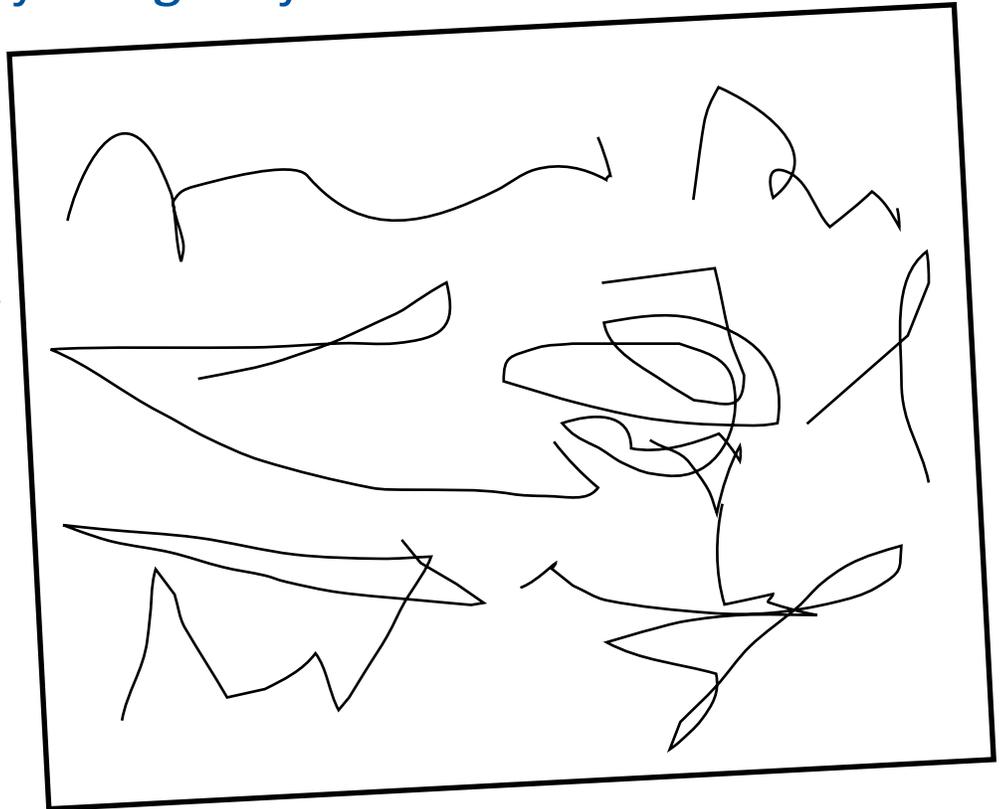


## Scribbles have meaning

Look at the picture in the box below.

Does it mean anything to you?

*Scribbles may not make any sense to an adult. They look like a lot of lines, loops, and squiggles. But these marks are very important to a young child. They are a child's way of writing her thoughts. Drawing and scribbling are the first steps in using the skills children will need later for writing.*



## Encourage scribbling and drawing

- Set out paper, pencils, crayons, and markers so children can use them to scribble or draw whenever they want to.
- Ask parents to bring office paper that's printed on one side. The children will enjoy scribbling and drawing on the back side of the paper and it's free!
- Put away coloring books. Allow children to be free to create their own pictures and use their own ideas. It doesn't matter if adults can't identify what the child is drawing. The child knows and that's what is important.
- Encourage children to use their scribbling skills during play. They may like to make signs if they are playing with cars and trucks or pretending they are running a store. Cut paper into smaller pieces for children to make their own play money and cash register receipts. Clip several pieces of paper together to make a pad for waiters and waitresses to write down orders in a restaurant.
- When children are having a hard day or missing mom, ask them if they would like to write a letter or draw a picture. Drawing and writing are good ways to help children get out their emotions.

**Drawing and scribbling are the first steps in learning to write.**

## Talking about drawings and scribblings

What do you say when a child shows you drawing or scribbling? Ask the child to explain what is written. To children, making marks on paper is more important than what the marks look like.

Caregivers may want to talk about how marks were made or what they are seeing.

*"You were pressing really hard on the crayon right here, and it's lighter over here."*

*"Look how big these lines are."*

*"How did you get that crayon to make that line?"*

*"You made some little tiny dots and a long curvy line."*

If a child shows some scribbles and asks, "What did I write?", the caregiver could ask him, "What do you want it to say?" or "What were you thinking about when you were working on it?"

**Set out lots of paper, pencils, crayons, and markers so children can draw or scribble whenever they want.**

## Make drawing and scribbling important

- Hang drawings and scribblings on the walls where children can see them.
- Ask a child to tell about her picture. Write down what she says on a piece of paper. Read what she said back to her.
- Some children will not want others to see their scribblings, especially if an older child or parent has made negative comments about scribbling. You can help these children by talking about scribbling as "working on your writing."
- Talk with parents about drawing and scribbling as the first step in learning to write.

