

Occupational Therapy Service for Children and Young People

Developing Scissor Skills

Care and adult supervision should be taken with all activities to ensure the child's safety.

Ensure that children's scissors are used at home and at school. Present the scissors to your child with one loop above the other and encourage them to grasp them with their hand in the 'thumbs up' position. The middle finger goes into the lower loop, with the index finger positioned to help with closing and holding the loop steady.

Your child may benefit from the opportunity to trial Easigrip scissors and/or spring-loaded/assisted scissors while they are still developing these skills.



Pre-cutting Activities

Incorporate some of the below activities into a pre-cutting warm up for your child. These will help them to develop the necessary motor skills to use scissors and orient themselves to the task.

- Scrunch paper into balls using a piece of paper in both hands. Throw into a basket for a goal.
- Tear pieces of paper with the tips of thumb, index and middle fingers and use for a collage.
- Use squeeze water bottles to spray thin paint onto paper, or water plants with it.
- Place a rubber band around all fingers. Stretch the band by moving the thumb away from the other fingers. Relax and repeat.
- Use pegs to make a pattern around a cut out shape.
- Use finger puppets to isolate finger movements.
- Place your hand flat on the table. Take it in turns to tap the thumb, index finger, thumb, middle finger, thumb, ring finger, thumb, little finger on the table. Repeat the pattern backwards. Do it with both hands. Try to develop speed, and try it with eyes closed.
- Use tongs or salad servers with scissor like loops to pick up a variety of different objects off the floor / play 'fishing' games or games where your child has to pick up objects and move them from one place to another.
- Use an eyedropper and/or a baster during an art activity to squirt/drop paint. Improve accuracy with the eyedropper by drawing onto the paper and aiming to drop the water or thin paint into those goals.
- Make colourful bubbles by filling a container with dyed soapy water (use cooking dye) and squirting air into it with a baster.

- Use a stapler to practice the open and closing motion required for scissors.
- Squeezing a paper punch involves some of the same hand muscles used in cutting. Your child can make confetti or punch a border around a piece of paper.

Cutting Activities

- Practice opening and closing the scissors in the air.
- A good cutting activity to start with is to cut plastic straws into small pieces. They can be used later to make a necklace or as part of a collage.
- Cut up other materials that provide lots of sensory feedback as well as an instant effect, such as cardboard, sandpaper, playdough, cotton wool, felt, corrugated card, tinfoil, etc. Ensure all items are small and can be cut through with one snip to eliminate any necessity for direction or prolonged control.
- Cutting while lying on the floor propped on forearms is a good way to inhibit movement of the last two fingers and for stabilising the arm in a 'thumbs up' position.
- Make a 'snake' out of modelling clay and cut it into small pieces.
- Snip the edges of a sheet of paper to make a fringe. Draw short lines around the edges if your child needs a visual reference to know where to cut.
- Slowly increase the length of activities and decrease the amount of adult support (e.g. encourage your child to hold the paper with their non-dominant hand as they become proficient with the scissors).
- Stick card circles, e.g., a smiley face on piece of paper and ask child to cut out using card as guideline gradually put more circles on the paper to make it more difficult.
- Draw around objects and ask the child to cut the shape out.
- Make a scrap book from magazines, old cards etc. E.g., general, topic, or alphabet.

