

Scissor Skills

Here is some advice for helping children learn to snip with scissors:

1. Provide opportunities to engage with items that require an open/close motion of the hand: This could include playing with items such as salad/serving tongs, squirt bottles, or squeezy bottles (empty ketchup or mayonnaise bottles - great for water play or making cotton balls zoom across the table).

2. Provide opportunities for tearing paper, either just for fun or as part of an art project.

3. Always prompt your child to:

- Hold both the scissors and the paper in a 'thumbs up' position
- Cut away from the body



- Think about the sitting posture!

4. Try using a visual cue to help your child understand proper hand positioning: If your child struggles with placing the thumb up when holding the scissors, you can place a sticker on its thumbnail or draw a little happy face on it. You can also place a little sticker on top of the thumb hole of the scissors.

5. Use hand-over-hand assistance if needed when getting started: Opening scissors may be more challenging for beginners than closing them, especially if the scissors are too big for their hands or they have weakness. The adult can put their hand over the child's and guide them through the motion.

6. Try spring-loaded scissors if opening ordinary scissors is too difficult: It can be nice to have some springy assistance when starting out. There are also other adapted versions of scissors for kids who are new to cutting or struggle with fine motor skills such as spring action scissors, loop scissors, and dual control training scissors for righties and for lefties.

7. Start out by snipping Playdoh: make a Playdoh sausage and snip it into smaller pieces.

8. Hold the cutting material (playdoh, paper, etc.) for your child if needed when first starting out so they can solely focus on opening and closing the scissors: Lift the material up a bit (like to the child's shoulder level) so they don't try to nose dive with the scissors down into the table, as kids often do when first starting out.

9. Snip straws, then thread the small pieces onto a piece of string to make a necklace.

10. Prepare thin strips of paper for your child to snip through (2cm/ 1 inch across): This will allow your child the satisfaction of fully cutting off a piece with each snip.

11. Place a sticker on the edge of the paper and "chomp" the sticker in half with the scissors: It's even more fun when you actually make the scissors say, "CHOMP!" As your child becomes more accurate, start drawing a thick straight line at the edge of the paper, about 2 – 4cm/ 1-2 inches long, and then place the sticker at the end of the line. This is the beginning of learning to cut on a line!

12. Use scissors to snip soft food into pieces: bananas or thin pieces of cucumber, courgette, melon, or even some jelly snakes.

Here are some tips for helping children learn to cut forward with scissors:

1. Encourage optimal finger positioning: You might notice that your child places its thumb in the top hole and as many fingers as possible in the larger bottom hole. The best finger positioning when cutting with scissors is when:

- The thumb is placed in the top hole,
- The middle finger is placed in the bottom hole,
- The index finger is actually placed on the outside of the bottom hole to provide increased stability and steering when cutting forward and around.
- The ring and little fingers can be tucked into the palm, which also provides added stability to the arches of the hand.
- Additionally, scissors are more easily operated when the scissor handles rest on the middle knuckle of the finger (closer to the fingertip), rather than being shoved all the way down to the bottom knuckle. It's really hard to open and close scissors when they are placed down at that last knuckle.

2. Start with cutting on a wide line (around 1cm/ ½ inch thick) that's just 4 – 6cm/ 2-3 inches long

3. For children who need or benefit from specific directions, tell them exactly how many cuts or “chomps” they will make with their scissors: Count with them as they cut forward (“1...2...3...4...stop”).

4. Teach your child that it needs to “push” the scissors forward after each snip: For children who struggle with the sequencing, rhythm, and motor planning involved with cutting forward across paper, you may provide very specific verbal cues such as “chomp, open, push; chomp, open, push”.

You could even model it alongside them with your hands as they cut. This can help them slow down a little and execute the motion more accurately, rather than quickly or repetitively snipping at whatever edge of paper they can catch.

5. Place stickers along a path on a piece of paper to provide additional visual guidance for where the scissors should go: First it may be helpful to completely cover the path with stickers.

As they grasp the concept of following the path, you can then begin to space out the stickers until there is only one at the start and one at the finish.



6. Pretend their scissors are a car that needs to stay on the road. You can even draw a road with dotted lines in the middle to try and stay on

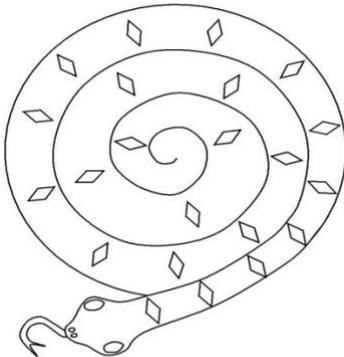
7. Pretend their scissors are a rocket ship zooming to outer space. You can do a countdown of “3-2-1-Blastoff!” and then have them follow a straight, pre-drawn path from the edge of the paper to a simple drawing or sticker of a moon, planet, or outer space creature just a few inches away! Up the challenge later on by adding curves or angles in order to reach outer space!

Here are some tips for helping your children learn to cut curves and angles for shapes:

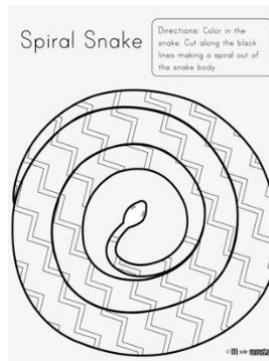
1. Make sure they are starting on the correct side of the shape: 'Righties' need to start cutting on the right side of the shape (moving anticlockwise ) 'Lefties' need to start on the left side of the shape (moving clockwise ). This gives them the best opportunity to see the line in relation to their scissor blade. It also prevents the paper from bending and tearing while they cut.

2. Cut spirals: This gives the children the chance to really practice moving those scissors forward and around while working it with the helper hand (which holds the paper). Here's an example of a "spiral snake":

Right handed example



Left handed example



3. Place stickers along the curving path, just like you did with the straight lines: These can be placed continuously along the path, or spread apart a little further. You can even take a marker and make little dots where the stickers need to go, then have your child peel and place the stickers on the targeted spots for added fine motor, bilateral, and hand-eye coordination practice.

4. Place stickers at the corners when cutting shapes with angles, and teach the child how to "STOP!" when their scissors chomp the sticker: Many children tend to turn the paper too early when cutting angles. The sticker (or just a dot you draw at each corner) gives them a more concrete visual cue to tell them when to turn the paper. You can start with just right angles instead of full squares to practice turning at one corner at first

