition document from setting to school (cont:)

All About Me @ 4			
What I would like you to know about me:			
Other professionals who help me:	<i>Please mark the appropriate box below:</i>		
	On-going contact:	Previous contact:	No contact:
	Comments:		
<a href="#">EYFS Documentation and Links   Shropshire Learning Gateway</a>			

# Further websites and resources:

- [BBC Tiny Happy People - Tips and Advice](#)
- [Help for early years providers : Writing](#)
- [Mark Making Matters: Young children making meaning in all areas of learning and development](#)
- [Write from the start | EEF](#)



- [What-to-expect-in-the-EYFS-complete-FINAL-16.09-compressed.pdf](#) (p.69)





## On reflection ...

- Explored the importance of mark making and emergent writing and the progression to writing.
- Considered the provision for mark making and emergent writing in your setting.
- Encourage parent carers to understand how they can help their children to be ready to start school.



## And finally ...



“Generally, 3-to-4-year-olds start behaving like writers, making wavy lines and distinct separate marks. If children show an interest and want to write, it is crucial that they should develop hand and finger strength to hold a chunky crayon or pencil comfortably. Eventually they may be able to make attempts to write some very familiar letters, for example their name.”

[Laurie.johnson@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:Laurie.johnson@shropshire.gov.uk)  
01743 250626

[Help for early years providers : Writing](#)