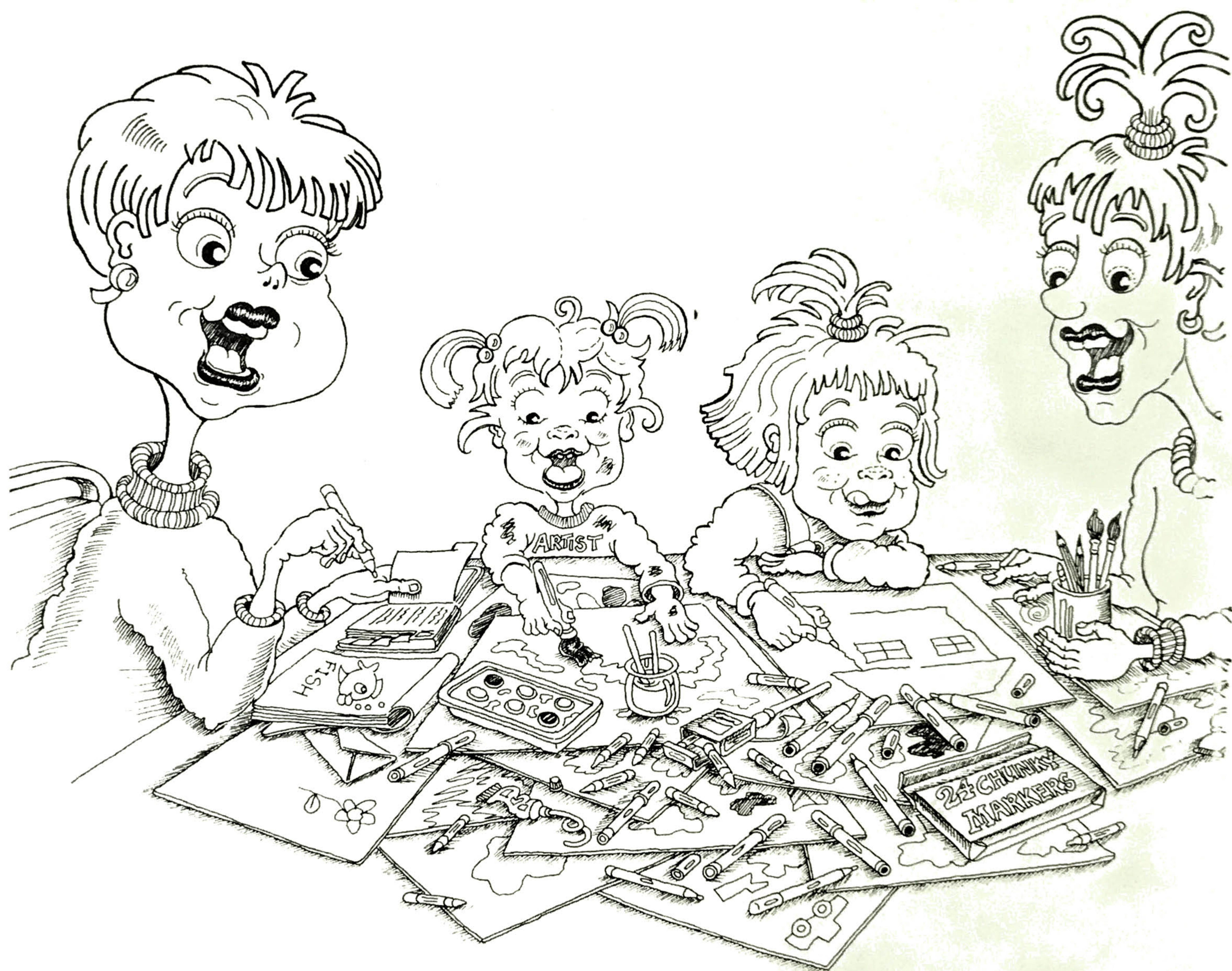


D



8 - Ready to write
9 - Everyday writing

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Early writing activities

Children develop an interest in writing by watching adults use writing every day. They learn that writing has many different purposes. Even as they make their first scribbles, children are aware that writing is a way of sharing ideas with others.

Your child needs to develop hand muscles and eye-hand co-ordination skills to control a pencil for drawing and writing. You can help him to develop these skills gradually by encouraging him to participate in everyday activities.

You can help your child to develop hand muscles and eye-hand co-ordination by letting him help you in the kitchen. He can:

- sift flour,
- beat eggs,
- stir batter with a big spoon,
- spread jam on bread.

You can also provide your child with sheets of paper and 'writing tools'. Chubby crayons, thick chalk, or thick paintbrushes are easier for a small child to grasp. Let him draw and scribble, trace and colour.

Dot-to-dot pictures, simple jigsaw puzzles and colouring books are other useful materials. Choose these carefully. Most puzzle books, jigsaws and similar activities indicate the appropriate age level on the box or cover.

Remember to praise your child's efforts, display his pictures, and talk about his drawings!

Here are a few more ideas:

- buttoning, unbuttoning clothes
- playing games of catch
- moulding and building with playdough
- playing with Lego and blocks
- finger painting
- tying shoelaces
- playing with sand
- using children's scissors
- playing with cards
- playing clapping games

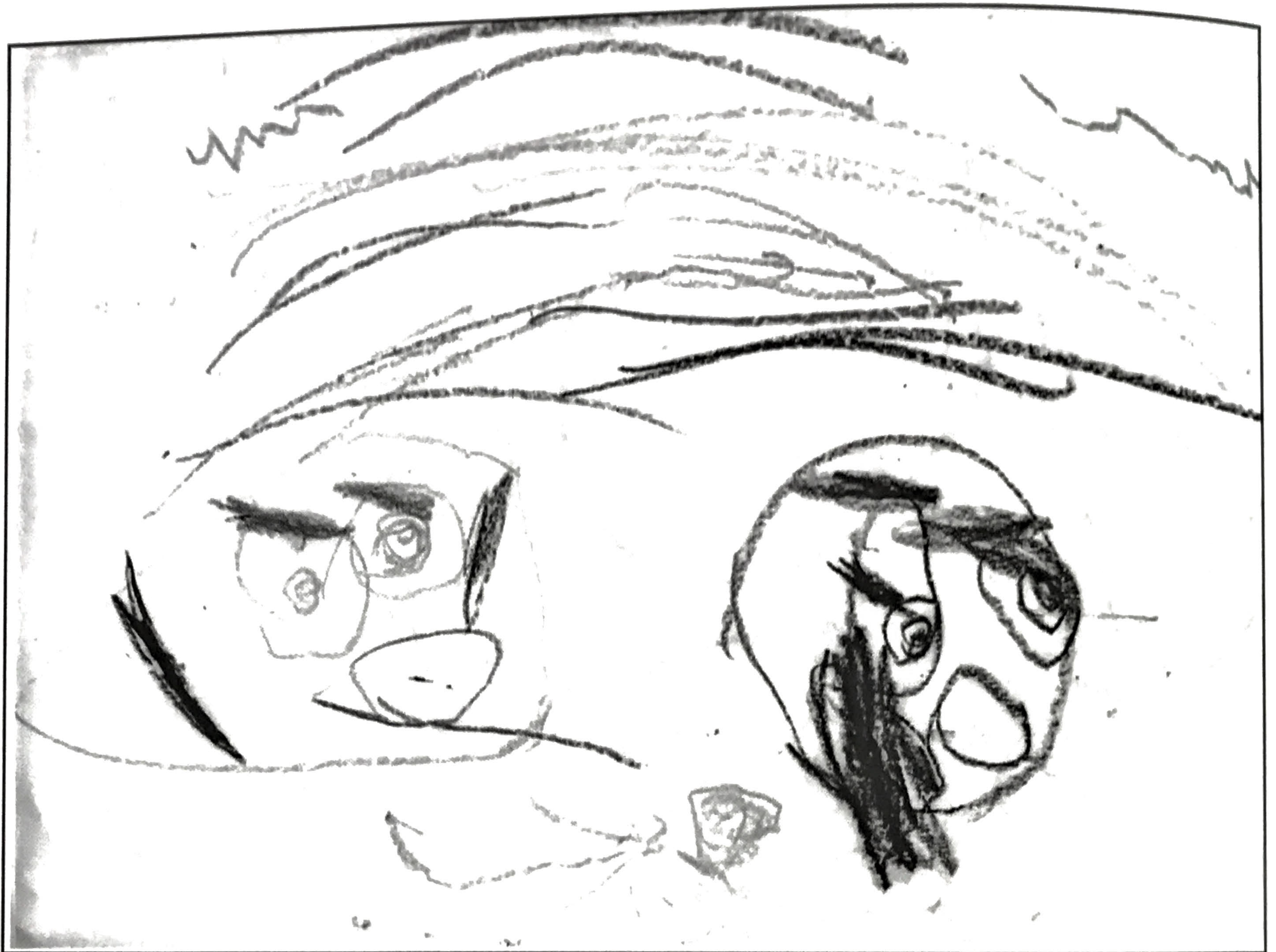
Early writing samples



1. Children begin to develop writing skills by showing an interest in writing and drawing. They start by making marks on the page, lines and shapes, and learning how to hold a crayon or pencil.

Jenny, 1 yr. 8 mos., demonstrates her enthusiasm for early writing by eagerly picking up a crayon, which she handles with a practiced grasp while making determined lines on the paper.

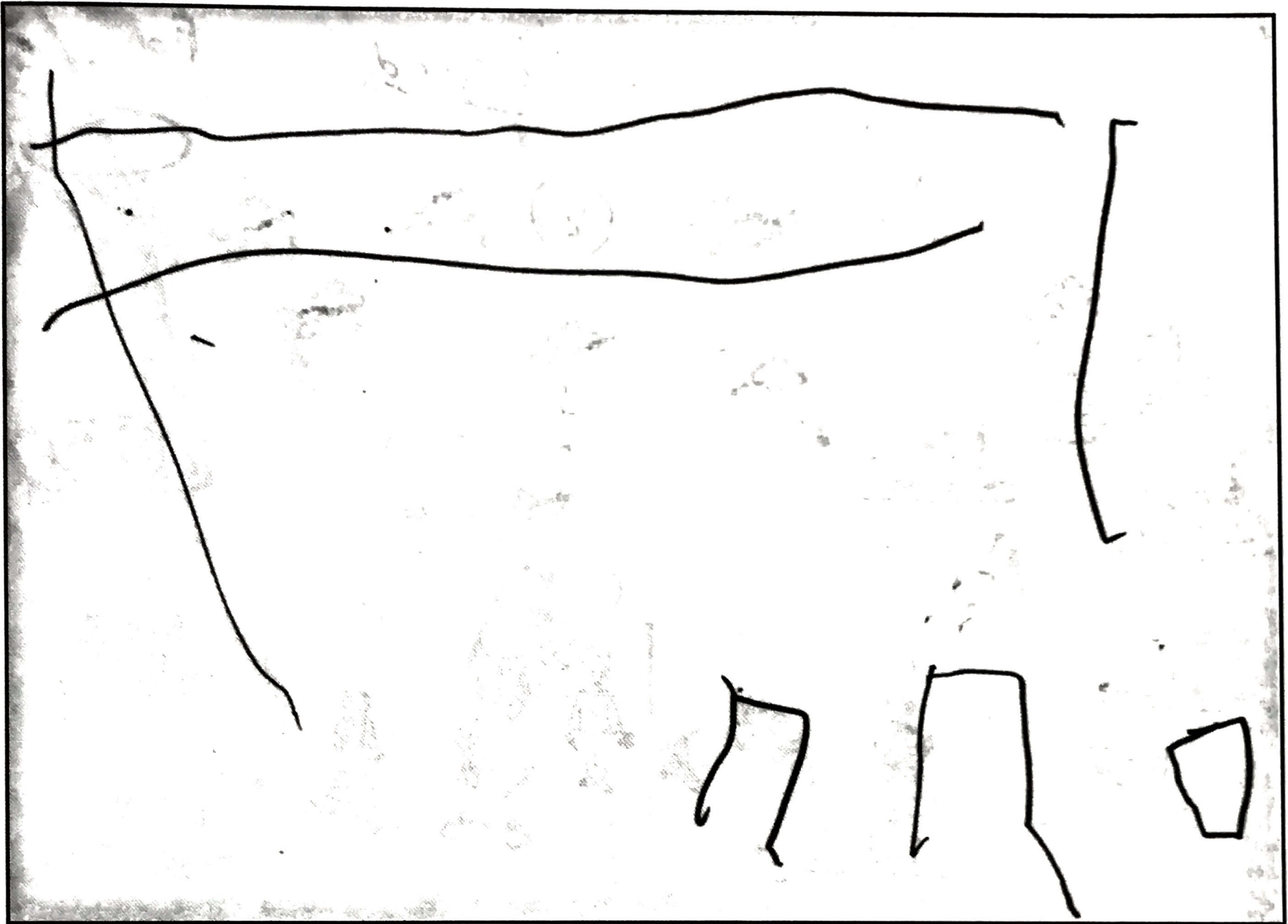
Early writing samples



2. Children are beginning to make a real effort to form letters. This may start as lines of scribbling and gradually recognisable patterns, such as circles begin to emerge. Children show that they understand the difference between drawing and writing by making different types of marks for drawing and letters/words.

Lucy, 2 yrs. 9 mos., shows evidence of emerging patterns and purpose in her early writing. She draws a picture of her mother and father to which she adds many details, such as eyebrows, beard, nostrils. Above each figure, she writes 'Mammy' and 'Daddy' with a special scribble which follows a repetitive pattern.

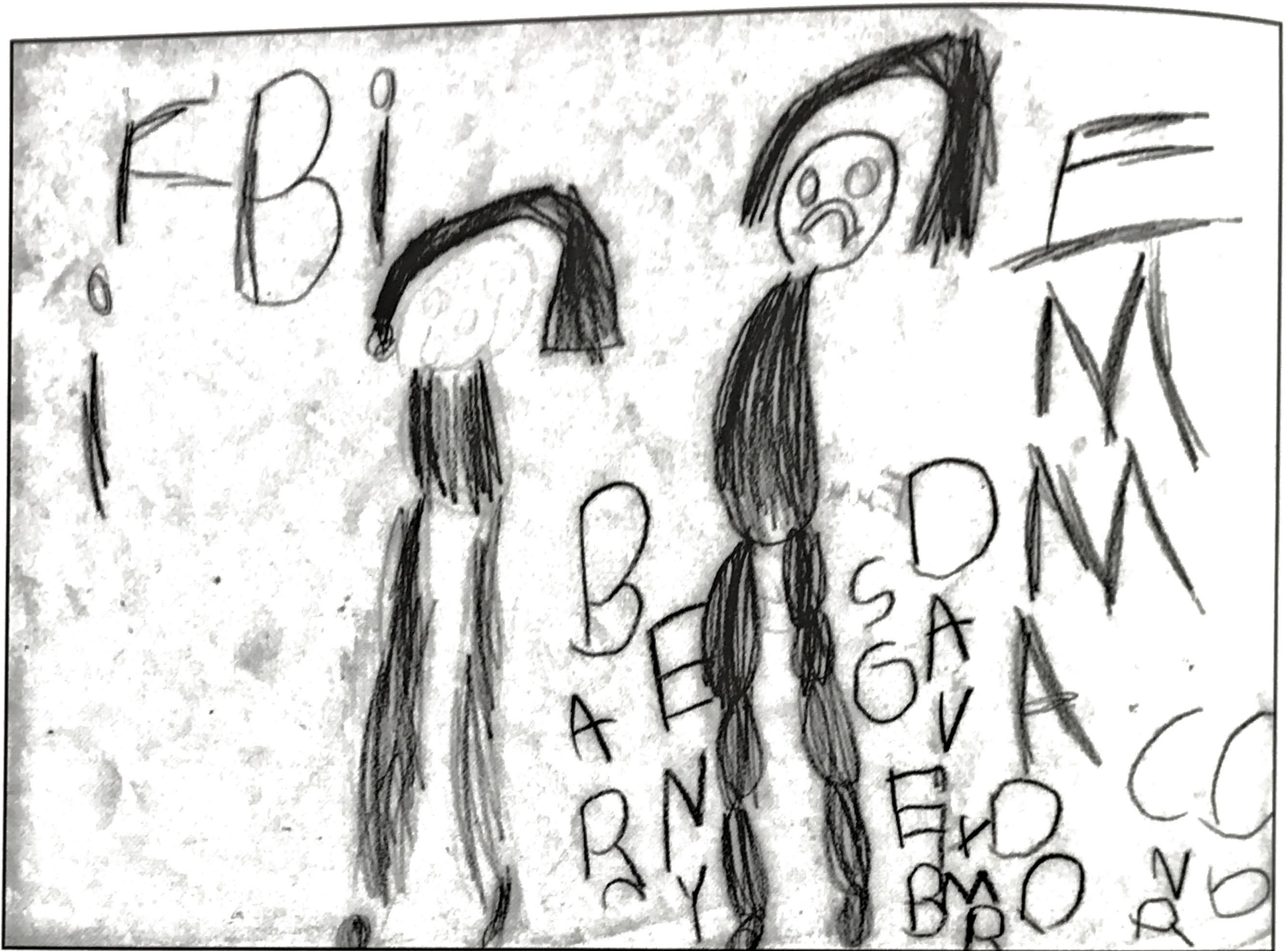
Early writing samples



3. Children at this stage are able to form letters by copying or tracing dots. They may be interested in exploring different types of writing. For example, they may copy bits of signs and posters.

Fionn, 4 yrs. 4 mos., focuses his interest on letter formation. He is interested in writing his name. He asks his teacher to write it out so he can copy the letters.

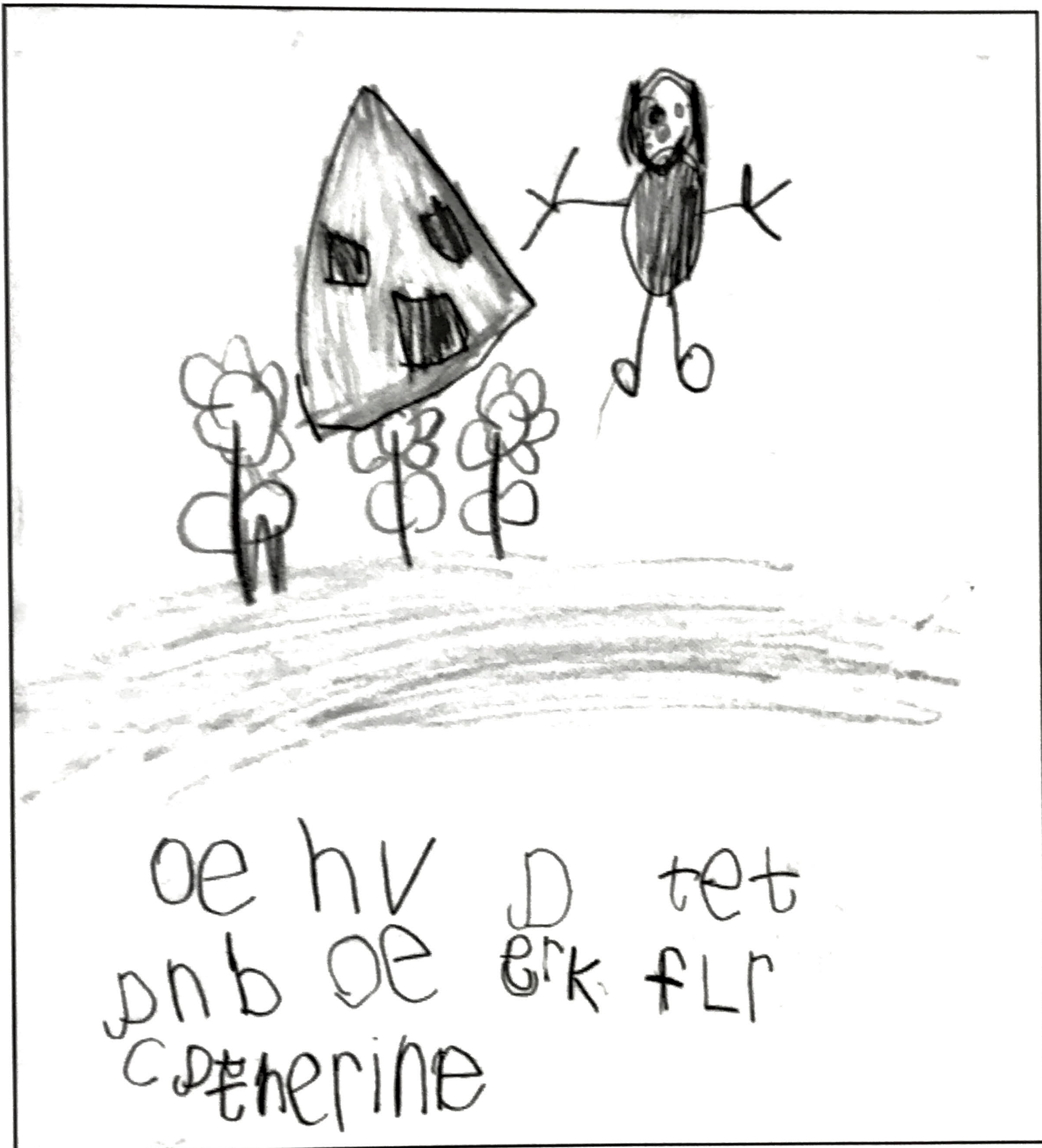
Early writing samples



4. Children are able to manage some letter formation by themselves, such as their names or strings of letters. Children are still doing lots of exploring at this stage, and decoration may be an important feature of their work.

Emma, 3 yrs. 6 mos., is interested in demonstrating her ability to write words. Her picture is not as important to her as her message. She began with the words that she can write on her own. She starts with her name and then 'FBI', and progresses to copy the names of her family and her favourite television programme, 'Barney'.

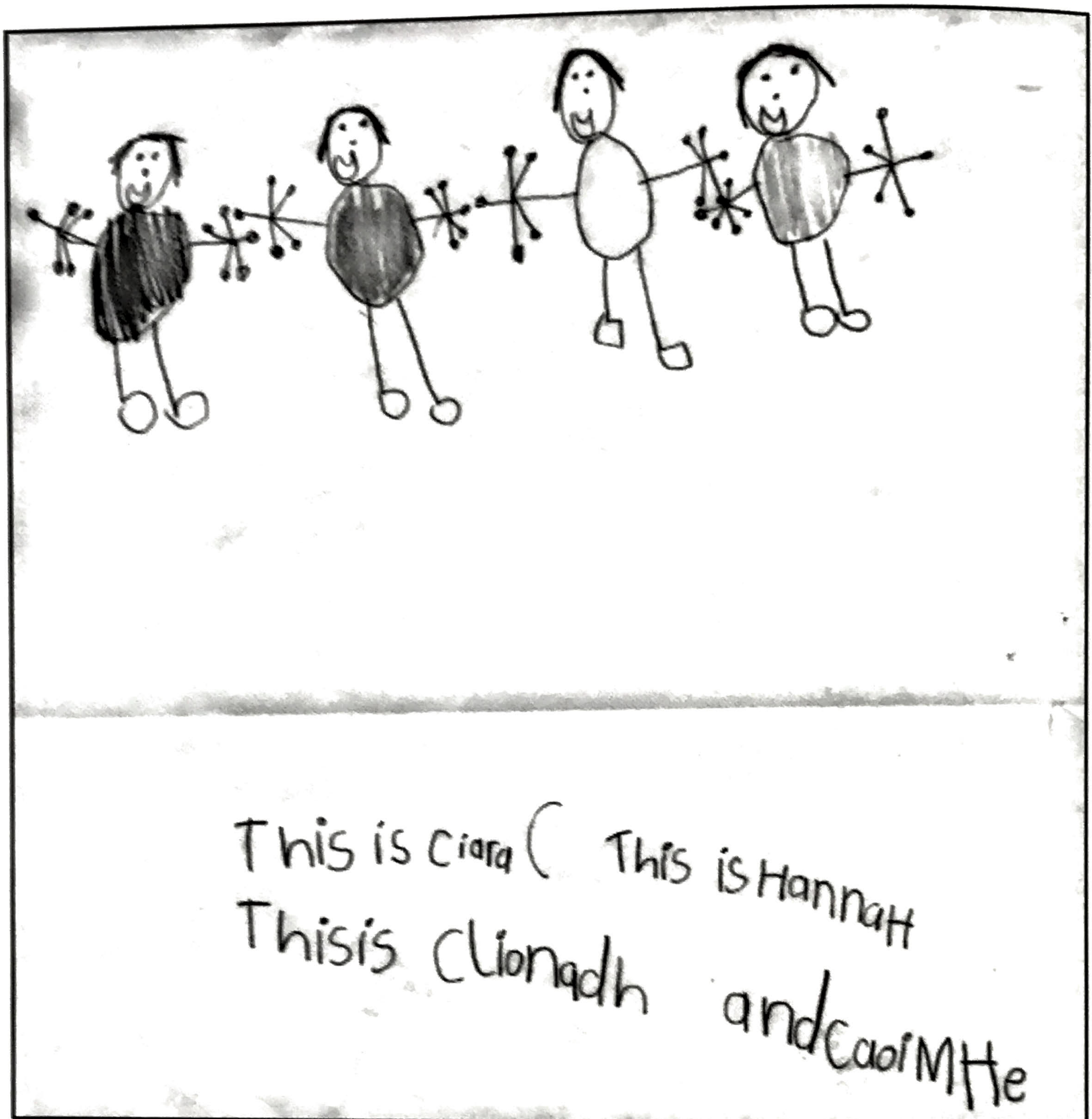
Early writing samples



5. Children understand that they must write words to communicate the meaning of their messages. Children at this stage will often ask adults to read their writing. They have very few spelling skills, but they know what they want to say.

Catherine, 5 yrs. 6 mos., conveys a clear message describing her picture, 'I have a tent and I grow flowers.' She is at a beginning spelling stage, demonstrating knowledge of some consonant and vowel sounds. She also demonstrates that she has learned that writing goes from left to right with a return sweep for the next line.

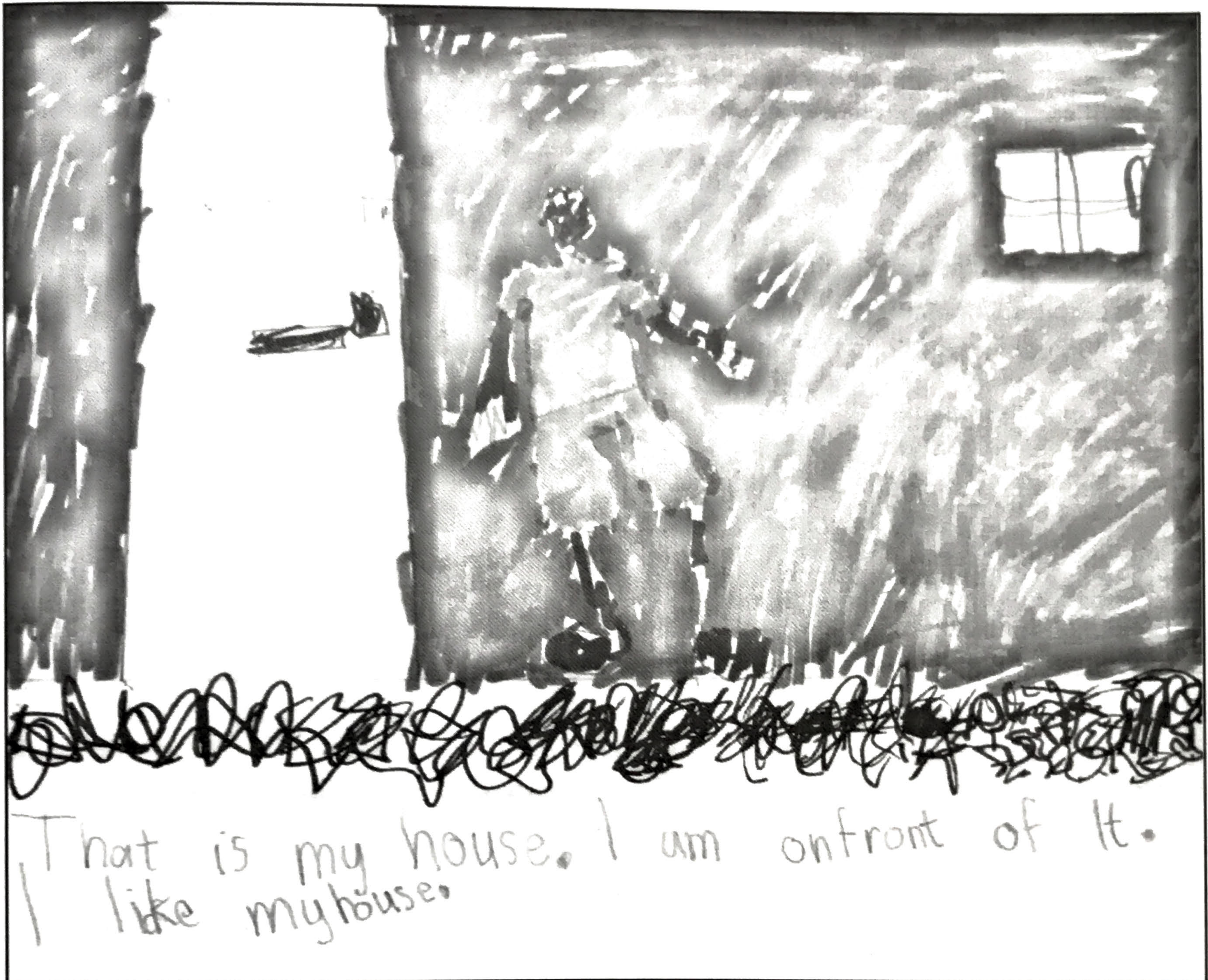
Early writing samples



6. Children begin to write so that it can be more easily understood. They will spell with beginning and ending sounds, but probably not with vowels. They may be able to spell simple words correctly such as 'cat', 'I', 'the'. They may begin to leave spaces between words.

Caiomhe, 6 yrs. 6 mos., shows good evidence that she has quite a bit of knowledge about spelling, grammar, and punctuation. However, she confines her writing to the simple words that she is confident about spelling. She has written a clear string of sentences with capital letters at the beginning of each one.

Early writing samples



7. Children at this stage are able to write 'text'. They are beginning to sequence a set of ideas that makes sense. They are beginning to use full stops or linking words such as 'and' and 'but' to help make their writing more structured. Although spelling is still not a major concern at this age, there is evidence that children are beginning to use spelling rules by sounding out words.

Killian, 6 yrs. 7 mos., is able to write 'text'. His writing contains complete sentences with full stops and capitals. His sentences are sequenced and make good sense. He demonstrates a good grasp of spelling skills.

Pencil power

You can help your child get ready to write letters by starting to copy and draw patterns. Making patterns helps to develop the eye-hand co-ordination skills needed to form letters. Joining lines from left to right will help him get used to the idea of reading and writing from left to right.

Draw patterns for your child to copy and let him draw patterns for you to copy in return. Don't expect your child to be able to copy your pattern accurately. He may just scribble at first. This is what beginning writers do.

Here are some other ideas for making patterns:

- Make a pattern frame around a picture.
- Play 'joining up' games. Draw two objects, for example, a cat and a mouse and ask your child to join them up.
- Draw a picture with a line or a circle left out. Ask your child to fill in the missing line. For example, draw a cup without a handle.
- Make simple mazes and dot-to-dots.
- Play 'take a line for a walk'.
- String beads.
- Make coloured paper chains.
- Draw patterns in the sand.
- Encourage all kinds of drawing and colouring.

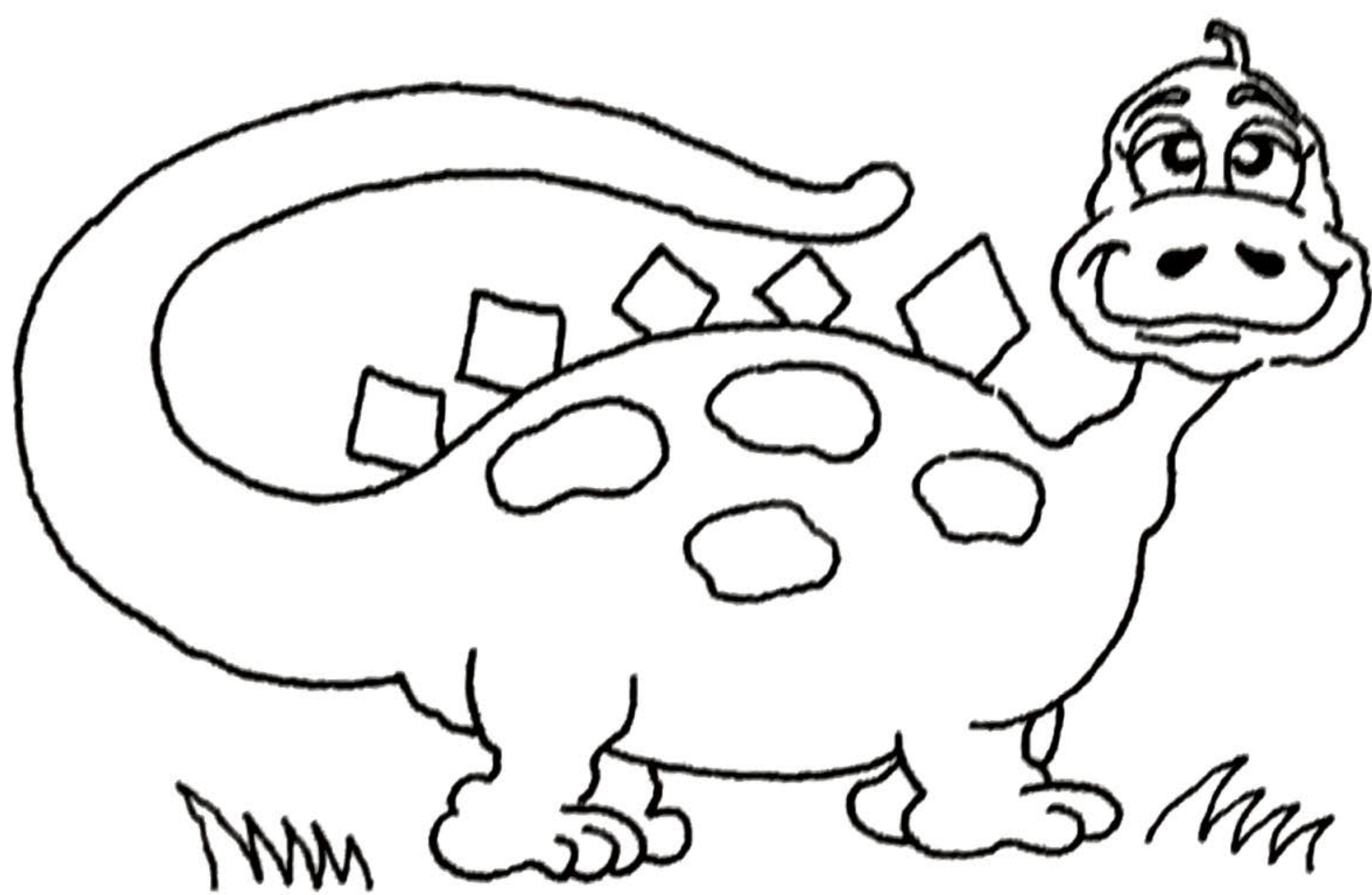
Making a dot-to-dot

You will need:

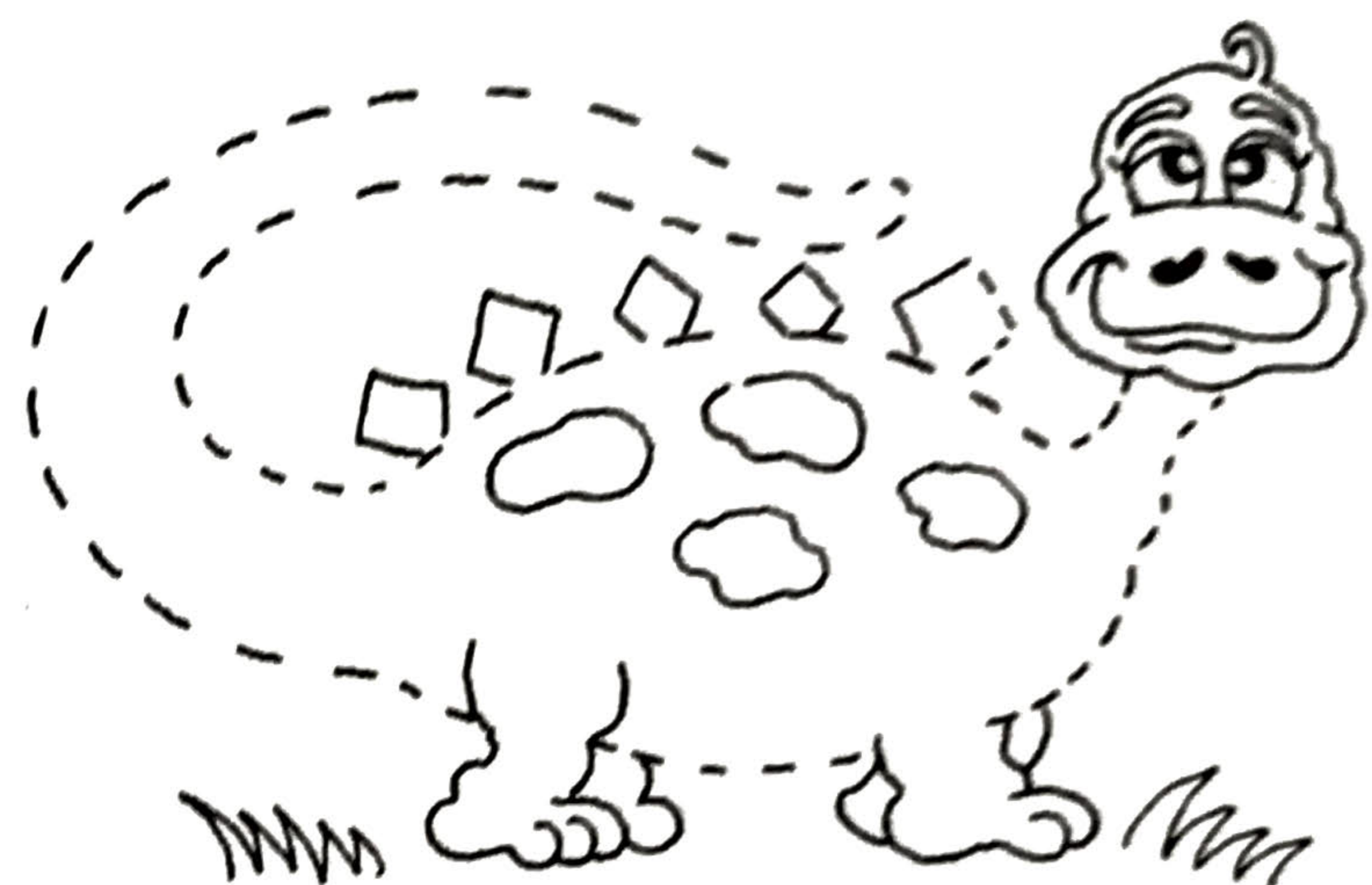
- a colouring book, cardboard (cereal box), scissors, markers and paper.

Copy or trace a simple drawing from a colouring book onto cardboard. Cut it out to make your stencil.

Place your stencil in the middle of a page. First, fill in small details and background details to give your child a hint of the picture. Then create your dot-to-dot in one of three ways:



Trace the picture in broken lines for your child to connect.



1

Trace the picture in dots for your child to connect.



2

Trace a few lines to give an idea of the picture. Then, working left to right, make and number dots for your child to connect.



3

Words about writing

Does your child know some of these words?

alphabet

copy

keep between
the lines

big letters

pencil

write in the
squares

lines

left to right

rubber

capitals

print

small letters

full stop

question
mark

skip a space

skip a line

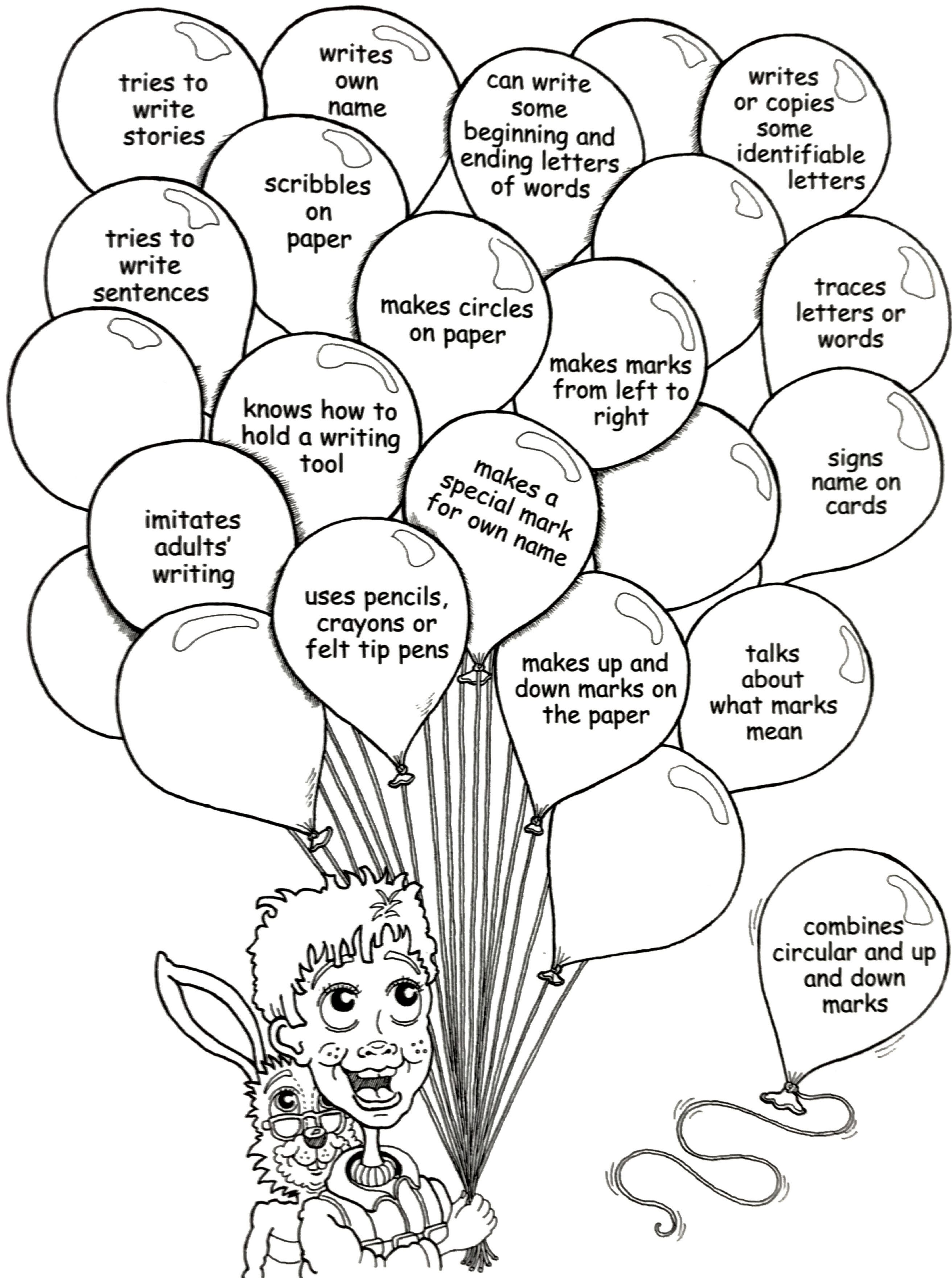
ruler

space

go on to the
next line

margins

Spotlight on writing



Name _____

Age _____

Photocopy for each child as needed.



Using the 'Spotlight on writing'

Can you list some of the writing skills mentioned in the **Spotlight on writing** that your child has demonstrated?

Can you name some of the times and places you have observed your child engaged in writing activities?

Can you give some of the reasons your child was writing?

What else could you do to encourage your child to develop the skills needed to write?



Everyday writing activities

Your child will become interested in learning how to write because she watches you and others in the home using writing for different purposes. Here are some ideas for including her in everyday writing activities in the home. Even if she is not ready to put pencil to paper, she will enjoy watching you and talking with you about these writing tasks.

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Make lists | shopping list, 'to do' list, Christmas wish list, who to invite to my party list, things to take on a trip list, things to do when Granny visits. |
| Take messages | telephone messages, messages from people stopping by, cooking instructions. |
| Sign cards | Christmas cards, birthday cards, Valentine's Day cards, thank you cards. |
| Write letters | to family members, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends. |
| Design labels | for personal belongings such as books, toys, sports gear, and on doors and shelves. |
| Make out a menu | for a birthday or holiday meal. |
| Write on pictures | add a title, write some dialogue, sign the picture. |

Your ideas:

Writing and play

Shop:

- Start by collecting empty food cartons such as cereal boxes, biscuit wrappers, egg cartons, or washing up bottles.
- Help your child to write price labels on the items.
- Use play money or make your own.
- Provide pencil and paper for writing a shopping list.
- Use a shoebox for a 'till'.
- Make a sign for the shop.

Restaurant:

- Allow your child to set the table.
- Do up a simple menu card with menu items and pictures to match.
- Have a note pad for taking orders.
- Use play money or make your own.
- Use a shoebox for a 'till'.

School:

- Provide a blackboard or a big piece of paper that can be tacked or taped to a wall.
- Collect some chalk, pencils, little notebooks or copies, and storybooks.
- Use large empty cardboard boxes for desks.
- Encourage your child to decorate her classroom with letters of the alphabet, numbers and pictures.

House:

- Help your child to make a tent with a blanket or sheet draped over several chairs for a playhouse.
- The playhouse could be for herself, her dolls or her stuffed animals.
- Provide her with paper, crayons and markers to make a colourful sign for the house.

Your ideas:

More writing activities

Start a scrapbook of your child's pictures, writing, cards.

Ask your child to draw pictures for a story and paste these into a scrapbook or other notebook. Then together you could write the text.

Give your child chalk to draw on the pavement. Teach her how to make a hopscotch board. It will wash away easily when it rains.

Providing your child with a wide variety of writing activities:

- helps to build her confidence around writing;
- prepares her for writing tasks in school;
- helps her to develop a sense of purpose about writing;
- helps her to feel included in the family and in the wider community.

Your ideas:



Fun with writing

Choose one or more of the writing activities to try at home:

Make something using the writer's toolkit.

Include your child in an everyday writing activity.

Play school/shop/restaurant/house.

Which activity did you choose?

Did this activity include talking and listening, reading or using numbers?

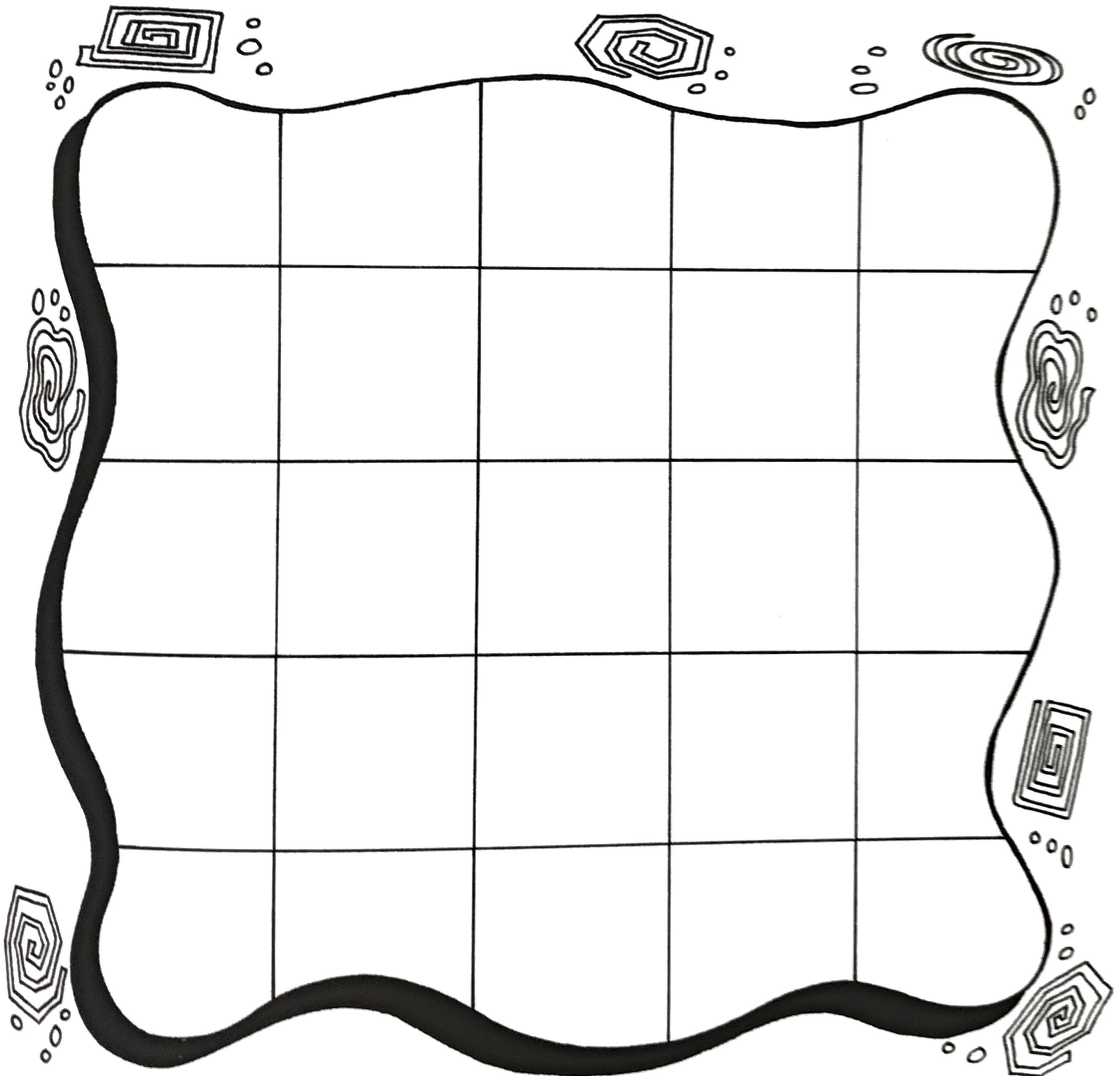
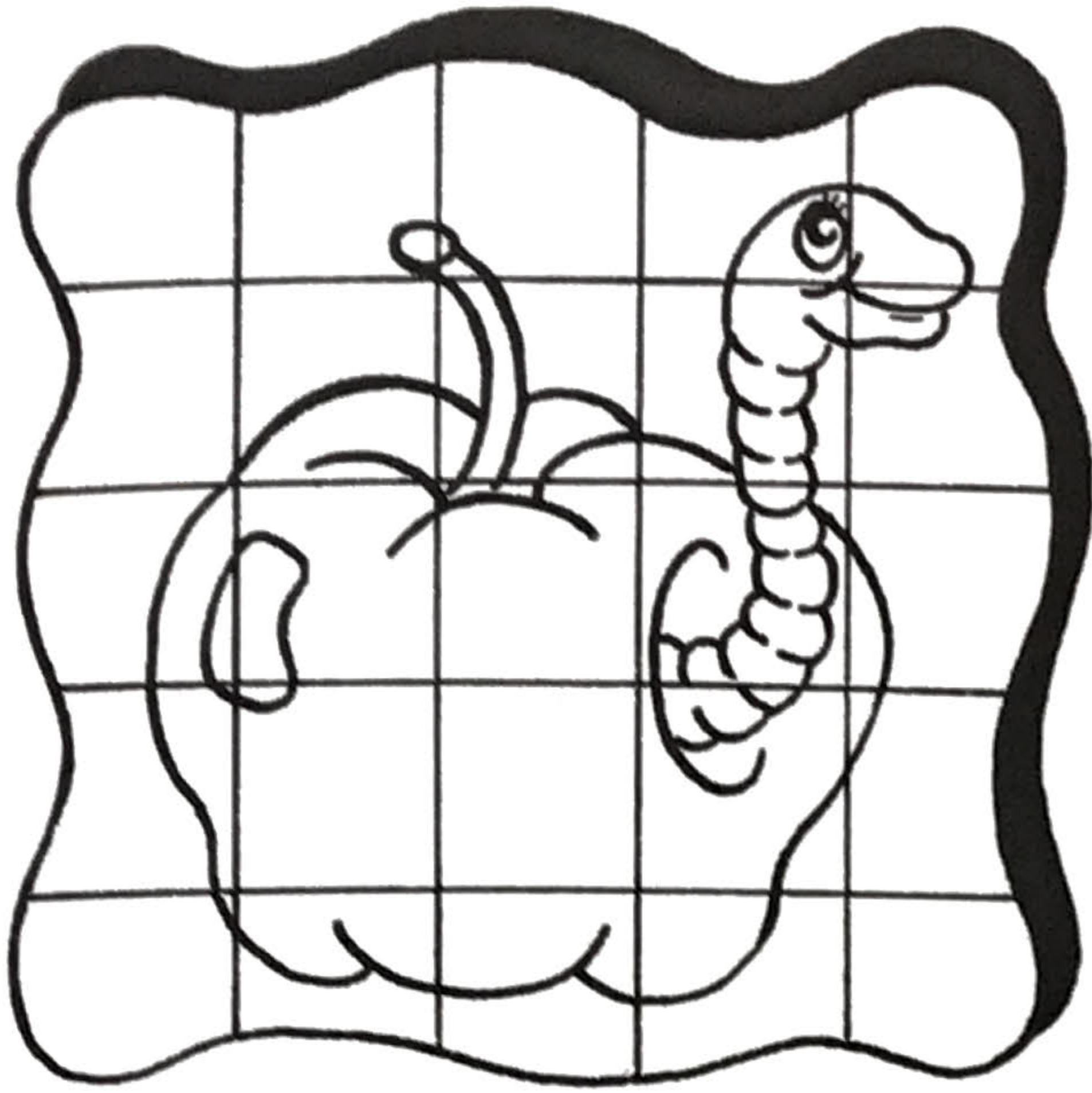
What did your child like about this activity?

Were other family members or friends part of the activity? What did they do?

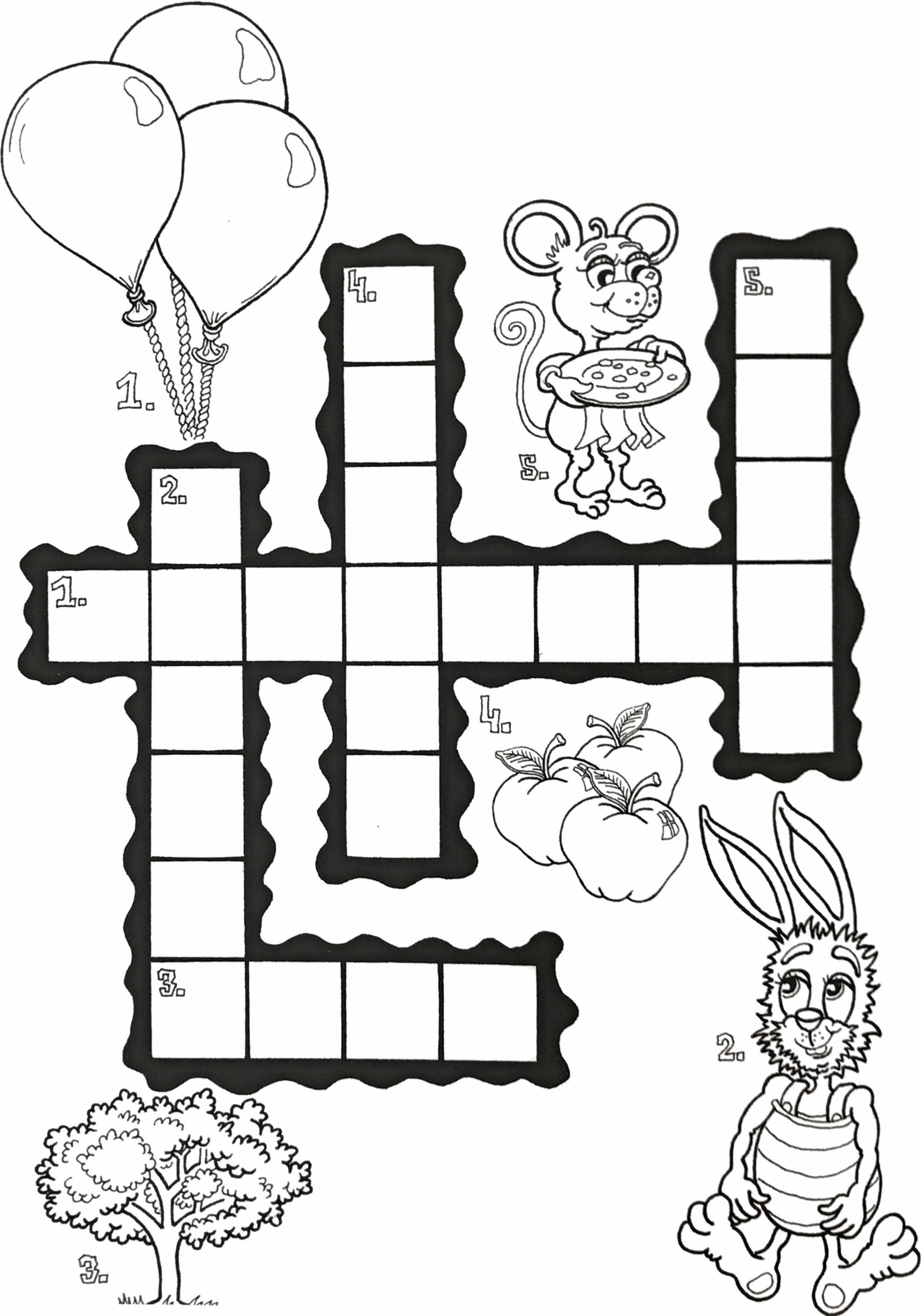
What do you think your child learned from this activity?



Draw the character using the grid



Quiz - word game



Answers to quiz - word game

1. Balloons
2. Rabbit
3. Tree
4. Apples
5. Mouse



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