

Pin-Punching Shapes

Twelve shapes whose outline is made of dots. Your child punches each dot, and the shape comes free on its own between their fingers.

3-6 years

Fine Motor Skills

3 sheets to punch

Push pin and thick mat

What your child practices

Holding a push pin is already holding a pencil: the thumb, index, and middle finger fall into a pincer grip on their own, and the wrist learns to rest in place. Your child builds precision and control of the motion long before being asked to trace a letter. It also builds long concentration, because an outline has to be finished, and the shape comes free only once the whole way around is done.

Prepare the material

1. Print the sheets on heavy paper, otherwise the paper tears instead of punching through.
2. Place a foam mat, a felt pad, or a folded magazine underneath: it catches the point.
3. Get a school push pin ready. Failing that, a large-headed thumbtack stuck in a wine cork does exactly the same job.
4. Cut the sheets into cards, and offer only one at a time.

Show once, then step back

1. Sit next to your child, on the side of their dominant hand, and set the card down straight.
2. Punch three or four dots in silence, slowly, letting them see the pincer grip.
3. Hand the pin back without another word, and let them go all the way around at their own pace.
4. Once the outline is done, don't pop the shape free for them: that's the best part.
5. Start with the corner sheet, and move to the curves only once it feels easy.

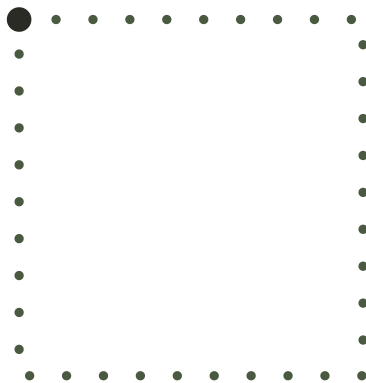
The built-in control of error. It is in the paper. If the holes stray from the line or some are missing, the shape resists and tears instead of coming free cleanly. Your child feels it under their fingers, no one needs to tell them.

Once your child feels confident

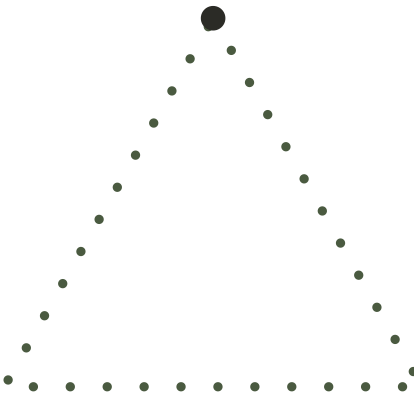
- Glue the freed shapes onto colored paper, or hang them from a string.
- Punch the outline of a drawing your child made themselves.
- Hold the punched card up to a window: the light comes through the holes.

Safety. A push pin is a sharp tool. It only comes out with an adult present, it goes out of reach right after, and no one ever walks around holding it. Sit down, set the card in place, push straight down, and push only into the paper. A child who still puts objects in their mouth should not use this material. Print on heavy paper, then have an adult cut it out.

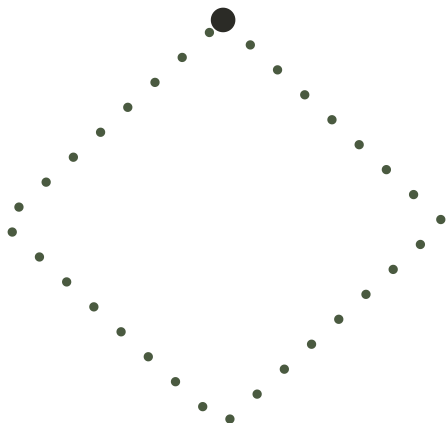
Level 1, the corners. The dots are far apart and the lines are straight: stop at the corner, turn the page, start again. Start at the black dot.



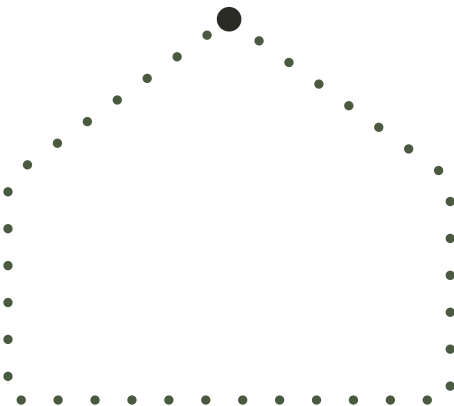
square



triangle

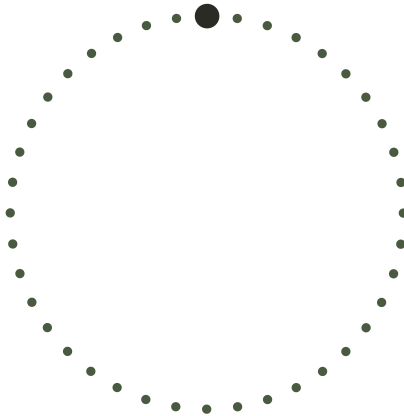


diamond

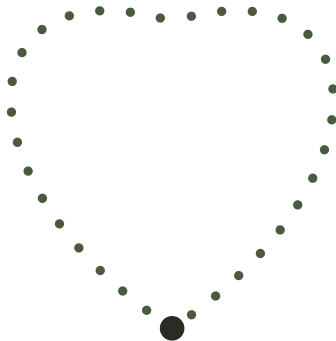


house

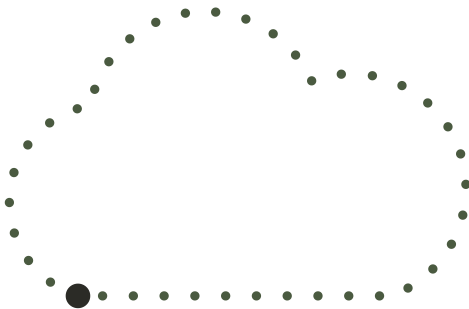
Level 2, the curves. The dots move closer together and the hand has to follow a curve without lifting the tool for too long. Start at the black dot.



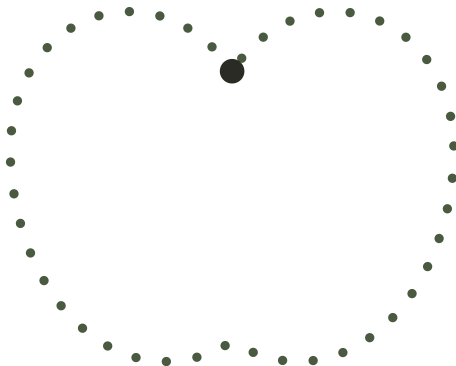
circle



heart

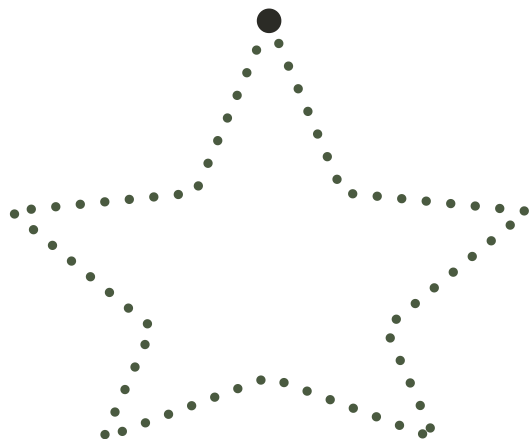


cloud

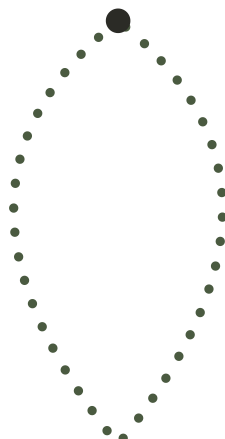


apple

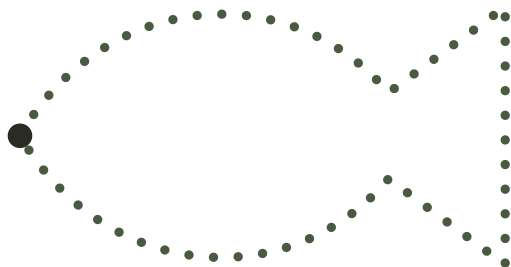
Level 3, the points. The dots are close together and the direction changes often: this is the hand preparing for writing. Start at the black dot.



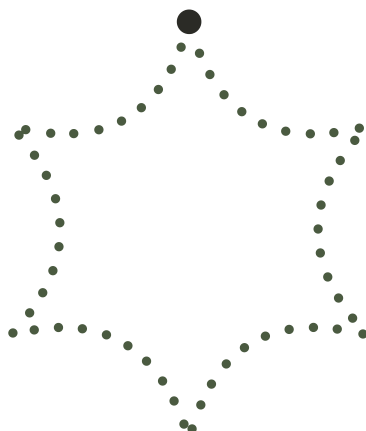
star



leaf



fish



flower