

TEACHING SCISSOR SKILLS

Positioning:

- Ensure that the child is sitting with a stable base of support – seated fully on the chair with both feet supported on the floor; chair close to the table.

Grasp:

- Ensure that the child is using their dominant hand to hold the scissors and non-dominant hand to manipulate the paper. Remember to use left-handed scissors for those that are left hand dominant.
- The child's thumb should be placed in the top loop of the scissors with thumbnail facing upwards. The index/middle finger placed within the bottom loop. Scissors should be pointed away from the body not parallel to the tummy.
- When holding the paper the child's thumb should be on the top surface, not underneath. Elbows positioned loosely against the waist, not elevated out to the side. The hand holding the paper will do most of the turning and movement.

Equipment:

- Start with cutting onto thin card. This is firmer and therefore easier to hold and control. Card from cereal packets is an ideal thickness.
- The size of card should be no bigger than A4 as it can be difficult to manipulate; A5 size is easier for a young child to control.
- For children that have difficulties in opening and closing scissors try Spring-loaded (Styrex) scissors or those which have a larger space for 2/3 fingers to grasp. These can be obtained from the Early Learning Centre.

Technique:

- Start with small snipping movements along the edge of the card, making sure that the non-dominant hand is holding the card appropriately. As the child progresses in their skills, encourage them to cut further into the card and along straight lines. Use stickers, drawn lines and wide pathways to encourage cutting in this direction.

- Initially use thick/wide cutting lines to allow the child to be successful before using thin lines that require greater control.
- Can the child stop at the point you request them to? Use visual markers, e.g. stickers/drawn marks to indicate where to stop.
- Once straight lines and stopping accurately have been mastered start working on cutting a change of direction. The child needs to cut along a line, stop, turn the paper with the non-dominant hand and then continue to cut in the new direction. Use clear verbal instructions – i.e. Cut, Stop, Turn, Cut. Try adding different colour lines for each direction change.
- “Right-handers” should cut around a shape in an anticlockwise direction to ensure they can see the cutting line. “Left-handers” should cut in a clockwise direction.
- Progress to cutting along gentle angles and curves. As skills progress make the angles and curves steeper. Encourage a progression of cutting the following patterns in sequence:

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Once the above shapes have been mastered the child should have the ability to cut out more complex shapes.

ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP PRE-SCISSOR SKILLS

If the child has difficulty in holding the scissors and in controlling them try some of the following ideas:

- Use salad tongs to pick up and move objects from one place to another. Try this as a race or game with another child.
- Child punches holes with hand held hole punch. Use the hole segments to glue onto paper and make into patterns/ladybirds etc.
- Child squirts water/paint from a bulb syringe into bucket/onto paper
- Child helps to staple items using hand held stapler – be careful with safety with this activity!
- Ask the child to hold something within the same hand palm whilst using tongs. This helps them strengthen their hand arches in order to stabilize their hand whilst cutting and helps them learn how to use the two sides of their hand for different functions.

- Child makes a circle by touching pads of the index and middle fingers to the pad of the thumb whilst holding the last two fingers against the palm. Pick up and release objects from between the thumb and first two fingertips.

Taken from Therapy Skill Builders 1991

TEACHING COMPASS SKILLS

- Use a pair of compasses, which have a large knob at the top to handle. Ensure the bottom spikes are fairly sharp to stick into the paper.
- Place a piece of cardboard under the paper for the compass to stick into. This provides a much more stable base from which to work and gives the user more control.
- Hold the top knob of the compass between thumb and first two fingers
- Press compass down into the paper so that the spike becomes firmly engaged
- Practice angling the compass in order to rotate the pencil on the paper
- Ensure the elbow is positioned off the table and rotate the wrist
- Practice skills by drawing lots of circles – different sizes and overlapping circles making lots of patterns to improve general control and fluency.