



## Occupational Therapy - Scissor Skills

### Scissor skills

Learning how to cut with scissors is a complex task. By the age of 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 years children are typically developmentally ready and interested to use scissors

### Stages of scissor skill development

It is helpful to understand your child's stage of development to choose activities they can manage and enjoy. Usually children develop skills in this order:

1. Holds scissors
2. Makes single snips
3. Holds paper whilst snipping
4. Cuts across paper. Start with narrow strips of card then gradually introduce larger pieces of card
5. Cuts along a straight line. Start with a thicker line then gradually introduce a narrower line
6. Cuts along a curved line
7. Cuts around simple shapes (square, circle, oval, triangle)
8. Cuts around simple shapes with corners and curves (moon, heart, star).

### Practice without scissors

Several activities without scissors can help your child to develop the muscles and movements required for cutting with scissors. These include:

- Squirting spray bottles—aiming for a target such as a balloon or small container.
- Using tongs—picking up small objects such as pom poms, small Lego™ blocks, pieces of scrunched paper or dry pasta pieces.
- Punching holes in paper—using a single hole paper punch or craft punch to punch out a line or pattern in stiff cardboard or paper.
- Playing with clothes pegs—placing them around containers to make fences for objects or to hang out paintings, drawings, dolls clothes, socks, etc.
- Using playdough—squeezing and pinching playdough

**Before cutting with scissors, review scissor safety rules with your child:**

- ✓ **Always sit at the table when cutting**
- ✓ **Scissors are for cutting paper (not furniture, clothes or hair etc.)**
- ✓ **Supervise scissors activities at all times**

**Practice with scissors:**

- Encourage your child to practice holding scissors so their thumb is on top.
- If this is difficult for them, try placing your hands over your child's hands to help them to develop the cutting action.
- It can help to start with thicker paper or card, such as construction paper, index cards or greeting cards. These are easier to cut because they hold their position better and do not slip as much as thinner papers. Once your child is cutting forwards confidently, try thinner papers such as paper bags, office paper or wax paper.
- Other materials can also be used in scissor practice, such as string, tape, fabric, play dough "snakes" or tin foil.

**Adapted from Government of S. Australia website 2017**

[https://www.childandyouthservices.sa.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/19406/Scissor-skills.pdf](https://www.childandyouthservices.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/19406/Scissor-skills.pdf)

**Please contact your occupational therapist if you have any questions about the above information**