

Scissor Skills

Scissor skill development

It takes time and practice to learn how to cut with scissors. To be able to use scissors, small muscles and movements in the hand need to strengthen and develop.

Stages of scissor skill development

It is helpful to understand your child's stage of development to choose activities they can manage and enjoy. Usually children develop skills in this order:

1. Holds scissors
2. Makes single snips
3. Holds paper whilst snipping
4. Cuts across paper. Start with narrow strips of card then gradually introduce larger pieces of card
5. Cuts along a straight line. Start with a thick texta line then gradually introduce a narrower line
6. Cuts along a curved line
7. Cuts around simple shapes (square, circle, oval, triangle)
8. Cuts around simple shapes with corners and curves (moon, heart, star).



Practice without scissors

Several activities without scissors can help your child to develop the muscles and movements required for cutting with scissors. These include:

- Squirting trigger action spray bottles—aiming for a target such as a balloon or small container.
- Using tongs—picking up small objects such as cotton wool balls, small Lego™ blocks, pieces of scrunched paper or dry pasta pieces.
- Punching holes in paper—using a single hole paper punch to punch out a line or pattern in stiff cardboard or paper.
- Playing with clothes pegs—placing them around containers to make fences for objects or to hang out paintings, drawings, dolls clothes, socks, etc.
- Using playdough—squeezing and stretching playdough, putty or plasticene.

Practise with scissors

- Encourage your child to practise holding scissors so their thumb is on top.
- If this is difficult for them, try placing your hands over your child's hands to help them to develop the cutting action.
- It can help to start with thicker paper or card, such as construction paper, index cards or greeting cards. These are easier to cut because they hold their position better and do not slip as much as thinner papers. Once your child is cutting forwards confidently, try thinner papers such as paper bags, office paper or wax paper.
- Other materials can also be used in scissor practice, such as string, tape, fabric, play dough "snakes" or aluminium foil.

Other activity ideas

Your child might enjoy practicing scissor skills when they are doing a special activity. Some easy activity ideas for early cutting experiences are:

- Cut paper lengths for a paper chain
- Cut fringes along a card or around a paper plate to make a lion mask
- Cut different textured items for a collage, such as straws, card, coloured paper strips and patty pans
- Cut a picture into pieces to make a puzzle
- Cut out pictures to paste
- Snip small pieces of paper and use them to decorate pictures or post them into a money box
- Use scissors with different blade patterns.

Modified scissors

A range of modified scissors is available for children who have difficulty using standard scissors.

- Left handed scissors for children who are left handed



- Children's safety scissors



- Loop scissors
(also called easy grip scissors)



- Dual control scissors
(also called training scissors)



- Bounce back scissors
(also called spring-loaded scissors)



- Mounted scissors
(also called table top scissors)



Safety considerations

- Always supervise your child with scissors.
- Start with children's safety scissors.
- Make sure your child is sitting down to cut.
- Keep scissors in a place your child can't reach when you are not supervising them.

Acknowledgements

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