

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF ART

T I N Y T O T P R E S C H O O L A N D K I N D E R G A R T E N

JUST SCRIBBLE - SCRABBLES?

We have a lot of little artists here and I thought you might be interested in just what is happening when all those works of art on your refrigerator are created! There are three stages of art children go through in their development. Types of Scribbling

Scribbling is a manipulative skill and involves the ability to use one's hands and fingers with dexterity. Developing this skill is vital to mastering hand-to-eye coordination, which is a prerequisite for developing the visual perception necessary to read from left to right.

Random Scribbling Stage (11months/2-3yrs)

Most children begin scribbling at about 1½ to 2 years. They will scribble with anything at hand and on anything nearby. Floors and walls work well! Their first marks are usually an aimless group of lines. Children simply enjoy the physical motions involved in scribbling. It is the act of doing, not the product, that is important to the child. For the toddler, art is a sensory-motor activity.

Controlled Scribbling Stage (ages 2-4)

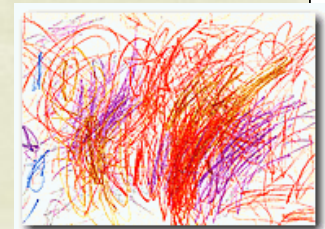
The second stage of development is signified by the introduction of geometric shapes such as circles, ovals, squares, triangles and crosses into the child's art. As children gain muscle control and eye-hand coordination, they begin to make attempts to organize their environment. They repeat shapes, hold their tools more like an adult and have a growing control over materials. Wavy lines and rippling lines may be interspersed with a variety of circular patterns. Children can now control their scribbles and

As a child draws or paints, every part of the body moves, all working to move the crayon or brush across the paper.

In the early scribble stage a child does not have control over hand movements or marks on the page. The marks are random and go in many directions. There is neither the desire nor the ability to control the marks. It's the process, not the product.

Random scribbles are universally a child's first mark. All children go through this preliminary stage of drawing. Randomly exploring and

experimenting with different writing tools, this stage of scribbling pleases children as they discover its possibilities. The duration of this stage is dictated by the encouragement of teachers and parents, the child's general health, muscle development, coordination, intelligence, and the quantity and frequency of opportunities to randomly scribble.



repeat them at will. Children now value their scribbles.

The Pictorial Stage (ages 3-5)

With the two earlier stages complete, children now have the ability to draw a variety of marks that make up their first pictures. Pictures are now made with a purpose. The basic forms in the preceding stage now suggest images to the child that stand for ideas in the child's mind. From the basic forms the child is able to draw and particular forms are chosen. In this way, children draw their first symbol.

A symbol is a visual representation of something important to the child; it may be a human figure, an animal, a tree, or a similar figure. Art in which symbols are used in such a way is called representational art. Children realize that there is a relationship between objects they have drawn and the outside world, and that the picture can be used to record ideas. The child now sees real meaning behind the drawings and names the objects in the drawing. The human form is often a child's first symbol. A person is usually drawn with a circle for a head and two lines for legs or body.

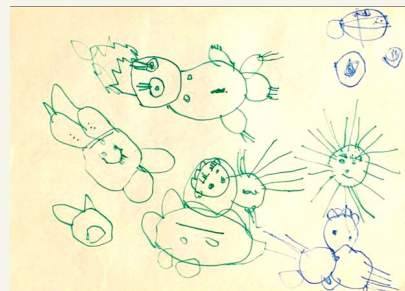
Early Pictorial stage

In this early stage, a child works on making and perfecting one of many symbols. Children will practice these symbols, covering sheets of paper with many examples of the same object. At this point a child's picture may be a collection of unrelated figures and objects. The child is searching for new ideas and symbols change constantly.

Later pictorial stage

In the later pictorial stage, a child draws symbols easily and more exactly and before long more complex drawing are made. Children use their drawings to tell a story or describe an event. The naming of these symbols is an important step, in that artwork becomes a clear form of visual communication. It may not look different, but the circle is now called a "sun" and represents a specific object. A child uses symbols when he/she is ready, and no sooner. Creative expression is the goal at this age and all ages. In the later pictorial stage, each child has a special way of drawing the human form, houses, and other symbols. This individual way of drawing is called a schema. A schema or individual pattern can often be seen in drawings by age five or six and often earlier. It is important to remember that there may be an overlap between developmental levels in art. When the child begins to identify the objects he draws by a name, he has moved into the third stage of development. Even though these drawn objects may be unrecognizable to adults, it is the act of naming that is significant. For children, the objects they have drawn are easily identifiable.

Subsequently, suns (a circle), radials (a circle with rays), and mandalas (circle with a cross inside) and other shapes from their environment begin to appear in the child's art as they prepare for the next stage. Supplying a wide variety of experiences aids this developmental process. However, it is important to note that if five-year-olds are still scribbling, they are not necessarily slow learners or affected by a learning disability.



Symbolic Stage or Pictorial Stage (ages 4-7)

When a child begins to depict abstract concepts, he has moved into the Symbolic or Pictorial Stage. Realizing that thoughts can be represented by symbols, they may draw what they feel, instead of how things really are. They may enlarge, distort, and change objects according to how important the object may be to them.



For example, a kindergartener is asked to draw a dog. The dog may be drawn larger than the child because the dog is so important in his life and the dog may be painted blue because blue is the child's favorite color. Instead of simple circular faces and stick bodies, children begin to draw people with articulated arms, legs and facial features. Baselines appear in drawings. For example, a ground is at the bottom of the picture, a sky above. If an object appears behind something and can't be seen, it may be drawn nearby. A child's bed, which could not be seen from the outside, may be drawn near the house. Color is used as a form of expression instead of as a realistic representation.

It is important to remember that that each child progresses in art at a different rate just like every other developmental stage.

Don't dismiss a child's scribbles – it's a vital part of learning.

Tadpole Figures

Around three to four years of age, children begin to combine the circle with one or more lines in order to represent a human figure. These figures typically start out looking like "tadpoles" and then gradually become "head-feet" symbols. It is not uncommon for children's first representations of the figure to be highly unrealistic or to be missing a neck, body, arms, fingers, feet, or toes.

Variations in the Figure

Children, four and five years of age, will experiment with various ways of drawing the figure and may depict the figure quite differently each time they draw. Sometimes, they create figures quite unique to the person or the experience being depicted.



Children may, in fact, draw two tadpoles to show their mother and father without making visible distinctions between the two figures. Several theories have been proposed to explain the "tadpole" phenomenon and the reasons why young children tend to draw unrealistic or incomplete human forms. Some experts suggest that children omit bodily features because of a lack of knowledge about the different parts of the human body and how they are organized.

Others argue that children don't look at what they are drawing; instead, they look at the abstract

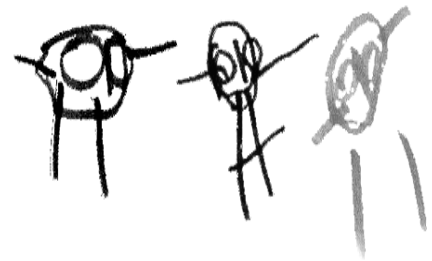


There is considerable evidence to suggest that children who draw figures without bodies, arms or legs are certainly capable of identifying these parts when asked to do so, but the idea of creating a realistic likeness of a person has not yet occurred to them or occupied their interest.

Such a concern doesn't typically show up until the age of seven or eight.



shapes already in their repertoire and discover that these forms can be combined in various ways to symbolize objects in the world. Still others believe that children are simply being selective and drawing only those parts necessary to make their figures recognizable as human



Art and Self-image

The sensitive self-portrait shown here was drawn by a four-and-a-half year old boy and is typical of the kind of drawings done by children at this stage. The head is drawn larger because of its importance to the child (it's where eating and talking goes on) and the subject of the drawing is the child himself. Through the act of drawing or painting, a child may explore several self-possibilities before arriving at a satisfying self-image. In this way, art plays a crucial role in the self-defining process.



The Young Child's Concept of Space

As young children become increasingly aware of the world around them, the many objects that make up their environment will begin to appear in their drawings. These objects are seldom drawn in relationship to one another in position or size. Nor are they organized on the page the way in which they are related

spatially in the world. Instead, objects will typically appear to "float" on the page in the drawings and paintings done by children of preschool age. This type of spatial organization may appear to an adult as incorrect in that it doesn't follow the Western tradition of representing three-dimensional space by the use of linear perspective. Instead of considering this as a defect in children's artwork, one might appreciate their honesty in arranging the forms on the page and their capacity for creating balanced two-dimensional compositions. Besides, if one looks at the artwork of other cultures or that of many contemporary artists, it can readily be seen that there is no right or wrong way to portray space in a drawing.



The Representation of Three-Dimensional Space

Whereas younger children become engrossed in the meanings and actions of subjects as they draw them, older children tend to be more concerned with whether their pictures resemble what it is they are drawing. This interest in visual description typically emerges around the age of nine or ten as children begin to adopt their culture's conventions for representing a three-dimensional scene on a two-dimensional surface. No longer are objects placed side by side on a baseline as seen in younger children's drawings. Now children attempt to arrange the things they draw

in relation to one another on the page. In doing so, they begin to show how the position of a viewer influences the image drawn. They begin to draw objects that overlap one another and that diminish in size. They also begin to use diagonals to show the recession of planes in space.



Visual Metaphor and Expressive Imagery

Many older children continue to draw and paint symbolically in spite of the increased concern for realism in their art work. Indeed, children's emerging capacity for abstract thought enables them to begin conceiving of images as visual metaphors.

When children draw or paint metaphorically, they are using images to suggest an idea or emotion beyond the specific object depicted. The ability to use images metaphorically depends on being able to entertain two levels of symbolization at once. The artist must decide which object best represents the concept or emotion and which lines, shapes and colors best represent the object.



Take a better look next time you find an art piece in your children's mailbox. See the artist inside and see the developmental stage your child has conquered.

Is it really only "scribble- scrabble"?