

SCISSOR SKILLS

When does it happen?

Children are introduced to scissor use as early as 3 years of age. Scissor use requires a child to open and close a hand, develop hand strength, and use two hands together.

A child will first learn to snip into paper, and then cut on straight lines, then curvy lines, wavy lines, then simple shapes (square, triangle and circle) and finally more complex shapes.

How can I help the child?

Here are some strategies and activities that will help target the skills needed for scissor use.

Strategies

- Provide children's blunt-ended scissors as they are easier to control.
- Provide scissors that can be used in the right or left hand.
- Provide scissors that comfortably fit in the child's hand.

How to hold the scissors

- Thumbs up - Place the thumb into the small hole and have this hole positioned on top. Stay in the position throughout the cut.
- Pointer finger drives - Place the pointer finger along the bottom of the scissors handle. The pointer finger leads the direction of the cut.
- Passenger fingers along for the ride - Place the middle, ring and pinkie finger in the bottom loop. If all fingers do not fit, they are tucked into the palm.
- Elbows in - When cutting elbows should remain close to the body for added stability.



- Example of recommended scissors: Fiskars©, Crayola©

- Cutting at a vertical surface with the top corners of the paper taped to the surface facilitates proper wrist position when cutting forward.
- Grasp the paper for the child if he/she is having difficulty coordinating the cutting hand and the “helper” hand together.
- Have the child lay on his/her tummy to provide good trunk and elbow support.
- Allow the child to choose the hand they wish to cut with. We do not always cut with the same hand we print with.
- To promote a ‘thumbs up’ position, tape the top of a paper to a wall and have the child cut vertically up the paper.
- Keep cutting worksheets small (less paper to handle and manipulate).
- Widen cutting lines using a marker, highlighter or crayon.
- Use heavy/thick materials initially (craft foam, play-doh, envelopes, construction paper, Bristol board, straws, index cards, old playing cards, sandpaper). Move to thinner papers (magazine, lined paper, foil) when the child develops their scissor skills.
- Draw a square or other simple shape around the complex shape to be cut.
- Use a sequence of stickers, or paper punched holes as a guide for the child to cut along.
- Promote correct cutting direction with circles:
 - Counter-clockwise for right-handed children
 - Clockwise for left-handed children
- If the child is having difficulty with scissor skills, the following alternate types of scissors can be tried with the child to increase their success while continuing to develop use of traditional scissors:

- My first Fiskars
- Loops scissors
- Long Loop Self-Opening
- Long Loop Easy Grip
- Decorative Scissors
- Cushion Grip Scissors
- Double Ring Training
- Small Loops



Activities

- Tearing paper

- Clothespins
- Wind up toys
- Use single hole punches (make confetti)
- Use turkey basters, squeeze water bottles, spray bottles, squirt toys or medicine droppers
- Pick up objects with tongs, tweezers or rookie sticks
- Cut play-doh, straws, foam, moon dough
- Cut envelopes, index cards, playing cards, sandpaper