

Developing Important Skills

Young children need to develop their fine-motor skills in order to accomplish many of the tasks they will be expected to do in school. To do this, children need to develop the muscles in their fingers, hands, wrists, and forearms. These muscles enable a child to dress himself or herself, to open and close containers, to hold a pencil or crayon, and to use scissors to cut. There are many fun activities to help children develop these fine-motor skills. Here are some activities you might try at home:

- ▶ washing hands
- ▶ applying lotion to hands



- ▶ doing finger plays
- ▶ squeezing water out of sponges
- ▶ gripping and squeezing small balls
- ▶ putting money into a piggy bank
- ▶ building with interlocking blocks like Legos® or Unifix® Cubes

- ▶ hunting for small items hidden in trays of beans or rice
- ▶ pouring water or rice from one container to another
- ▶ rolling, squeezing, and shaping clay, dough, or slime
- ▶ stringing large beads on shoelaces or on pipe cleaners



- ▶ tearing colored paper into small pieces to make collages
- ▶ using a spray bottle to water plants
- ▶ using tongs or tweezers to pick up small items such as cotton balls or beads

Getting Ready to Write

Printing is a very important skill. Children need to develop an awareness of different types of lines, as well as the ability to correctly hold writing tools, like pencils, crayons, and markers. Here are some things you can do to help your child:

- ▶ Find straight, curved, and diagonal lines in the house. Is the table round or does it have straight lines? Are the walls straight lines? Does the ceiling or roof have diagonal lines? What kinds of lines and patterns do you see?
- ▶ Encourage children to recognize and use different terms—*horizontal*, *vertical*, *curved*, and *zigzag*.
- ▶ Notice different shapes, numbers, and letters. What kinds of lines do you see? Are there *corners*, *curves*, etc.?



Use the tracing pages in this book to introduce your child to many different types of lines. Encourage your child to trace from left to right, and to start at the top and work down, just the way you read! Try it first using fingers, and then move on to using different writing tools.

Writing Time

Give your child the tools needed to succeed. Prepare a “work station” or work kit for your child. Include different kinds of paper, crayons, pencils, markers, glue and glue sticks, and safety scissors. Add stickers, envelopes, and other fun items. Talk about the proper way to hold a writing tool.

Tips and Grips

- ✎ Sit up straight with your feet flat on the floor. Try not to slouch.
- ✎ Try to keep your elbows off the table.
- ✎ Hold the pencil between the thumb, the index finger, and the middle finger.
- ✎ Let the index finger rest on the top of the pencil and the pencil rest on top of the middle finger.
- ✎ Hold the pencil close to the pointed end, not the eraser end.
- ✎ Keep an easy grip on the pencil—not too tight, not too loose!
- ✎ Hold the page with the other hand.



Play *Grasp and Release* a few times before beginning to write each time. Keep dropping a pencil and picking it up, using the correct grip. Practice a little each day until holding a pencil correctly is automatic.

Hint: If your child is having a difficult time, use short pencils, such as golf pencils, to encourage holding the pencil closer to the pointed end. You might also consider purchasing cute rubber or plastic pencil grips designed to help children place their fingers correctly.

Cutting and Gluing Time

Cutting Practice

Find good left-handed or right-handed safety scissors that are comfortable for your child to hold. Guide your child to hold the scissors carefully in the following manner:

- ▶ Thumb in the top hole
- ▶ Index and middle finger in the bottom hole
- ▶ Ring finger and pinkie finger on the outside for support



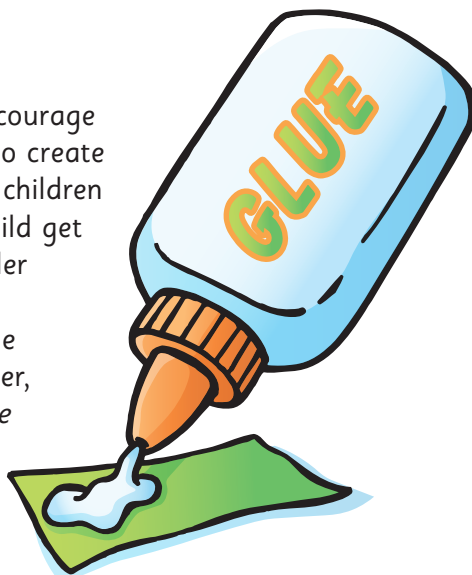
Demonstrate opening and closing the scissors to cut. To start, cut straws, scrap paper, paint-strip samples, and clay “snakes.”

Encourage your child to slide whatever they wish toward the **V** the scissors makes when open, and then squeeze the scissors closed to cut. Slide forward and continue the motion if more than one snip is needed.

Once your child is comfortable cutting freely, move to cutting straight lines, curved lines, and shapes. There are many examples in this book. It may help if you cut out the cutting page your child wants to do before he or she begins. This will provide your child with easier access to the items to be cut or assembled.

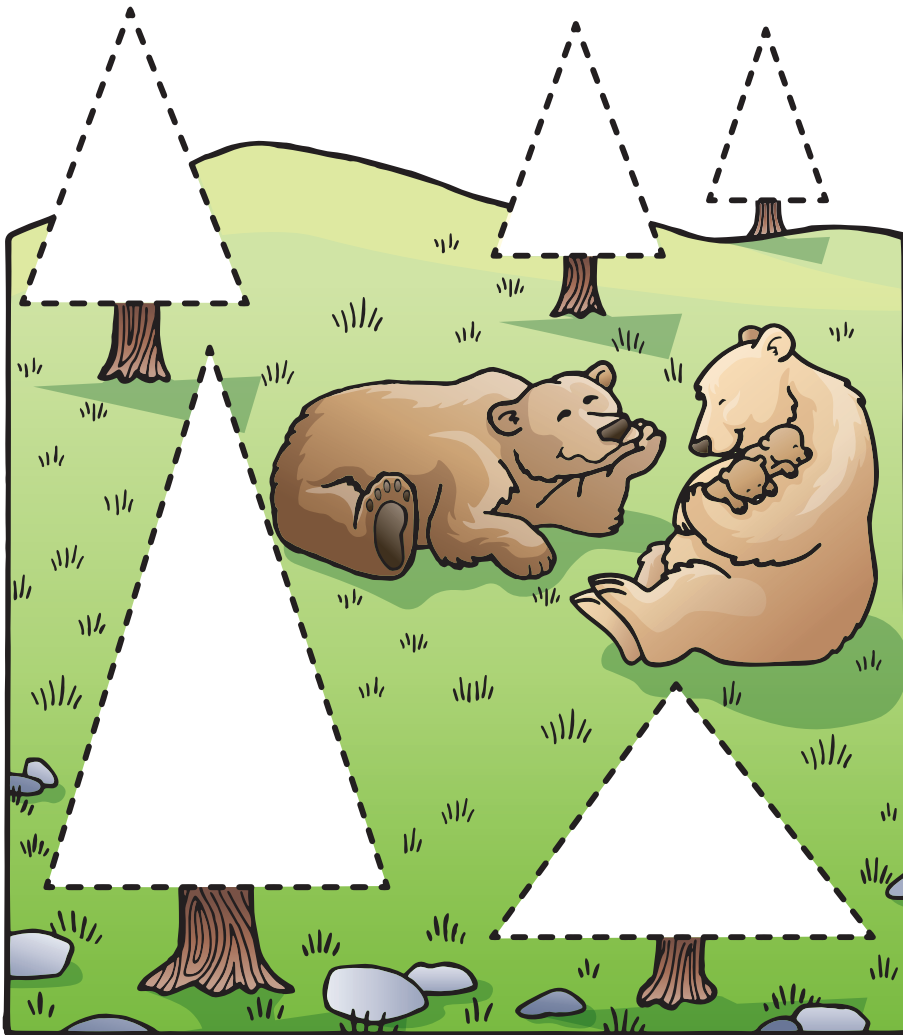
A Word About Gluing

Activities in the *Cutting* section of this book encourage children to cut out shapes and then glue them to create pictures. Glue sticks are easy to use, but some children prefer to use school or craft glue. Help your child get in the habit of putting dots of glue on the smaller piece to be glued and attaching it to the larger piece of paper. Just a little squeeze of the bottle at a time is all he or she should need. Remember, it is easier to *add* more glue than it is to *remove* glue. This will help avoid having excess glue on the finished page.



FOREST FAMILY

Trace the *diagonal* and *horizontal* lines. Then, color the trees. What shape are the trees?



How many trees do you see?

1

2

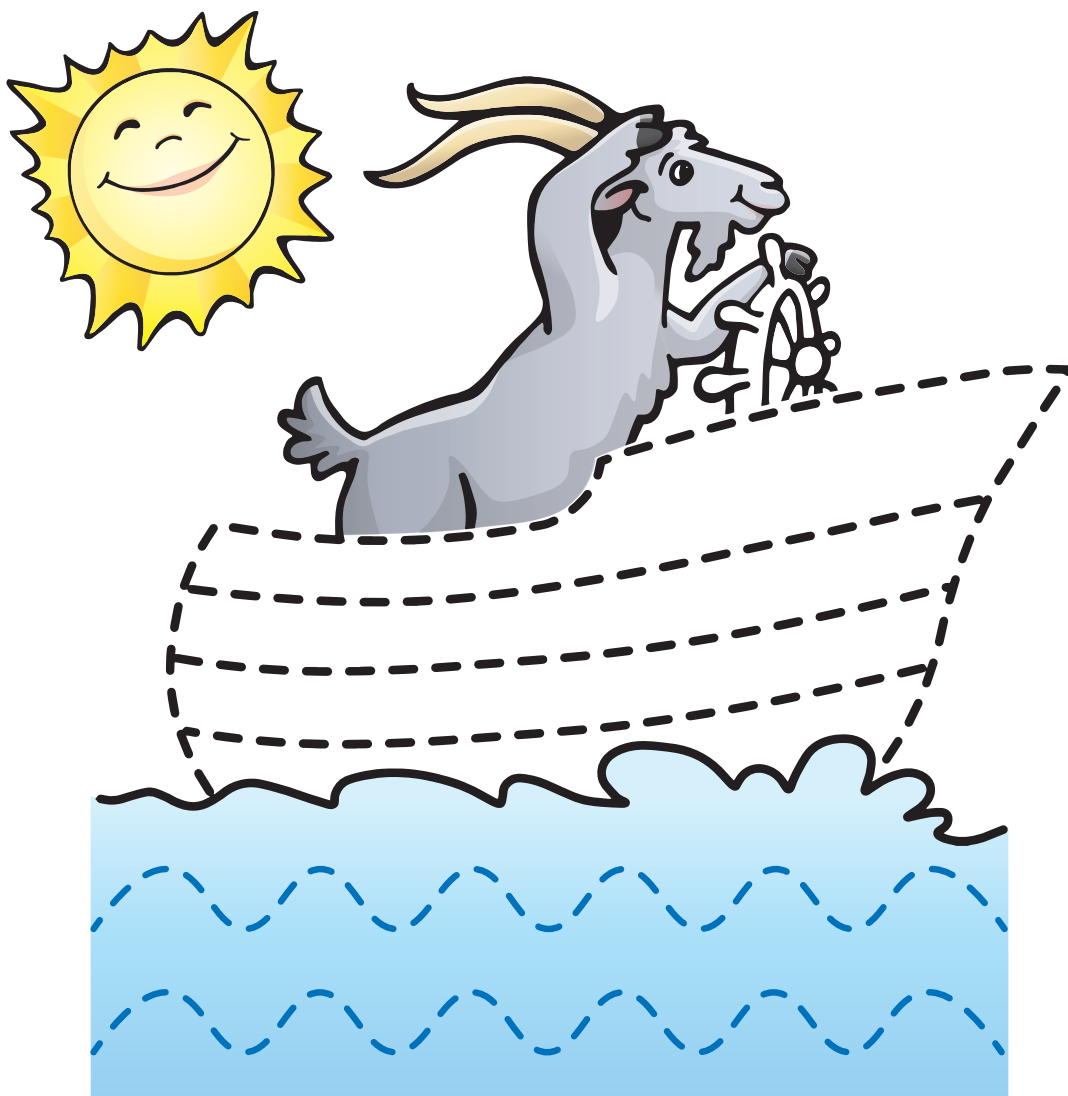
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GOING OUT TO SEA

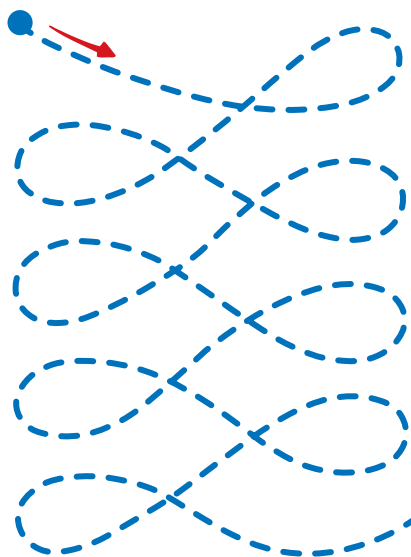
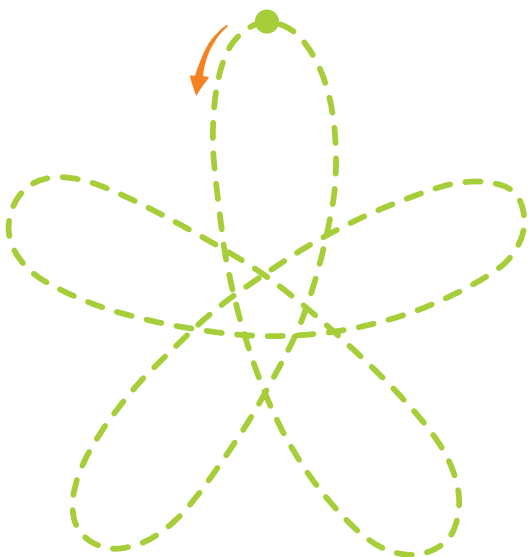
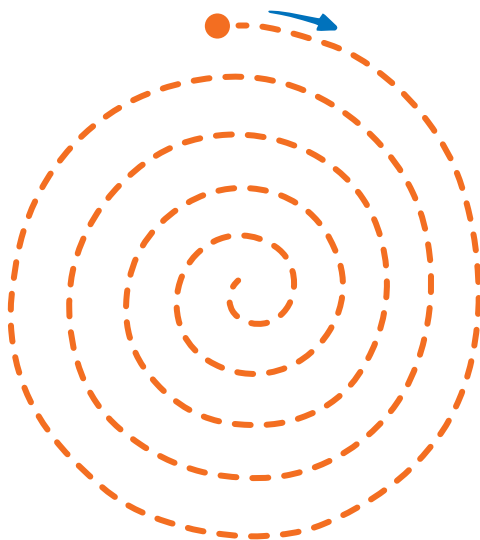
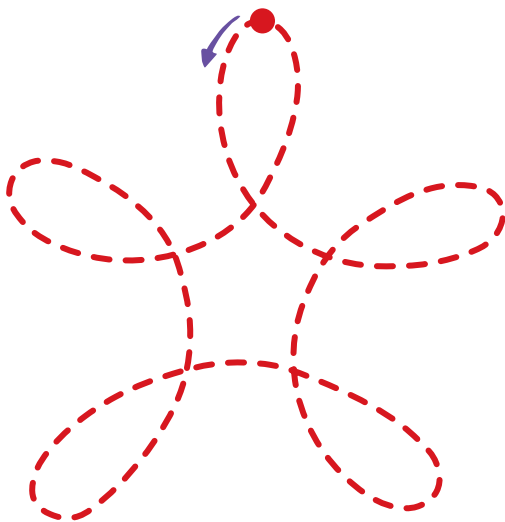
Trace the lines to finish the boat and the sea. Color the boat.



Where do you think the goat in the boat is going?

SPIRAL TRACING

Start at the dots and follow the arrows to draw each spiral.



MAKE A BIRD

Cut out the pieces, and assemble the bird. Glue the pieces to a separate piece of paper.

