

Scissor skills



Learning to use scissors provides an opportunity to improve upper body stability, get both sides of the body working together, and improve fine motor skills and visual perceptual skills.

Learning to cut with scissors is a skill learnt in stages. There are some skills that need to be in place before the child is ready to master this skill. It is really important to check whether the child can do the following:

Top Tips

- Ensure your child is positioned correctly with the appropriate height table and chair. This will have an impact on the child's level of ability and control when attempting cutting out activities.
- Ensure right/left handed scissors are available.
- Begin activities with 2cm or 4cm wide strips of paper – this enables the child to achieve at the task by snipping with scissors. As they are able, increase width of paper.
- Use reinforced paper or card – rigidity facilitates manipulation of the paper.

Stages of Developmental Scissor Use

The ability to use scissors follows a developmental pattern. Below, there is a description of each stage and some ideas for how to move them on to the next.

Stage 1 What the child can do:	How to help the child move to the next stage:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tears paper into strips• Interested in scissors – brings the scissors to the paper and pretends to cut – but doesn't hold them the right way	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Squeezing empty plastic bottles in water to make bubbles, or to blow air at feathers or ping pong balls across a table.• Finger or glove puppets.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand and finger rhymes , e.g. ‘Incey Wincey Spider,’ ‘Peter Pointer,’ Two little dicky birds.’ • Modelling clay/play dough – rolling and pinching. • Tearing up paper to make papier maché/collages.
<p>Stage 2 What the child can do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holds the scissors the right way but not using them yet 	<p>How to help the child move to the next stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable child to stabilise wrist/arms on the table. • Encourage thumb to be positioned on top of paper and scissor blades at 90° to page. • Provide hand over hand support, if needed to facilitate and establish consistency.
<p>Stage 3 What the child can do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holds the scissors the right way and can open / close them in a controlled fashion 	<p>How to help the child move to the next stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow child opportunity to cut different textures of paper/fabric etc. • Cutting rolls of clay/playdough. • Cutting cotton wool balls – paste onto snowman, lamb outlines
<p>Stage 4 What the child can do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can use the scissors to cut random strips 	<p>How to help the child move to the next stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with short, thick lines to cut along and move to long thin ones. • Start with cutting out large pictures and then move to smaller ones. • Start with cutting down lines which are wide apart from each other and then try ones closer together. • Cutting string for outlines of picture, friendship bracelets. • Cutting small pieces of leaves to stick on a picture of a tree. • Cut up plastic straws for a necklace.
<p>Stage 5 What the child can do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tries to cut forwards and has a goal in mind. 	<p>How to help the child move to the next stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the length of line to be cut, i.e. start with piece of paper approx. 1cm wide gradually increase width of strip of paper as child able to achieve goal.
<p>Stage 6 What the child can do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can cut left to right. 	<p>How to help the child move to the next stage: Encourage child to turn the paper for correct orientation</p>
<p>Stage 7 What the child can do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can cut a straight forward line. 	<p>How to help the child move to the next stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glue cardboard/lollipop sticks/sandpaper strips each side as a guide to cut between. • Make Chinese lanterns. • Cut crayons – place between waxed paper, cover with newspaper, iron and hang on window.

<p>Stage 8 What the child can do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can cut out a simple geometric shape. 	<p>How to help the child move to the next stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut along the lines of a printed shape. • Cut out shapes/stickers.
<p>Stage 9 What the child can do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can cut a simple shape out from a background. 	<p>How to help the child move to the next stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut from hole to hole, picture to picture. • Medallions/Christmas decorations. • Cut out a picture and mount onto cardboard locket for necklace. • Start by drawing geometric shapes around pictures to be cut out. • Cut out pieces for collage i.e. circles for flowers/chickens.
<p>Stage 10 What the child can do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can cut out a complex shape from a background. 	<p>How to help the child move to the next stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make jigsaw puzzles – using magazine pictures pasted onto cardboard. • Paper dolls – cut out clothes. • Cut out curves and make letters. • Trace around stencils, cut out and copy design. • Cut around edge of paper to make a long snake. • Snowflakes – fold paper and cut/snip off chunks.
<p>Stage 11 What the child can do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can cut non-paper materials. 	<p>How to help the child move to the next stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cutting rolls of clay/playdough. • Cutting cotton wool balls – paste onto snowman, lamb outlines. • Cut up plastic straws then thread them on a string to make a necklace. • Cut crayons; place between waxed paper; cover with newspaper; iron and hang in the window. • Cut leather strips for plaiting.