

## SCISSOR SKILLS

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Many young children love to use scissors even though learning to use them is quite challenging. However, some children are simply not developmentally ready to handle the complicated task of cutting. Using scissors successfully requires being able to separate the two sides of the hand (thumb side for skill and pinkie side for stabilizing). Foundational skills such as good posture, forearm control, finger isolation, use of two hands working collaboratively, and coordination of arm, hand, and eye movements all must be achieved.

You may notice that some kids try to cut with their elbows pointed out, arms up in the air, and scissors pointed down. While this may look awkward, they use this position because it provides the shoulder and wrist stability needed to cut. Though a child does not have to master cutting to start kindergarten, it is to their advantage to not get into the habit of immature and awkward arm positions.

Here are some suggestions to help all kids practice cutting skills while providing them with the support they need:

- Make sure they are seated in a chair small enough so that their feet are on the floor. Encourage them to rest their elbows on the table when they cut to discourage awkward arm positions.
- The *correct scissor grasp* can vary depending on the child, but generally the thumb should be in the top (smaller) loop, the middle and ring fingers in the lower (larger) loop, and the index finger remaining out to stabilize the lower loop.
- To build feelings of success, have child begin cutting with thin strips of heavy paper (old greeting cards, index cards, construction paper), play-doh “snakes,” or drinking straws so that all is needed is to snip it.
- Encourage hand-strengthening and coordination activities for the whole upper body – a great pre-cutting activity is tearing paper to make a collage.
- Some scissors are better than others. There are various scissor types available (regular child scissors, self-opening, double loop training scissors, non-loop) depending on a child’s skills.

Cutting Skills Progression:

- Shows interest in scissors
- Holds and manipulates scissors appropriately
- Opens and closes scissors in a controlled fashion
- Cuts short random snips
- Manipulates scissors in a forward motion
- Cuts forward across paper
- Cuts forward across paper along a straight line
- Cuts a straight forward line
- Cuts a curved line
- Cuts simple geometric shapes
- Cuts simple figure shapes
- Cuts complex figure shapes
- Cuts non-paper materials (e.g., string, tape)

Factors to consider for scissors selection:

- Size of child’s hand
- Hand strength and motor control
- Use of 2 hands in a coordination fashion

See the attached handout for ideas to promote cutting success with your child.

## CUTTING IDEAS

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Pre-cutting activities that build foundational skills for success with cutting:

- Point to pictures in a book.
- Remove and replace marker lids.
- Use salad servers, salad or bread tongs to pick up and release a variety of objects.
- Squeeze water from a turkey baster at bath time.
- Use paper punch to punch holes in index cards.
- Tear paper to make a collage.
- Screw and unscrew lids on jars (on a bug hunt, to help Mom/Dad make a sandwich).
- Pull apart and put together pop beads.
- Hang clothes (or paper) on a clothesline.
- Do lacing activities and string beads.
- Draw along a path of stickers or dots on an easel.

Cutting Activities:

- Pretend the scissors are alligators taking big chomps.
- Cut playdough and gak.
- Cut ends of licorice to make straws; cut tops off fruit snacks, cut up pieces of string cheese, etc.
- Cut up straws to make beads.
- Cut strips to make chains of paper.
- Tape large sheets of paper around the top of a school table and have children sit on the floor and cut up to the top to make fringed sides.
- Cut paper into hula skirts.
- Use "crazy scissors" (often used for scrapbooking) with a variety of edge patterns.
- Tape a hershey kiss at the end of a winding road on an index card. They eat it when they reach it.
- Go outside and cut grass or dandelions with scissors, a good spring activity with young children.
- Cut up magazine pictures to make puzzles.
- Use cutting projects to make finger puppets, paper airplanes, etc.

