

Stages of Artistic Development

Just as children grow and learn how to do more and more things, artists grow too. Here are some general stages you can watch as your child grows as an artist.

Artistic Stages

1. Scribble (2 to 4 years)

This is the beginning of art for a child. They make what we call “scribble”. Scribble is actually very important for a child to do. They are learning how to make marks on paper and this is the beginning of art. This stage starts with wild scribbles and ends with a circle shape called a mandala which can then become all sorts of things like a person, a car, a house, or anything else from your child’s imagination. The most important thing about this stage is that your child is learning how to show their ideas with pictures!



2. Preschematic (4 to 6 years)



In this stage, your child’s drawings become more and more detailed. The circle shape from the last stage now becomes even more special. They may add sticks coming out of the sides for arms and legs of a person. Or they may add circles to the bottom to create a car. Your child now will begin to understand and show how different details make different pictures. Their placement of objects on the page however is not always like we may draw something. It is less important for houses and people to be touching the ground. Rather, for a child, the importance is that they are included in the picture. The way your child colors is also different at this stage. They will not always choose colors that are realistic. Instead they choose colors that they like when coloring a picture.

3. Schematic (7-9 years)

Your child's pictures in this stage will become more what adults would call realistic. The details they draw in their pictures will be easier to recognize. They will start putting things at the top of their pictures that we might place in the sky like clouds, sun, etc. They will also start placing other things at the bottom of the page that we might place on the ground like trees, houses, etc. Also, the colors that your child uses in their pictures will be more realistic. One interesting thing to note from this stage is that the size that your child draws objects can sometimes be related to how important they may be to your child. For instance, they may draw themselves larger than any other person on the page because in their eyes they are the most important.



4. Dawning Realism (9-11 years)



In this artistic stage, children now become very aware of the differences between themselves and others. Their pictures contain many details that are connected to a specific person or situation rather than something more general. At times, because of this awareness of differences, your child may become frustrated with not being able to make something look exactly like it is in real life. Reassure them by saying that cameras were invented to capture how we look exactly. The fun of art is to make a representation of an idea and not simply capture it exactly. The awesome thing about drawing is that you are free to draw something however you want. Also in this stage, your child will begin to understand the idea of perspective. This means that the farther away something is the smaller it is, and the closer it is the bigger. This understanding now will let your child move objects from simply being on the bottom of the page and moving them into what we call the picture plane. Doing this makes your child's drawings look more realistic.

5. Pseudorealistic stage (11-13 years)

In the previous stages, the process of creating art was the most important. Many times, the enjoyment is found in steps to create a work of art. For some children, in this stage they may become solely concerned about the final work of art. They may not want to show you their work until they are done. Or they may throw out many versions of a drawing before showing you the copy they are most pleased with. Most important in

this stage for your child is the freedom to create art. Allow them time to just draw and doodle without the expectation that they have to make a final artwork. Also, give them access to drawing paper, crayons, and other supplies so that they can make art on their own motivation and desire. Finally, encourage them in their artwork. Make a big deal when they bring a picture to show you. Put it in a frame or display it on the refrigerator. Doing these things will encourage your kids to pursue art as a fun thing to do for the rest of their lives.



We have learned a little bit about the stages of artistic development. But as we look closer at the stages, you will see that the descriptions end at age 13. Does this mean that we quit growing as artists after we turn 13? For some who chose to never continue making art, this might be the case, but for those who continue to work and explore art making, artistic growth is an ongoing process for the rest of our lives!

