NHS
Wirral University Teaching Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

Wirral Children's Occupational Therapy Service

Scissor skill development

Close supervision is always needed when a child is learning to use scissors.

Pre-scissor activities

- Activities involving pointing e.g. asking child to point out things in books, pressing buttons etc.
- Practice isolating each finger by placing palms flat on the table and lifting up one finger at a time or make circles with the thumb and each finger in turn.
- Use a water pistol/ toys to squirt water at suspended balloons, or to squirt into a bowl of soapy water to make bubbles.
- Place lots of objects in one bucket and transfer to another bucket using kitchen tongs, salad servers etc. Child picks up objects from one bucket using tongs, runs and drops them into the other bucket, gradually increasing the distance.
- Use a hole punch to punch holes randomly in stiff paper or card. Then lace the card and connect the holes with crayon lines.
- Tear strips of different types of paper, card, foil etc. use for collage or papier mache.
- Fill a washing up bottle with paint and squeeze.
- Puppets – fingers and thumbs (to move puppets mouth)
- Squeezing activities, such as:
  - ❖ Picking up small pieces of cut-up sponge with tongs or tweezers, drop them into a bowl of water or the bath
  - ❖ Tweezers to pick up finger foods, such as raisins or marshmallows
  - ❖ Squeezing a baster or puff blower – make bubbles in water, using the air from squeezing the baster or puff blower to move the ball

Things to consider during set up

- When sitting to use scissors, the furniture should allow feet to be flat on a firm surface and forearms supported on the work surface to maximise stability. The table ideally needs to be 1 inch above the child's elbow. For adult dining table consider the use of booster seats and/ or stable support under the child's feet.
- Ensure you choose scissors which are appropriate for the child's hand dominance, and hand size.

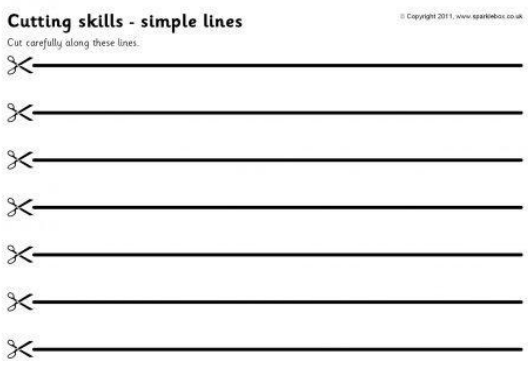
Position

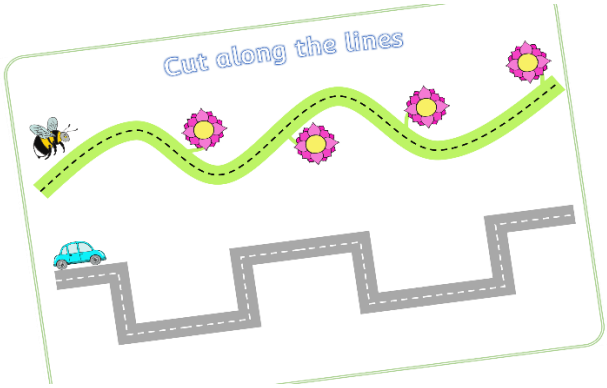


- Thumb should be on the top loop and can use either index finger or middle finger or both in the bottom loop depending on size of the scissors and your child's hand. To encourage thumb on top you can place a sticker on their thumb to remind them.
- Paper should be held parallel to the table with helping hand with thumb on top of paper.
- The child is also able to manoeuvre their helping hand to support the cutting by turning the paper (not turning the scissors). Scissors should be pointed forward and parallel with the table (not pointing up to ceiling).
- Encourage your child to cut slowly and to remain on the line.

Stages of scissor skills development

- ✓ Child can snip paper. Child holds scissors in one hand (dominant hand is not likely established at this stage).
- ✓ Child can cut along a thick straight line.
- ✓ Child can cut along a thin straight line.
- ✓ Child can cut around corners.
- ✓ Child can cut along curves.
- ✓ Child can cut out a range of squares.
- ✓ Child can cut out a range of triangles.
- ✓ Child can cut out a range of circles.
- ✓ Child can cut out a range of large, simple shapes e.g. stars.
- ✓ Child can cut out pictures, use skills in arts and craft projects etc.





Scissors Activities

These activities are for you to use when your child can hold a pair of scissors and make the correct movement. Do not move to curved lines until they have mastered straight lines.

Straight lines

Simplify the cutting task, teach to cut along a straight line – ask the child to:

- Cut along a line of punched holes (reducing the task to a series of small snips).
- Cut along the edge of a piece of card stuck on the paper.
- Cut along the middle of a line of small stickers on the paper.
- Cut long 2.5cm strips of paper and mark with thick black felt tip. Your child should be able to cut through with one snip.
- Practice above using several types of paper, e.g. newspaper, foil, thin card, sandpaper.
- Encourage child to cut across (not necessarily in a straight line).
- Stick lolly sticks, straws, or strips of strong card on paper in straight lines, and encourage the child to cut between these markers.
- Repeat above with wool, sandpaper etc.
- Colour 1cm - 2.5cm strips across the paper and cut along coloured strip.
- Stick several strips of varying thickness paper and card on a sheet of paper and ask child to cut along edge of each strip - using edge as a guideline.
- Punch a series of holes in paper and ask child to cut through holes.
- Cut strips of paper and glue into circles to make paper chains.
- Glue small pieces of material or stickers on a piece of paper and ask child to cut from one to another. Gradually put more pieces on the paper to make it more difficult.

Curves lines

- Repeat section on straight lines using curved lines instead.
- Stick card circle e.g. paper plate on a piece of paper and ask child to cut out using card as a guideline.
- Stick coloured circle shapes onto paper and ask child to cut out.