

## **Creating Tactile Pictures**

In kindergarten classrooms, visuals are typically integrated into the writing process, beginning with the child drawing a picture to help generate ideas for their writing. For braille readers, the creation of a tactile picture often takes place after they have finished writing. Adding a picture can add meaning and motivation to writing for both print and braille readers.

Tactile pictures are important for a variety of reasons:

- They help the child develop fine motor skills and the use of classroom tools.
- They assist with recognition of unfamiliar words, such as in patterned text.
- They develop tactile discrimination skills that the child will use later in school when interpreting graphs, charts, maps, and visuals, as well as in future high stakes testing.
- They serve as a way for the child to engage with peers, parents, and teachers when sharing written work.

Kindergarten may be the first time a child creates pictures for their work. They will likely need support both to generate ideas and to complete the pictures. During the process of creating tactile pictures, the child can receive individual instruction and practice holding scissors, developing cutting skills, using glue or glue sticks, and positioning materials consistently for ease of access. These are skills the child can transfer to the general education classes, including Art class.

When working with the child to create a tactile picture to accompany the child's writing in *BOP-K* and the general education classroom, it is important to consider factors that increase their ability to recognize the object, including shape, texture, size, and the spacing and relationship of objects on the page. While texture and shape are important features, they often do not offer enough tactual information by themselves. Simplicity of design is important; focusing on one aspect of an object (a picture of a cat's face, rather than a two-dimensional outline of the cat) and adding one unique detail with which the child is familiar (such as pipe cleaners for the cat's whiskers) also aids recognition (Wright, 2017). Help the child to create a picture that represents a characteristic of an object they have interacted with directly, and consider the way the

child has physically handled it. Real objects, such as food containers for a book about the lunch line, are easier to recognize than two-dimensional pictures, and may be appropriate for some students who are just beginning to use tactile pictures and have not yet been introduced to two-dimensional pictures. As the child begins to explore two-dimensional pictures, using a fill texture can aid in identification (Wright, 2017).



Photo: Tactile picture for grocery list using real object

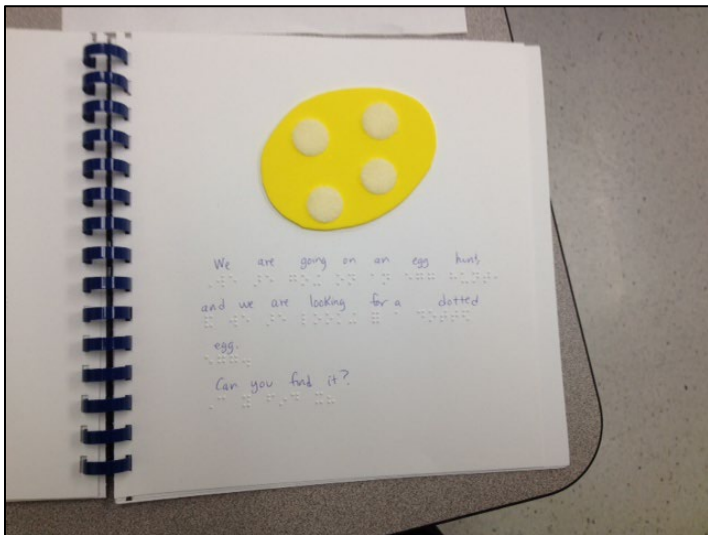


Photo: Tactile picture of a decorated egg

When the child is first learning, they can participate by

- choosing a concept for the picture/object, based on their interest or motivation;
- choosing the shape(s) for the picture, such as a circle for a ball, or a triangle for a slice of pizza;

- selecting the texture for each individual object;
- describing concepts to define the shape or position, such as long/short or in/out;
- cutting the shape from the chosen material; and
- attaching the object to the page (a stapler is most efficient for this task).



Photo: Child plays with a tactile picture of a door which “opens” and “closes”

Once the picture is complete, a label, in the form of a describing word or phrase, may be added with brailleable labels. As the child gains more experience producing pictures, they can increase their independence in the process.

You may want to gather a variety of textured materials, stickers, shapes, graphic art tape, and tools (scissors, glue, stapler, hole-punchers with differently shaped holes, or a tracing wheel) and place them in a portable container that the child can access across different school settings, including during writing activities in their classroom. Additional items to include in your tactile materials collection can be found in the Teacher Resources section “Materials for Making Tactile Graphics and Tactile Markers.” Commercial materials for creating tactile pictures and diagrams include the APH Carousel of Textures, Tactile Book Builder Kit, Feel `n Peel Stickers, DRAFTSMAN Tactile Drawing Board, and TactileDoodle.

**Reference**

Wright, Suzette. (2017). *Tactile book builder: Guide to designing tactile books*. American Printing House for the Blind. <https://www.aph.org/product/tactile-book-builder-kit-print-guide/>

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