



## CARE & LEARNING SERVICE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ADVICE FOR

### SCISSOR SKILLS

Scissor skills are what we need to manipulate scissors, being able to cut with scissors involves the skill of hand separation.

This means using the thumb, index and middle finger separately from the rest of the hand.

It takes time to practice to learn how to cut with scissors; small muscles and movement in the hand need to strengthen and develop.

**Activities without scissors can help the child to develop the muscles and movement required for cutting with scissors**



#### Activities for pre-scissors skills:

- Using Playdoh squeezing, stretching, rolling and pinching
- Tearing and scrunching paper of different thickness into little pieces to make a collage
- Placing cloth pegs around the edge of box
- Using small tweezers or tongs to pick up small items
- Squeezing empty plastic bottles to make bubbles in the water



#### Ready to use scissors:

- Child shows an interest in using scissors
- Child sits at an appropriate height table and chair so that the child can use their arms and hands freely

- Ensure that the dominant doing arm rests on the table or the side of the body to help with stability
- Ensure the child holds the scissors with their thumb in the small hole and fingers in the larger hole
- The ability to open and close the scissors smoothly
- Choose a “doing hand”, the one that holds the scissors and a “helper hand” that holds the paper
- Encourage the child to hold the scissors and paper with their thumbs up while pointing the scissors forward

### **Stages of scissor skill development:**

- Cut short, random strips, try snipping Playdoh, straws moving on to card and paper
- Cutting along thick straight lines, moving towards thinner lines
- Cutting out a square shape learning to stop and turn the paper when they reach the corner
- Cutting around a large circle learning to turn the paper as they cut



### **Tips for success:**

- Encourage the child to practise holding scissors so their thumb is on top of the scissors
- Verbal reminder “thumbs up” or you can place a smiley sticker on the child’s thumb and remind them it needs to point to the sky
- If it is difficult for them try placing your hands over the child’s hand to help them feel the opening and closing movement to develop the cutting action
- It is important to sequence materials to cut for cutting activities as it will promote confidence and interest and reduce frustration
- Ensure the child has mastered each stage before moving on to the next stage
- Start with materials that do not need much holding and positioning, items that require one snip such as plastic straws, strip of card and Playdoh
- It can help to start with thicker paper or card, as these are easier to cut as they hold their position better and do not slip as much as thinner paper.



- Start with thicker lines which are easier to cut along than thinner lines so that the child experiences success
- Once the child is cutting confidently try thinner paper
- When moving onto cutting corners say “stop turn the paper”
- The child should use the helper hand to turn the paper and keep the scissors pointing forward

***Link the activity with the child’s interest and make it fun***

## **Types of scissors**

### **Choosing scissors**

- Make sure the scissors you use are child friendly and that you supervise the child to ensure safety when they are using scissors
- Scissors with oval hands are easier for children to use to start with
- Always provide left handed scissors for left handed children

### **Mini easi-opening scissors:**

- These scissors are suitable for right or left handed users
- These scissors are lightweight and require gentle pressure between fingers, thumb and the palm of the hand the blades reopen after each cut



### **Self opening scissors:**

- Self opening scissors are designed for children who have difficulty opening and closing scissors; these scissors automatically open when pressure is released it gives the child the feeling of the movement to open and close the scissors



There is a variety of different scissors available for children who have difficulty using scissors. If further advice is needed, please contact the Occupational Therapy Department

### **Suppliers to order scissors:**

[www.peta.uk](http://www.peta.uk)  
[www.amazon.uk](http://www.amazon.uk)