

Early Writing Development Progression Chart (Age 3 → Writing a Sentence)



Stage	Personal, Social & Emotional	Communication & Language	Physical Development (Including Motor Foundations)	Literacy	Cognitive / Thinking
Stage 1 – Exploration (Approx. 3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separates from main carer with support • Feels safe and secure in the setting • Shows curiosity about materials • Engages briefly in adult-led activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses simple verbal sentences (3–4 words) • Talks about immediate experiences • Listens to short stories • Responds to simple questions • Uses Makaton signs and symbols for functional language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses large arm movements for mark making • Holds tools using whole hand (palmar grasp) • Developing core strength through climbing and movement • Uses shoulder pivot for large movements- pouring, scrubbing and cleaning • Begins developing hand strength through play- play dough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes random scribbles • Enjoys looking at books • Recognizes familiar signs and logos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explores materials freely • Experiments with cause and effect • Shows curiosity about objects
Stage 2 – Early Mark Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows pride in creations • Sustains attention briefly • Shares ideas with adults • Begins turn-taking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses longer sentences (4–6 words) • Talks about experiences during play • Begins storytelling through role play • Uses individual Makaton signs and symbols in role play or story telling • Follows two-step instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops hand strength through play • Begins using crayons, chalk and paint tools • Begins crossing the midline during large drawing activities • Engages in fine motor play including threading large beads • Uses peg boards and construction toys- Connection Schema • Pressure connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates circular scribbles and lines • Assigns meaning to marks • Recognises environmental print 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins symbolic play • Uses drawings to represent ideas • Shows imagination in play
Stage 3 – Controlled Marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins persisting with tasks • Shows ability to concentrate for a more sustained period • Shows confidence sharing ideas • Participates in small group activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retells simple experiences • Joined in repeated parts of stories • Beginning to be able to discuss the story/ potential endings and what happens next • Expands vocabulary • Engages in conversations with peers • Uses Makaton signs and symbols for key parts of story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates improved hand control • Uses digital pronate grasp • Develops elbow pivot for controlled marks • Crosses the midline more consistently • Completes threading activities with smaller bead • Uses tweezers and pegs • Begins copying vertical and horizontal lines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produces repeated shapes and patterns • Creates recognisable drawings • Recognises own name 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans play ideas • Represents experiences through drawings • Demonstrates early problem-solving
Stage 4 – Representational Drawing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chooses activities independently • Shows pride in achievements • Explains their work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses complex sentences • Begins to use more than one sign/ symbol together in context of story/ instruction or request. • Talks about events in sequence • Role play familiar stories recalling the characters and plot • Retells familiar stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates improved fine motor control • Begins wrist pivot movements • Uses four-finger grasp progressing toward tripod grip • Draws circles and crosses • Cuts with scissors with support • Completes threading patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawings represent people and objects • Attempts writing own name • Recognises some letters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses drawings to express ideas • Demonstrates symbolic thinking
Stage 5 – Early Phonological Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates resilience when challenged • Works with increasing independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbally rehearses ideas • Understands simple story structures • Orders Makaton signs and symbols correctly to narrate part of a story or play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops tripod pencil grip • Demonstrates increased wrist stability • Shows improved finger isolation • Maintains core strength for seated posture • Completes threading with smaller beads or laces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoys rhymes and rhythm • Claps syllables • Identifies initial sounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans drawings before starting • Explains ideas
Stage 6 – Emergent Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows motivation to record ideas • Persists with writing attempts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaks clearly in full sentences • Constructs sentences using Makaton symbols and signs • Holds ideas in working memory briefly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates controlled wrist and finger movements • Uses tripod grip more consistently • Shows increased shoulder stability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links sounds to letters • Writes letters from their name • Labels drawings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands writing communicates meaning
Stage 7 – Phonetic Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shares written work confidently • Accepts adult support and feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbally rehearses sentences before writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains tripod grip • Begins controlling letter size • Begins spacing letters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Segments simple words into sounds • Writes initial and some final sounds • Writes captions and labels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holds a short phrase in working memory
Stage 8 – Caption Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persists with longer tasks • Shows pride in writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explains ideas clearly • Uses descriptive language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writes several letters in sequence • Maintains control across longer writing tasks • Demonstrates improved endurance from core and shoulder stability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writes simple captions • Begins spacing between words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans writing before starting
Stage 9 – Sentence Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates confidence as a writer • Persists when writing is challenging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbally constructs a sentence before writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustains tripod grip throughout writing • Maintains controlled wrist and finger movement • Writes across a short sentence without fatigue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Segments words into sounds • Writes a simple sentence • Attempts finger spaces • Begins using capital letters and full stops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands a sentence communicates a complete idea