

Scissor Skills:



Why are scissor skills important?

Scissor skills are involved in a variety of curriculum tasks in the early school years, such as cut and stick comprehension activities, as well as arts and crafts. It is a useful everyday life skill. Each child comes to school with varying experience of using scissors, which will impact on their cutting skills.

Using scissors is actually a complex skill requiring an individual to do the following:

- Open and close the hand
- Use both hands together (with the dominant hand leading and the other hand assisting)
- Coordinate arm, hand and eye movements

Children with reduced scissor skills may:

- Struggle to open and close the scissors
- Fatigue easily during scissor activities
- Display reduced control when attempting to cut along lines
- Take a long time to complete tasks involving scissor use
- Opt out of tasks requiring scissor use

5 key ideas:

- Provide opportunities to further develop the skills needed for scissor use
 - tweezers lifting cotton balls or cornflakes
 - squeezing liquid out of bottles or turkey basters
 - tearing paper and using to make collages
 - Construction toys using 2 hands together
- For children who struggle to coordinate the other hand, cello tape the page to the edge of the table and allow the child to try cutting independently without an adult holding the paper.
- Try some adapted scissors/ paper e.g. 'easi grip' or 'assisted opening' scissors to help with open and close action / Thick paper is easier to hold and cut.
- Make it easier for children to handle paper by cutting off the excess paper on the sheet.
- Master the steps
 - Child learns to hold, open and close the scissors
 - Child learns to hold page in other hand and snips
 - Child cuts on a straight line
 - Child cuts out simple shapes like circles and squares
 - Child cuts complex shapes and figures



Strategies for the classroom and home:

- Complete warm up exercises before activities that use the hands:



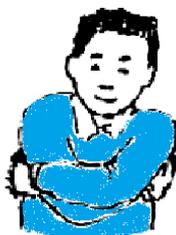
Push palms together really hard!

Make sure elbows are at right angles to wrists. Hold for a count of 5. Slowly release. Repeat 5 times.



Pull hands apart as hard as possible!

For a count of 5. Release. Shake out hands. Repeat 5 times.



Give yourself a big tight hug!

Hold for a count of 5. Release and give arms and hands a big shake out. Repeat 5 times.



Reach up high!

Stretch one arm up and then the other. Draw circles in the air. Repeat the sequence 5 times.

- Provide opportunities to further develop the prerequisite skills for scissors:
 - Pick-up games – use salad servers, tongs, tweezers, etc. to pick up a variety of small objects such as plastic toys, cotton wool balls, dried peas, buttons, etc and transfer these to a container
 - Squeeze play tasks – squeeze play doh or use a trigger type spray container with coloured water to make a design on a page or aim at a target. A squeezey bottle could be used during water play activities
 - Paper punch games - use a hole punch to punch holes randomly or along a path in paper or card, which can then be used for a threading/ lacing activity
 - Paper tearing activities – tearing tissue paper, thin paper then thick paper. These can then be scrunched into a ball and used for craft activities or blowing/ throwing or finger flicking games
 - Drawing around hand or stencils

- Construction activities - for example, lego, k-nex, etc
- Clapping games – clap out syllables of words, clap to music, clap during P.E. games

Additional tips:

- A typical scissor grasp is with the middle finger and thumb in the scissor loops, with the index finger to the front of the lower loop, stabilising and steering the scissors as they move. The thumb should be positioned on top – **“thumbs up”** towards the ceiling.
- Have the child lay on their tummy on the floor, resting on their forearms to practice snipping, as this keeps the large body joints still and aligned and increases control in the wrists and hands
- While seated at the desk, allow the child to rest their forearms on the table top to help with stability and fatigue
- Ensure the page is held in the child’s hand appropriately and remind them to “steer” the paper with the non-preferred hand if required
- Cut away any excess paper before cutting out an object itself
- Consider using easy grip or assisted opening scissors if there is poor strength to open scissor blades once closed
- Initially simplify cutting tasks by:
 - Starting with straight lines before moving onto curved lines
 - Cut along a line/ circle of punched holes
 - Cut through the middle of a line/ circle of small stickers on the page
 - Cut along a line/ circle drawn with a thick marker