For Grown-ups: How Lines Develop

A one-page guide to using these sheets well. Ages are a rough guide, not a test.

The order most children learn to COPY these shapes

Standing	Sleeping	Circle	Cross	Slant /	Square	Slant \	X	Triangle
2–3 yrs	3 yrs	3 yrs	4 yrs	4 y 4 m	4 y 6 m	4 y 7 m	4 y 11 m	5 y 3 m

Typical ages for copying each shape from a picture (y = years, m = months), in the Beery VMI order used in NHS occupational therapy leaflets. Most children can imitate a shape (watch you draw it, then do it) a few months earlier. Curves, waves and zigzags are extra pencil-control patterns for changing direction.

Trace, then imitate, then copy

- Trace: follow a dashed path. This is where the Level 1 and 2 sheets start.
- Imitate: you draw a line while your child watches, then they draw one.
- Copy: your child draws the shape from a picture alone. This is the real milestone, so finish each sheet with the “your turn” part.
- Big before small: crayon on wide paths, then pencil on thin ones.

How the sheets are levelled

- Level 1 · Big paths: wide lanes, start dots and arrows, pictures at both ends. For a chunky crayon, from about 2½.
- Level 2 · Smaller paths: thinner lines and more of them. For a crayon or pencil, from about 3.
- Level 3 · On my own: start dots only, then copy a model in an empty box. From about 3½ to 4.

Grip: what is typical

- 1–2 years: whole fist, moving from the shoulder.
- 2–3 years: all fingers on the crayon, palm facing down.
- 3–4 years: four fingers, starting to move from the wrist.
- 4–6 years: three-finger (tripod) grip, still fairly stiff.
- 6–7 years: a moving tripod grip with the fingertips doing the work.

Do not force a “correct” grip at 3. Short or broken crayons nudge small fingers into a better grip by themselves.

Set up for success

- Feet flat on the floor (or a box), table about elbow height.
- The helper hand holds the paper still.
- Tape a sheet to a wall or easel now and then: drawing on a vertical surface builds shoulder and wrist strength.
- 5–10 minutes is plenty. Stop while it is still fun.
- Lines first, letters later: praise the try, not the neatness.

Ready for letter tracing when they can…

- copy a standing line, a sleeping line, a circle and a cross
- start at the top and pull down without being reminded
- hold a crayon with their fingers, not a fist

Then try our alphabet and number tracing sheets.

When to ask for advice

Every child is different. Talk to their teacher, health visitor or doctor if, by about 5, your child cannot copy a cross or a square, avoids drawing, or finds holding a crayon painful or very tiring. A children’s occupational therapist can help.

PARENT OVEN

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My Pre-Writing Progress Chart

Colour a star each time you finish a sheet. Can you fill them all?

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Standing lines ☆	2 Standing: smaller ☆	3 Sleeping lines ☆	4 Sleeping: smaller ☆	5 Standing + sleeping ☆
6 Big circles ☆	7 Circles ☆	8 Curves ☆	9 C-curves ☆	10 Crosses ☆
11 Slanting / ☆	12 Slanting \ ☆	13 Squares ☆	14 X and triangles ☆	15 Waves ☆
16 Zigzags ☆	17 Loops and spirals ☆	18 Copy the shapes ☆	19 Four lines ☆	20 Aa Lines to letters ☆

LINE STAR

certificate

This is to say that

_____

can draw standing lines, sleeping lines, circles and crosses, and is getting ready to write letters!

Signed: _____ Date: _____

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