

CARE & LEARNING SERVICE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ADVICE FOR

SCISSOR SKILLS

Fine motor skills

Fine motor skills are important as these are used to operate scissor effectively.

If a child is having a lot of difficulty using scissor, focus on fine motor skills and come back to scissors later.

A separate ***fine motor skills* *handout*** is available.



Scissor skills and handwriting

Using scissor works on the skills needed for writing.



Scissors help to develop hand separation – when the thumb, index and middle finger separately from the rest of the hand.

Practicing cutting with scissors helps the small muscles and movements in the hand to strengthen and develop. These are the same muscles and movements used to control a pencil.

In order to use scissors effectively you have to have a “doing hand” and a “helping hand”. This helps a child to develop hand dominance.

Staring to use scissors:

- Start using scissors when a child shows interest in using them – there is no exact age to start
- Choose a “doing hand” that holds the scissors and a “helper hand” that holds the paper
- Practice opening and closing the scissors smoothly
- Make sure that the sits at an appropriate height table and chair so that the child can use their arms and hands freely
- Encourage the “doing” (dominant) arm to rest on the table or on the side of the body - this helps with stability
- Ensure the child holds the scissors with their thumb in the small hole and fingers in the larger hole
- 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 or straws
 - move on to card and paper when ready
- Cut along thick straight lines, moving towards thinner lines
- Cut out a square shape learning to stop and turn the paper when they reach the corner
- Cut around a large circle, learning to turn the paper whilst cutting



Tips for success:

- Encourage the child to practise holding scissors so their thumb is in the hole on top of the scissors
- Verbal reminder “thumbs up” or **“thumb to the sky”**. A smiley sticker or dot on the child’s thumb may help as a reminder
- Place your hand over the child’s hand to help them **feel the movement** of the opening and closing action
- It is important to start with easy to cut activities and materials and then build up to harder ones. This promotes confidence and interest and reduces 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 and only need one snip, e.g. plastic straws, strip of card and Playdoh
- It can help to start with thicker paper or thin 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 drawn on the paper as these 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 on to cutting corners say “stop, turn the paper”
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- Link scissors skills with the child’s interest – cut around a circle with their favourite character inside
- The child should use the helper hand to turn the paper and keep the scissors pointing forward
- Make sure that children learn to cut around shapes in the right direction, this is especially important with circles – **cut in the direction you would draw**



Choosing scissors

- Make sure the scissors you use are child friendly
- Try the scissors yourself first – some are harder to use than they look
- 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



Possible suppliers:

www.peta.uk
www.amazon.uk

Websites:

The following websites have some downloadable resources for cutting activities

<http://www.sparklebox.co.uk/topic/creative-arts/art-and-design/cutting-skills.html>
<http://www.ot-mom-learning-activities.com/cutting-activities.html>
<http://www.activityvillage.co.uk/cutting-skills-printables>