

## Scissor Skills

### INTRODUCTION

Using scissors is a complex activity requiring the integration of many different skills including fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination.

Before a child learns to use scissors he or she should be able to manage the following:

- Open and close hand
- Use two hands together
- Stabilise at the shoulder, elbow and wrist joint
- Able to use individual fingers e.g. thumb, index and middle fingers separately from the rest of the hand.

### Pre-Scissor Skills

These activities focus on the skill of opening and closing the hand using the first three fingers.

- Hand / finger rhymes e.g. Incy-Wincy Spider
- Finger puppets
- Tearing and scrunching paper
- Dough activities— rolling, squeezing, pinching
- Squeezing plastic bottles to make bubbles in water
- Playing with water pistols
- Using tongs / tweezers to pick up various small objects e.g. cotton balls, Lego blocks, marbles
- Using pegs

### Bilateral Activities (using 2 hands together)

- Hands doing the same action – rolling pin, catching large ball
- Hands doing the same but opposite action – wringing out a cloth, tearing paper
- Stabilising with grasp – one hand stabilises while other completes activity, e.g. opening a jar, stabilising paper while drawing, threading beads, using a knife and fork together

### Tips for Left Handed Children

- Some children who write with their left hand will use their right hand for scissors.
- Left handed children will require left handed scissors, the blades of these are specifically engineered to provide full visibility of the cutting line.

### Scissor Grasp

Children may initially try to hold the scissors with both hands to open and close them, or place the index and middle fingers in the loops but not the thumb.

The most efficient way to grasp scissors is to hold them with the thumb in the top loop and the middle finger in the bottom loop. The index finger supports and stabilises on the underside of the scissors.



When cutting, both the hand holding the scissors and the hand holding the paper should have the thumb on top. Children may find it useful to be verbally prompted to have “thumbs on top”.

### Stage 1: Opening and closing scissors

- Once the child can hold the scissors correctly they are ready to practice opening and closing the scissors

### Stage 2: Learning to snip paper

- The child makes random snips on paper
- Cutting is not in any particular direction and there is no forward movement
- The child may exaggerate their movements and initially open and close their whole hand

### Stage 3: Pushing the scissors forward

- The child begins to push the scissors forward to cut across the page
- It may be good to start with heavyweight paper or card (which provides additional stability) in 1” strips
- As the child progresses you can increase the width of the paper to be cut

### Stage 4: Cutting a straight line

- The child begins to manipulate the direction of the scissors to stay on a line
- This requires forearm stability

### Stage 5: Cutting a curved line / simple shape

- The child is now learning to turn and manipulate the paper as well as the scissors to stay on the line
- During this stage, children often have better control over opening and closing the scissors which provides a smoother, less jagged cut
- The child can then cut out simple shapes like squares and circles

### Stage 6: Cutting out complex shape

- Once the child has mastered the above stages they are able to cut various weights of paper and non paper materials
- They can then move onto cutting out more complex shapes and figures