

**HILLINGDON CHILDREN'S INTEGRATED THERAPY SERVICE - CITS**  
**OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY - Universal Strategies Booklet**  
**Early Years – 2 to 5 years old - Mark Making and Pre-writing skills**

## Contents:

- Introduction:
- Pre-writing shapes to master before attempting letter or number formation
- Mat Man
- Number formation
- Letter formation

## Introduction:

This universal strategies booklet on mark making and pre-writing follows on from our Advice sheet (<https://www.cnwl.nhs.uk/application/files/3515/8469/8535/Pre-writing.pdf>) and has been formulated to ensure that the same message about writing is being shared between nurseries, schools, parents and therapists. Once your child has established how to draw prewriting shapes they can move on to letter formation – See school aged package.

Why do we need universal package for mark making, pre-writing and writing?

The ever increasing academic demand on our children to write before they are developmentally ready is causing many to fall into bad writing habits early on. This makes it difficult to correct when they are older and have been flagged up as not keeping up with their peers in speed and legibility.

Writing **does not** require specialists to teach, practice or review difficulty with it. There are simple steps that need to be followed before a child learns to write to ensure they are ready. The first steps are making sure the child is able to copy age appropriate shapes and lines required for forming letters and numbers later. Once those have been mastered the child can be taught numbers and letters with the emphasis on the start and end point (formation). We leave sizing, placement on a line and spacing for later in their school career.

It is imperative that letter and number formation is performed correctly before the child is required to write a word, their name or use a number mathematically. If a child learns the incorrect pattern it will impact their ability to write legibly and efficiently in later years.








In early years there are only two rules:

- 1.) Follow the pre-writing steps that are developmentally appropriate for your child.
- 2.) MAKE IT FUN!!!

**Before children can write letters and numbers they need to learn to copy these basic shapes.**

**PRE-WRITING SHAPES**

Before your child can learn to write, he or she needs to be able to draw these shapes

 2 years	 2½ years	 3 years	 3½-4 years	
 4 years	 4½ years	 4½ years	 4 years 11 months	 5 years 3 months

Children who can draw an oblique cross are able to copy more letters and numbers than children who cannot

**Click on these links for how to make it fun!**

- <https://www.cnwl.nhs.uk/application/files/3515/8469/8535/Pre-writing.pdf>
- <https://www.learning4kids.net/2015/07/07/pre-writing-activities-with-squishy-bags/>
- <https://www.earlyyearscentre.com/eyc/enabling-environment/mark-making-activities-for-younger-children/>
  - [www.Pinterest.co.uk](http://www.Pinterest.co.uk)

**Before you get started!**



**Paper**

Correct paper position is important to support good wrist position. It should be tilted to one side depending on if they are right or left handed. Their non-writing hand should stabilise the page.

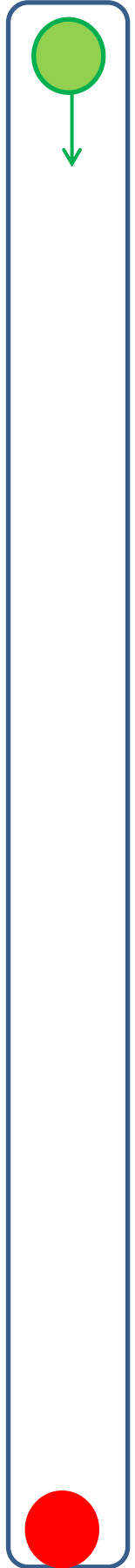
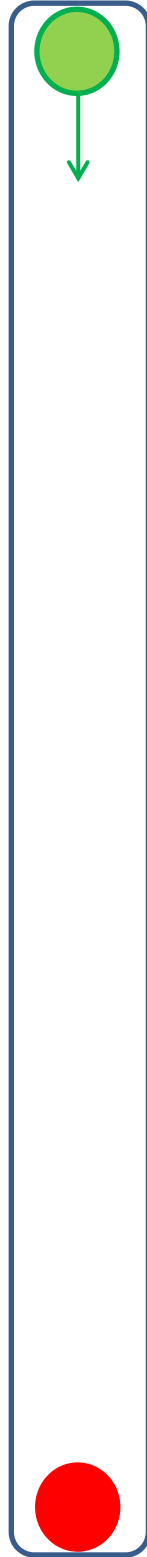


**Pencil**

Encourage your child not to swap hands, this can be supported by placing a pencil directly front of them (equal distance from both hands), to develop hand dominance, rather than handing to your preferred hand. Try thicker, shorter pencils to help develop grasp

# Vertical lines

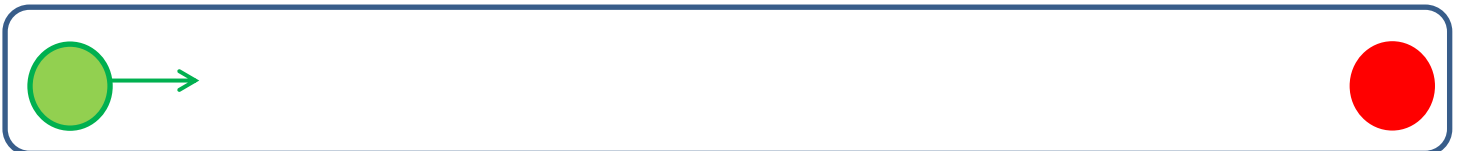
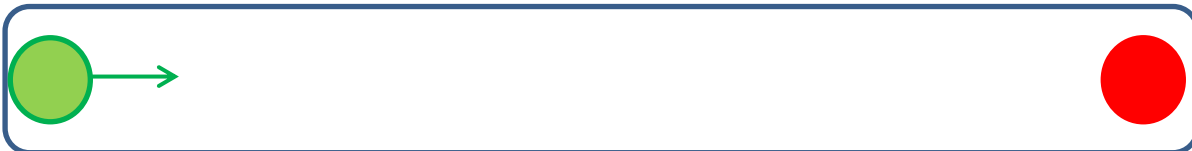
Can you draw a vertical line?  
Starting at the green dot and  
stopping at the red dot.



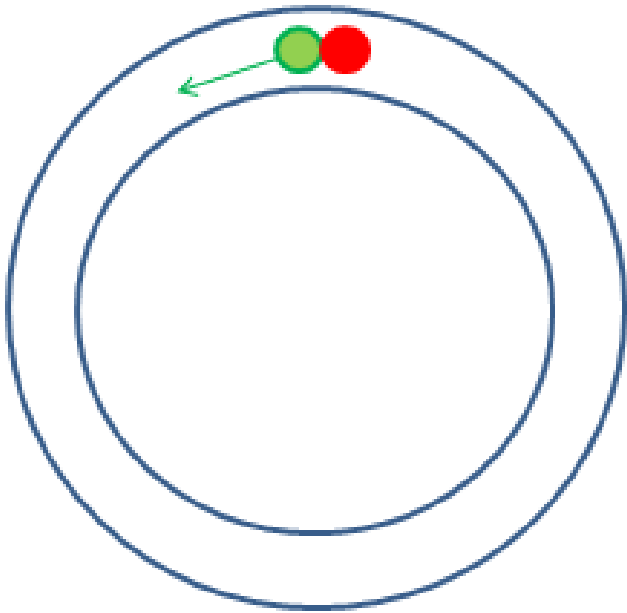
# Horizontal lines



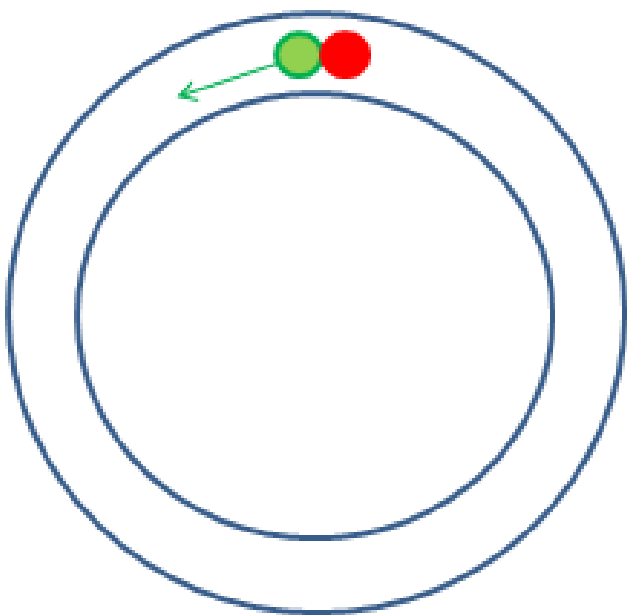
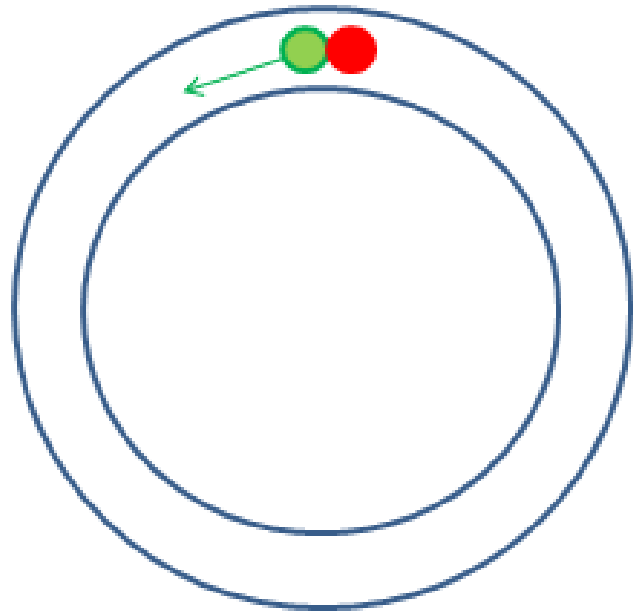
Can you draw a horizontal line?  
Starting at the green dot and  
stopping at the red dot.



# Circles

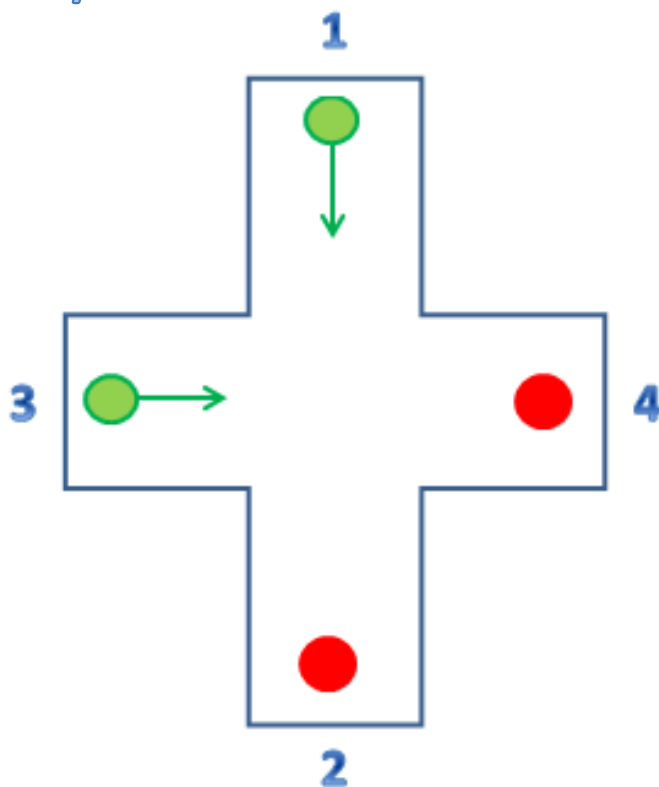


Can you draw a circle?  
Starting at the green dot and  
stopping at the red dot.

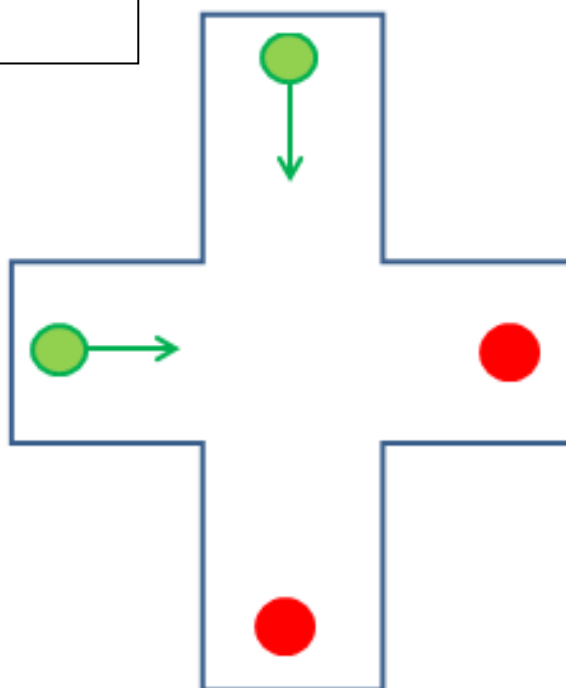
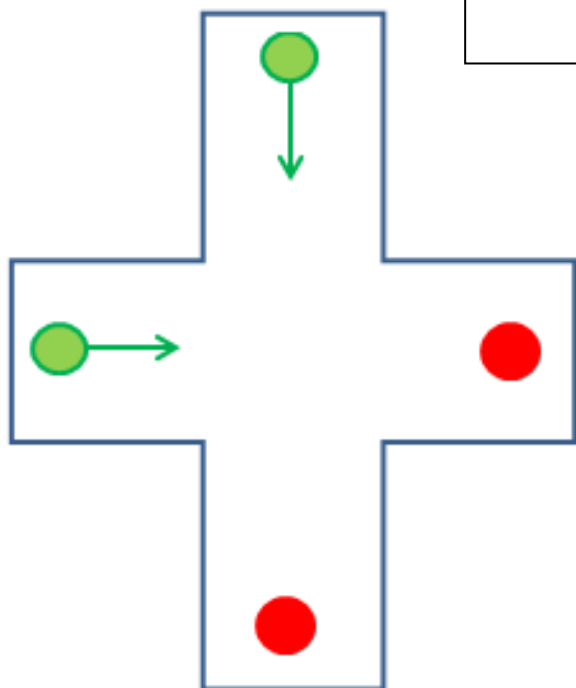


## Cross/Plus

Can you draw a Plus? Start at Number 1's green dot and draw a vertical line stopping at number 2's red dot. Then start at number 3's green dot and draw a horizontal line stopping at the number 4's red dot.

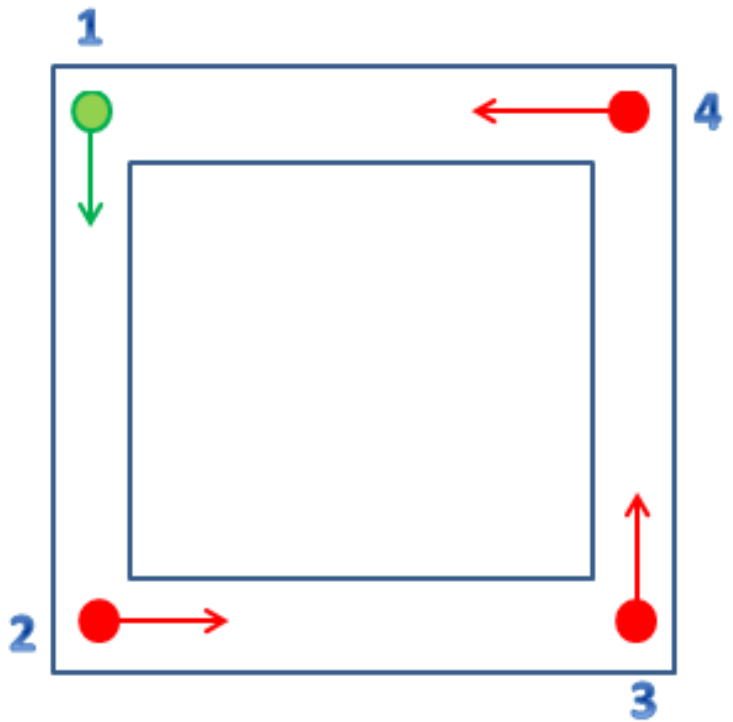


Now try it without the numbers!

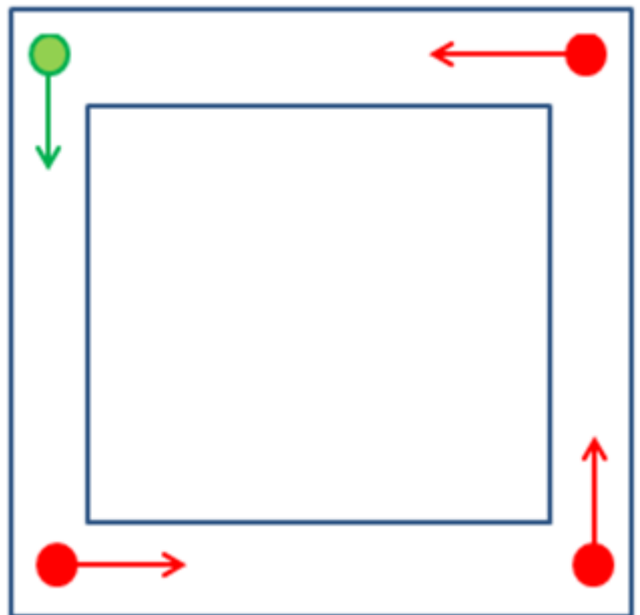
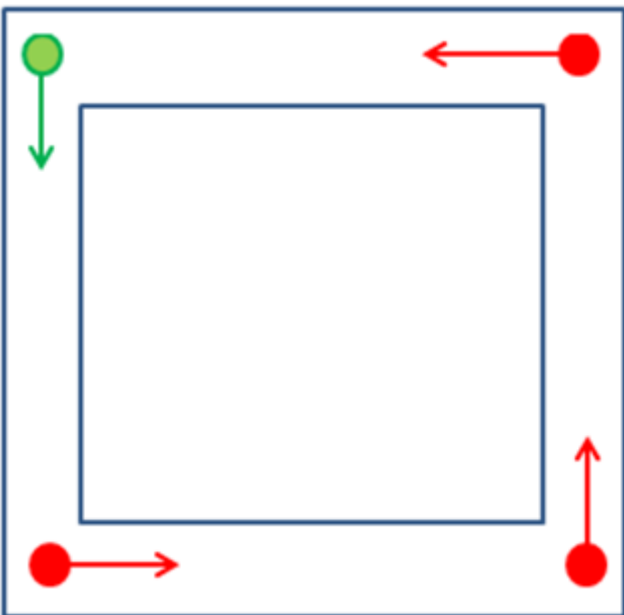


# Squares

Can you draw a Plus? Start at Number 1's green dot and draw a vertical line stopping at number 2's red dot. Then start at number 3's green dot and draw a horizontal line stopping at the number 4's red dot.

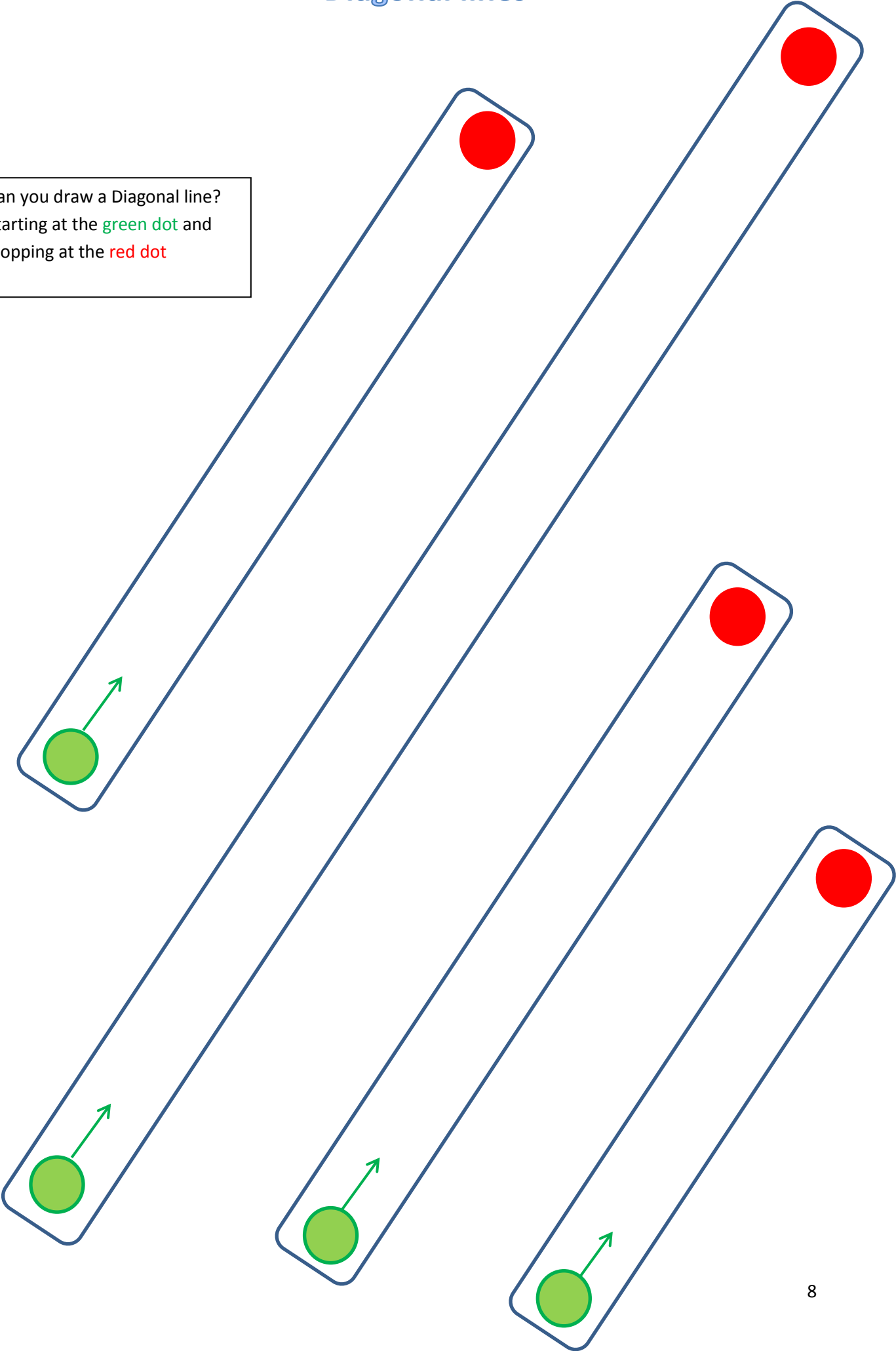


Now try it without the numbers!



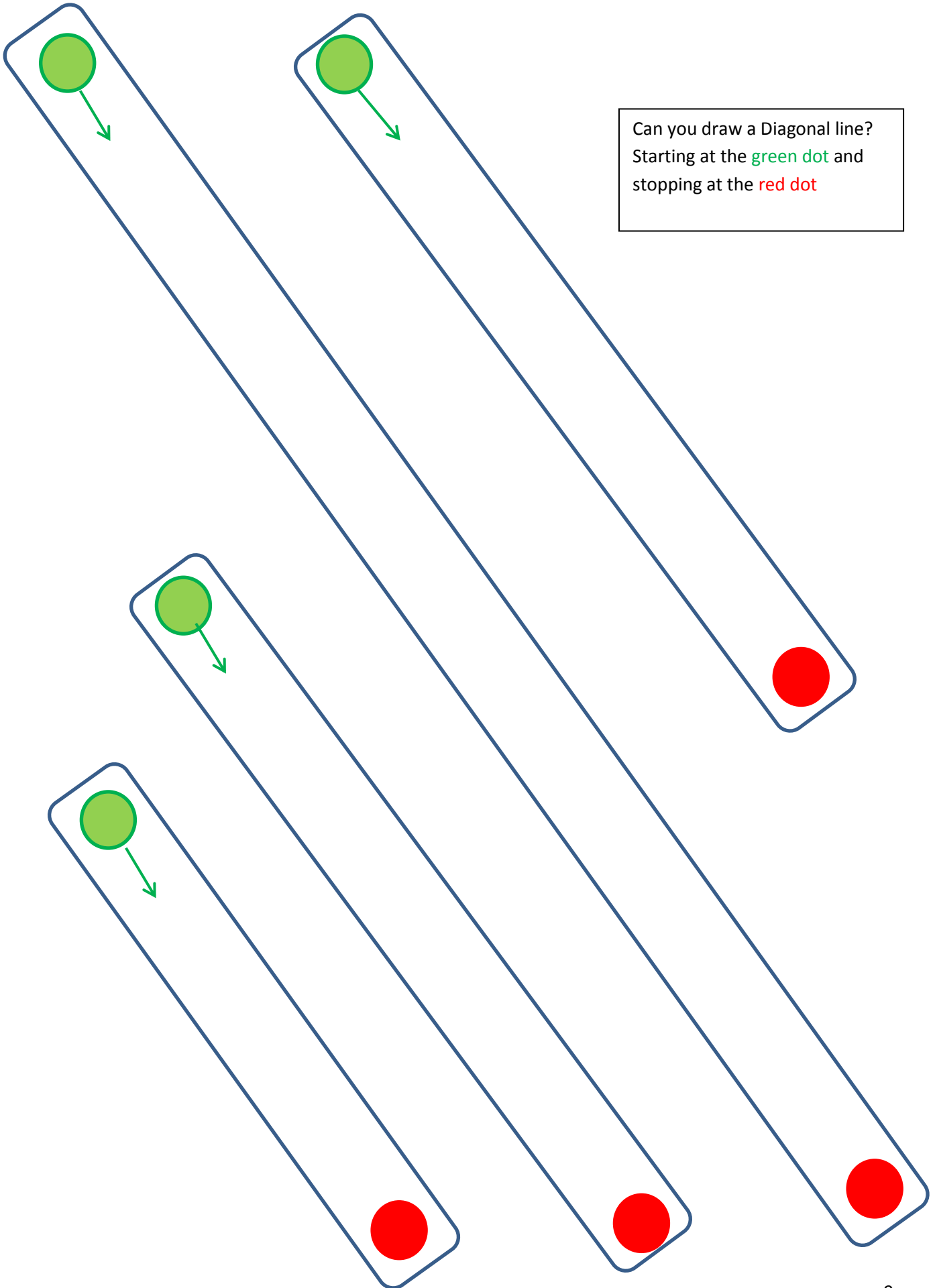
# Diagonal lines

Can you draw a Diagonal line?  
Starting at the green dot and  
stopping at the red dot





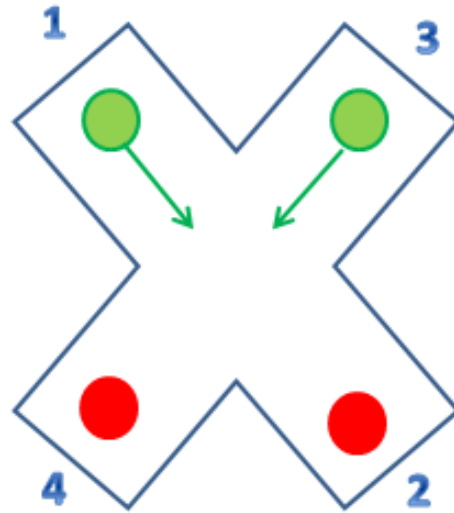
# Diagonal lines



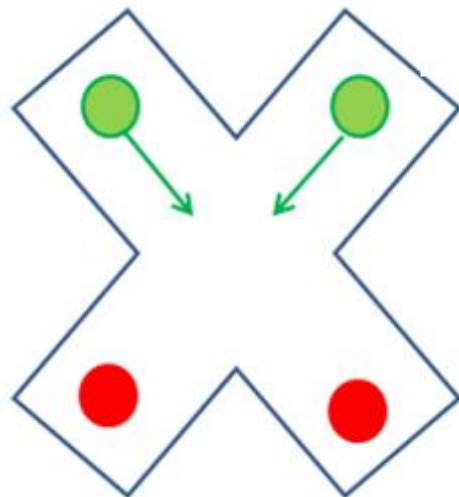
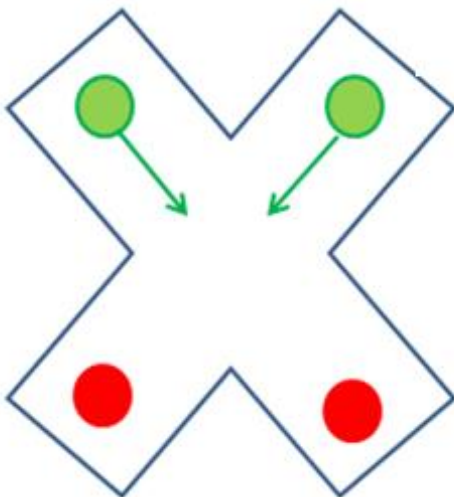
Can you draw a Diagonal line?  
Starting at the green dot and  
stopping at the red dot

# Cross/X

Can you draw a Cross (X)? Start at Number 1's green dot and draw a diagonal line stopping at number 2's red dot. Then start at number 3's green dot and draw another diagonal line stopping at the number 4's red dot.

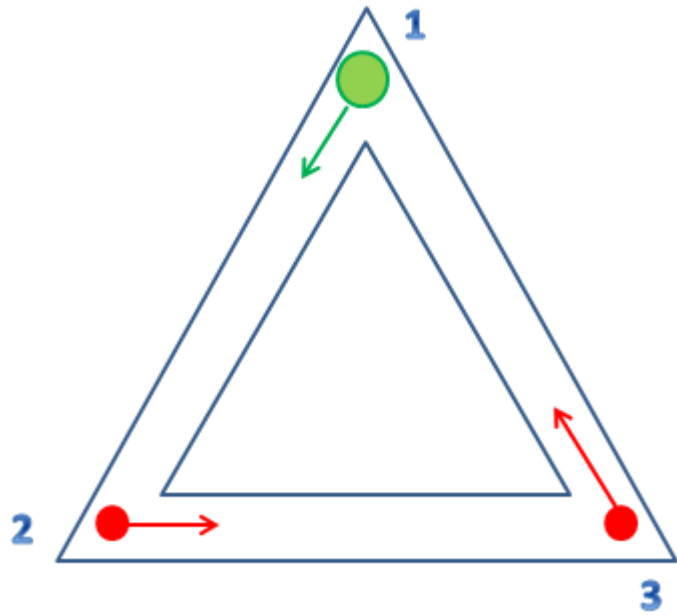


Now try it without the numbers!

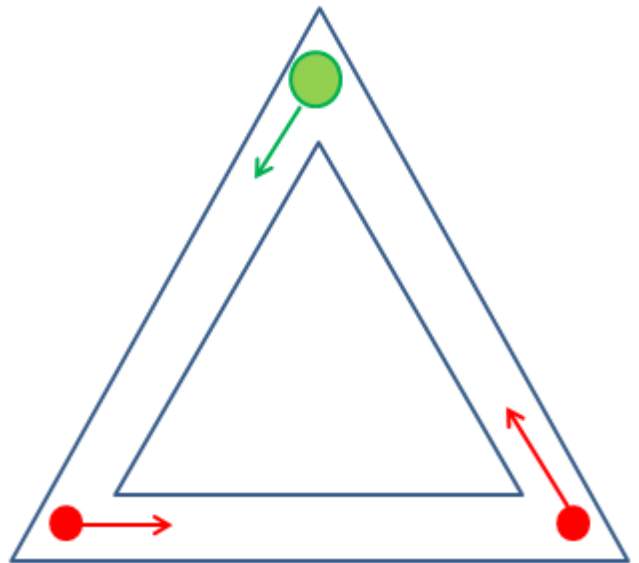
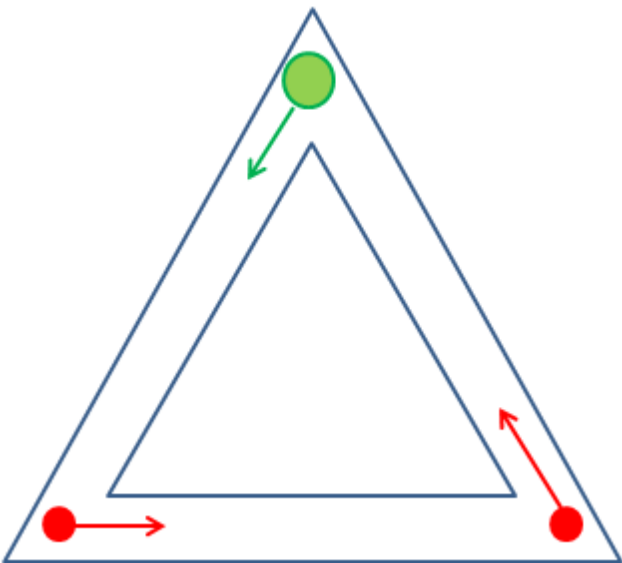


# Triangles

Can you draw a Triangle?  
Start at Number 1's green dot and draw a diagonal line stopping at number 2's red dot. Then follow the arrow and draw a line to the next red dot. Repeat until you reach the green dot again.



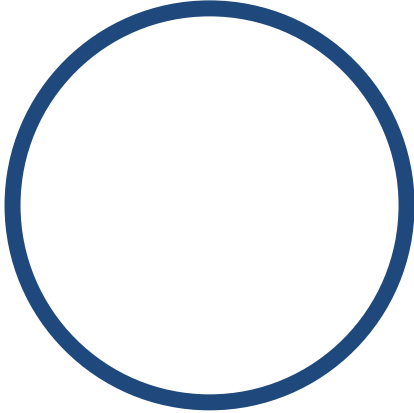



Now try it without the numbers!




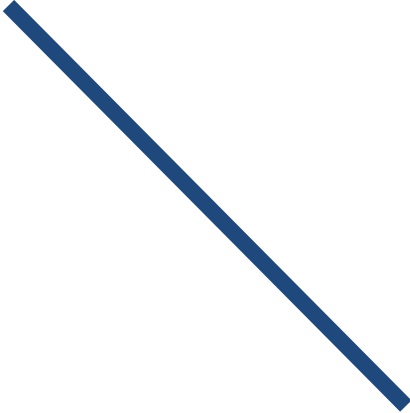
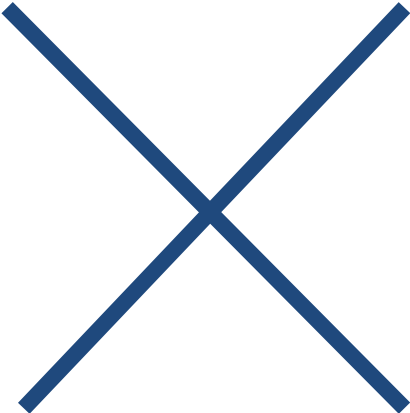
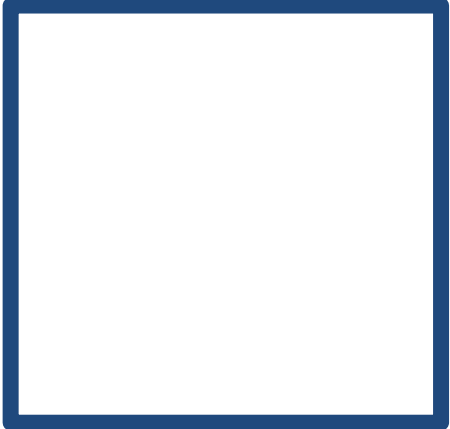
## Copy the shapes!

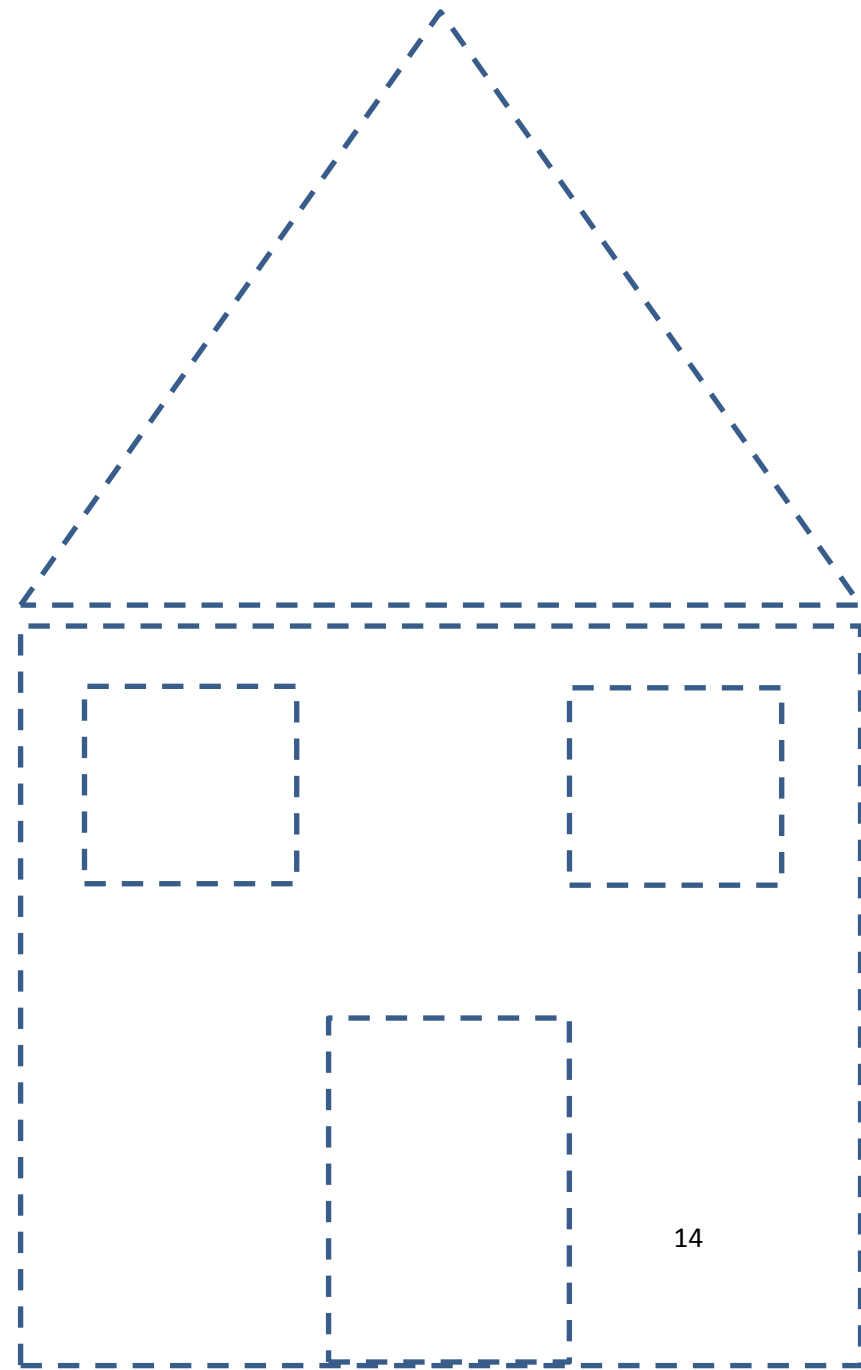
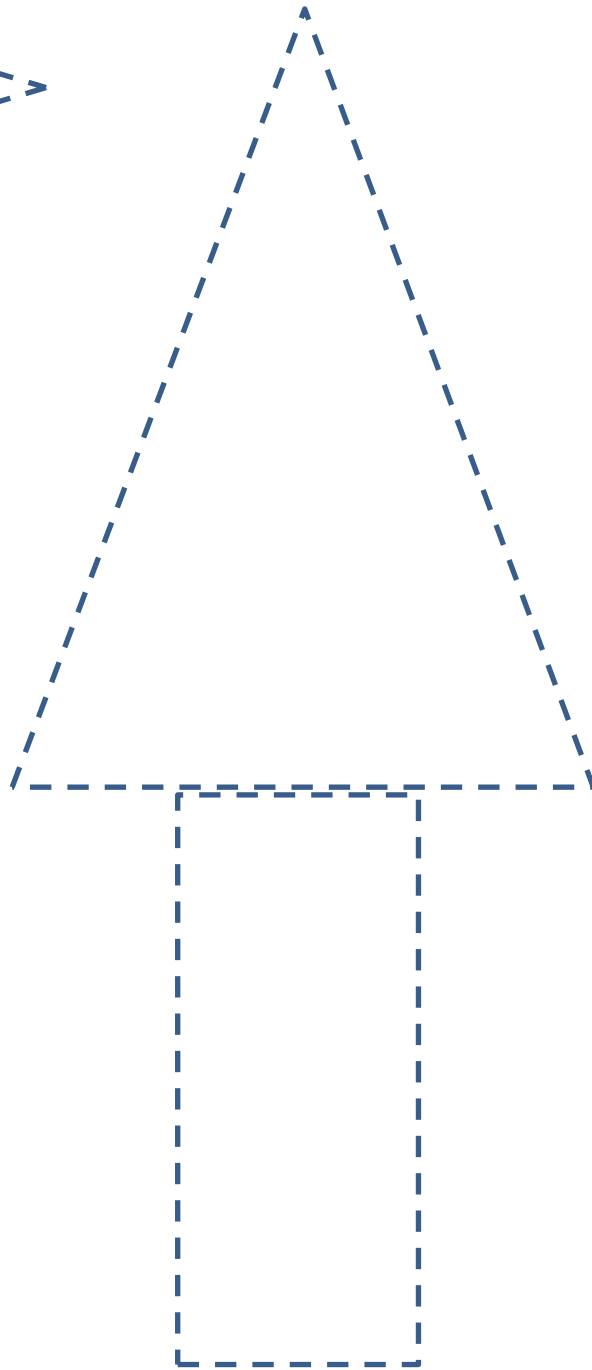
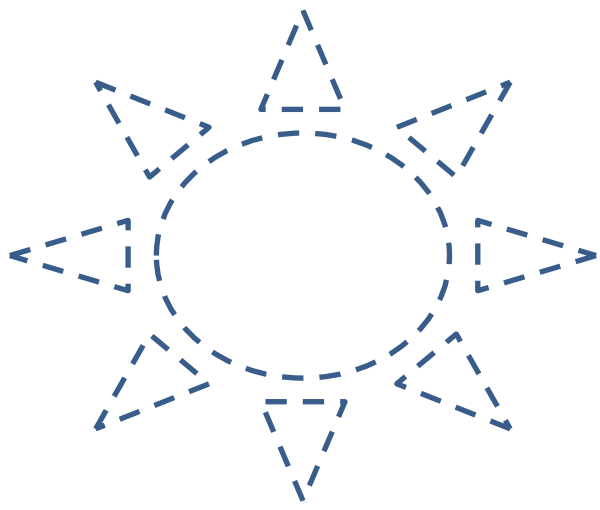
Can you copy the shapes in the boxes below? See if you can form them using the same direction you did on the previous two pages.

## Copy the shapes!

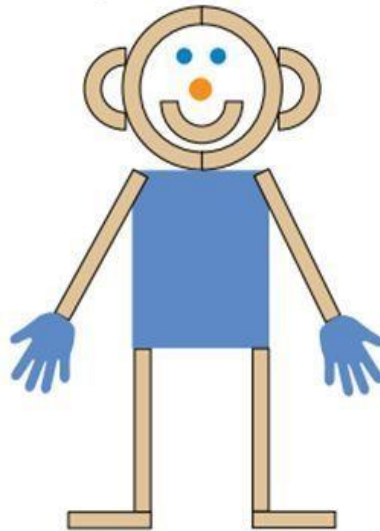
Can you copy the shapes in the boxes below? See if you can form them using the same direction you did on the previous two pages.



# Meet Mat Man:

**Mat Man**



Before children start writing, there are important concepts that need to be mastered to make writing easier for the children to learn. These early concepts, or readiness skills, include size recognition, placement, and sequence skills. Use Mat Man to teach these skills and simultaneously promote body awareness, socializing, and sharing.

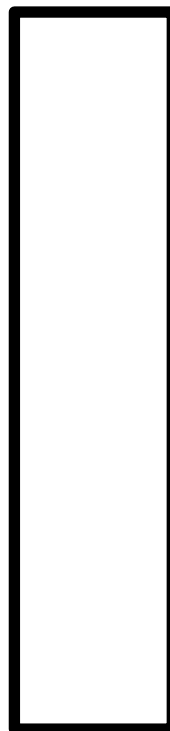
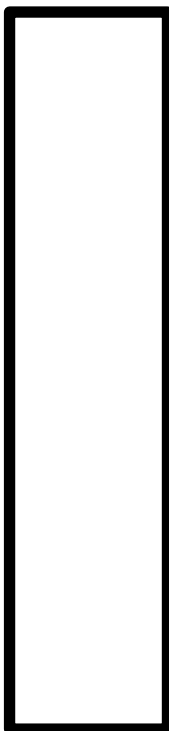
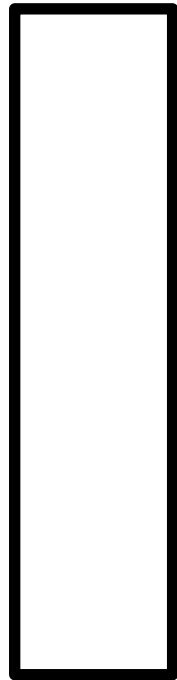
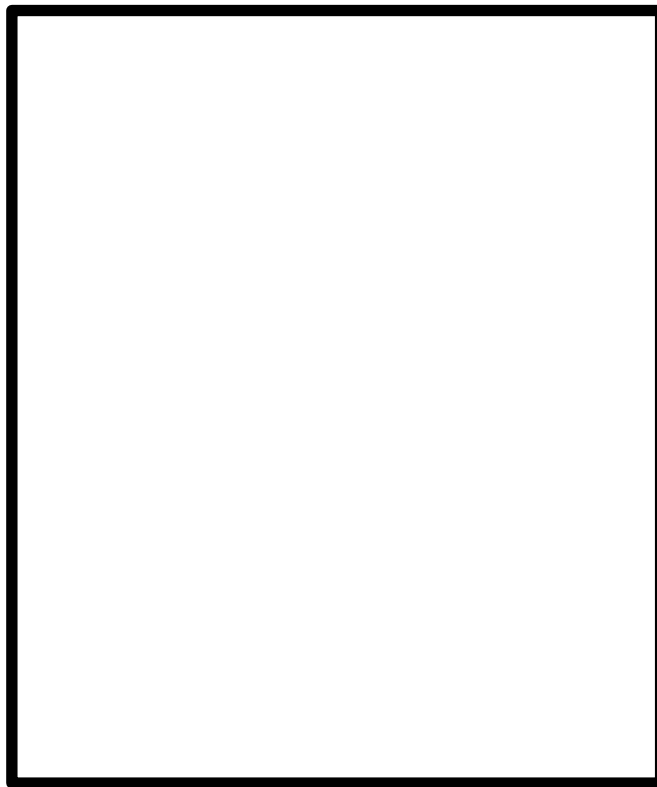
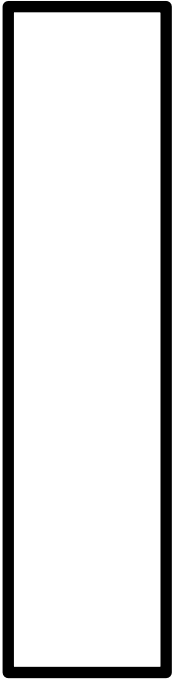
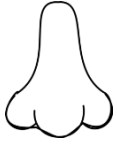
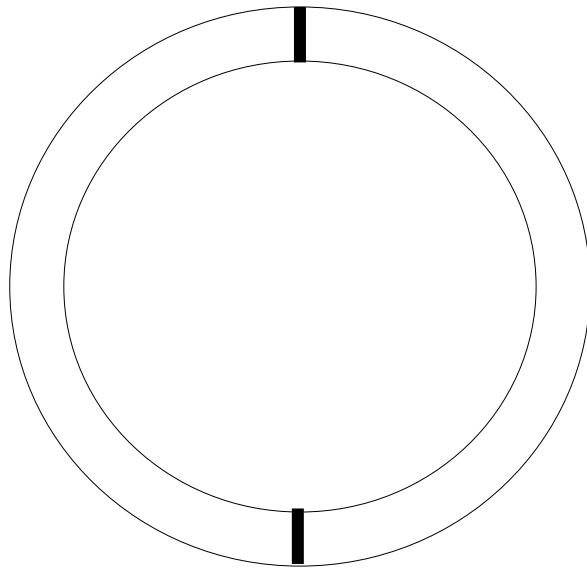
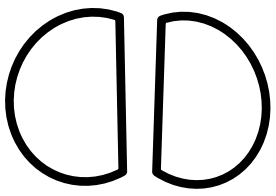
## Here's how to teach Mat Man.

1. Children sit in a circle.
2. Teacher/Parent gives Mat Man body parts to the children, who then build Mat Man piece by piece, singing the Mat Man song together.
3. Once mat man is built, encourage the children to draw mat man.

## Mat Man™ Song Tune: "The Bear Went Over the Mountain"

- Mat Man has 1 head, 1 head, 1 head, Mat Man has 1 head, So that he can\* think
- Mat Man has 2 eyes, 2 eyes, 2 eyes, Mat Man has 2 eyes, So that he can\* see
- Mat Man has 1 nose, 1 nose, 1 nose, Mat Man has 1 nose, So that he can\* smell
- Mat Man has 1 mouth, 1 mouth, 1 mouth, Mat Man has 1 mouth, So that he can\* eat
- Mat Man has 2 ears, 2 ears, 2 ears, Mat Man has 2 ears, So that he can\* hear
- Mat Man has 1 body, 1 body, 1 body, Mat Man has 1 body, To hold what is inside heart, lungs, stomach
- Mat Man has 2 arms, 2 arms, 2 arms, Mat Man has 2 arms, So that he can\* reach
- Mat Man has 2 hands, 2 hands, 2 hands, Mat Man has 2 hands, So that he can\* clap
- Mat Man has 2 legs, 2 legs, 2 legs, Mat Man has 2 legs, So that he can\* stand
- Mat Man has 2 feet, 2 feet, 2 feet, Mat Man has 2 feet, So that he can\* walk

\*Wait for your children to respond. Add extra verses when you add new accessories your children may call out other body functions (feet= run, kick, dance).





# Numbers 0-9:

- Start at the green dot
- Follow the number
- Stop at the red dot.

