

Children, Young People and Families Occupational  
Therapy Team

## SCISSOR SKILLS

Integrated Disability Service	Integrated Disability Service
Lancaster House	Saltisford Office Park
Exhall Grange Campus	Building 1
Easter Way	Ansell Way
Exhall	Warwick
Coventry	CV34 4UL
CV7 9HP	
Tel: 02476 368 800	Tel: 01926 413 737
Fax: 02476 368 800	Fax: 01926 742 474

## Contents

	<b>Page Number</b>
Contents	2
Stages of Scissor Use	3 - 4
Developing Scissor Skills	5 - 6
First Scissor Use	7 - 8
Equipment Suppliers	9 - 10

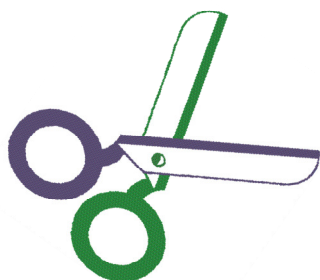
## Stages of Scissor Use

1. Child shows an interest in using scissors
2. Child holds and manipulates the scissors appropriately
3. Child open and closes the scissors in a controlled way
4. Child cuts random snips
5. Child manipulates scissors in a forward motion (e.g. to get to the other side of the paper)
6. Child can co-ordinate the lateral movements (e.g. can cut within a path without straying outside)
7. Child cuts forward in a straight line
8. Child cuts out simple geometric shapes (starting with straight lines such as a triangle, square or rectangle and moving to curved lines such as in a circle)
9. Child cuts out simple figure shapes (e.g. around a house or a flower)
10. Child cuts out complex figure shapes.

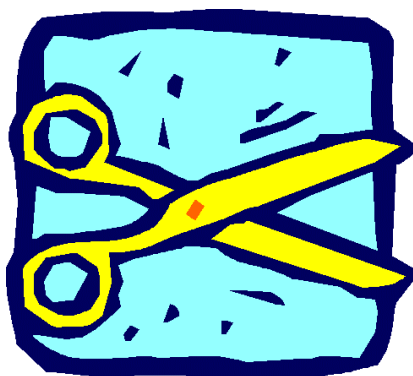


### **How to help a child to progress through these stages**

- Help the child to develop good eye-hand co-ordination (activities included)
- Help the child to develop good fine motor skills especially using the lateral pincer grip used to open and close scissors (activities included).
- Choose scissors that the child feels comfortable with. It is essential to provide left-handed scissors for left-handed children. You can get different types of scissors e.g. safety scissors and spring scissors that open up again if the child relaxes their grip after snipping or cutting.
- Use different types of paper, e.g. cardboard, brown paper bags, wax paper, aluminium foil, sugar paper. Card is easier to use at first as it is easier to handle.
- Practice snipping with scissors by cutting through thin strips of paper or card, or through different materials such as through straws. Snip along the edge of a piece of paper.
- Help the child to learn to control the direction of their cutting by giving them a target, e.g. a sticker in the middle of the page to aim for, a thick path to cut along or a line to follow. Starting with smaller pieces of paper makes it easier for the child to handle the paper and easier for them to reach the other side of the page.



- If the child is really struggling to stay within a path you can glue two lines of lolly sticks to a piece of card and ask the child to cut between the lolly sticks. You could also glue two pieces of string to form the edges of a path that the child needs to keep to. When using string, the path can be slightly curvy or could change direction.
- Vary the width between the two lines. You may need to start with a very wide path and then bring the lines in as the child's co-ordination develops.
- Use strips of sandpaper or wallpaper glued to card to help the child learn to control the direction of their cutting by staying between the strips.
- Punch a line of holes into card or paper and then ask the child to cut along the line of holes.
- Start to use the above ideas for diagonal or curvy lines or lines that change directions and have corners.
- When cutting around simple shapes or figure shapes you may need to make the outside lines quite thick at first. You could use a marker pen to make the lines thicker so the child will find it easier to stay on the line.



## **Developing Scissor Skills**

It would be useful if children can begin with a warm up exercise to stimulate sensation and finger mobility, followed by a pre-cutting activity, to get both hands working together before beginning to cut.

### **Warm up Exercise**

- Shake hands simultaneously for count of 5.
- Rub hands together with palms flat for count of 5.
- Clench and unclench hands 5 times.

### **Pre-cutting Activities**

These activities encourage the motor pattern required for the non-dominant hand to manipulate paper while the dominant hand simulates the pattern required for opening and closing scissors.

- Play relay games where you have to pick up small objects (e.g. aluminium foil balls, marshmallows, cotton balls, small toys, blocks) using tweezers, salad servers or tongs and then move them to another container. Make it harder by picking the objects out of a bucket of water.
- Play with squirt guns or water pistols. Get the child to aim their water spray at a target drawn with chalk on a brick wall or aim for a hanging balloon.
- Use turkey basters or medicine droppers during craft activities to pick up and then drop paint onto paper.
- Use a hole punch to punch holes into card or paper. Squeezing with fingers and thumb rather than pressing with palm of hand.
- Lacing activities.
- Use a leather punch to punch holes into card.
- Card games.
- Thumb Wrestling, where you grasp another person's fingers in your fingers and then try to hold their thumb down with your thumb.
- Family games such as Jenga, Operation, Kerplunk, Pick-Up Sticks.

## **Sorting**

The child holds a saucer/tray with the non-dominant hand and places beads into this with the dominant hand.

### **Variations**

- Child holds the tray with several compartments and is asked to sort different colour beads into each compartment.
- Child picks up beads with tongs, e.g. sugar tongs or larger tweezers, and places into the container.

## **Pegs on a Box**

- The child holds the lid of a shoebox with his/her non-dominant hand and picks up pegs with dominant hand, placing them around the edge of the box lid, turning the lid with non-dominant hand to offer spaces for the pegs to be placed.
- Replace the pegs with, for example, bulldog clips, large paper clips, small pegs.
- If the child has difficulty squeezing the pegs, try placing the pegs on the box sides and asking the child to remove them.

## **Play dough**

Form play dough into a flat circular shape and with the child holding this with the non-dominant hand, turn the play dough while pinching the edge between finger and thumb of dominant hand.

## **First Scissor Use**

- Initially a child should practice opening and closing blades.
- When intended blade movements become rhythmic, introduce straws to be cut into segments. Only one cutting action required. (Segments then can be used for craft activities so there is a purpose to the task).
- Move on to strips of paper which the child can cut with one cut. Gradually widen the width of the strips so that two cuts are required to cut through strip.
- Once the child is more proficient with the skill, introduce wider strips of paper where more cuts have to be made and the non-dominant hand has to control the paper.
- Wavy lines can be drawn across the paper for the child to cut along. The paper should be turned by the non-dominant hand when cutting out shapes.

## **Difficulty Managing Conventional Scissors**

There are several alternatives available:

- Make sure that left-handed children use left-handed scissors.
- Ensure that scissors are sharp enough to do the task but be aware of safety.
- Children who have difficulty with opening and closing scissors may find Easi-Grip scissors easier to manage. These scissors have a plastic hoop attached to the ends of the scissors, rather than finger holes, providing a spring action so there is no effort with opening.
- Peta scissors operate on a spring, so no effort is required for opening and they have flat plastic controls attached to the ends of the scissors rather than finger holes. (Your Occupational Therapist will have further details.)

## **Coping with Cutting Difficulties**

- If there is difficulty starting off: place the paper on a thick mat so that it extends over the front of the mat. Ask the child to gently place their non-dominant hand on the paper where it is resting on the mat. The child should now slide the lower blade of the scissors into the gap between the table and

the paper and make a cut. Once the first cut had been made, the child can pick up the paper and continue cutting.

- Verbally remind the child to always cut away from the body.
- Practice cutting around a corner: the child should stop cutting at the end of the first line, turn the paper with the non-dominant hand and continue to cut along the second line, keeping the scissors pointing away from the body.
- If the child has difficulty cutting along a line, remind them to keep looking at the blades of the scissors by putting a blob of paint or a sticker on the end.
- Make a series of holes along the line to be cut, so that the child can feel when he/she is cutting accurately.
- Copy the shape to be cut onto a black background.
- Enlarge the shape outline.
- Use stiff paper or card if there is difficulty holding the paper.
- Scissors that cut interesting patterns are often more motivating to children than ordinary blades.
- If the child is having difficulty successfully completing a task, try using pre-cut shapes to stick and arrange and practice the skills needed to manipulate scissors at another time.



## Equipment Suppliers

### Left-Handed Scissors

Priced From: £3.95  
Supplier: Anything Left Handed  
Contact Details: Tel: 01737 888269 (10.00 to 2.00 weekdays UK time only)  
[http://www.anythinglefthanded.co.uk/acatalog/childrens\\_scissors.html](http://www.anythinglefthanded.co.uk/acatalog/childrens_scissors.html)



### Easi-Grip Scissors

Priced From: £5.65  
Supplier: Peta UK Ltd  
Contact details: Tel: +44 (0) 1376 573 476 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)  
[http://www.peta-uk.com/acatalog/Peta\\_Easi\\_Grip\\_Scissors](http://www.peta-uk.com/acatalog/Peta_Easi_Grip_Scissors)



### Long Loop Scissors

Priced from: £5.15  
Supplier: Peta UK Ltd  
Contact Details: Tel: 01376 573 476 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)  
[http://www.peta-uk.com/acatalog/Children\\_Long\\_Loop\\_Scissors](http://www.peta-uk.com/acatalog/Children_Long_Loop_Scissors)



### Self-Opening Scissors

Priced from: £5.95  
Supplier: Peta UK Ltd  
Contact Details: Tel: 01376 573 476 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)  
[http://www.peta-uk.com/acatalog/Self\\_Opening\\_Scissors](http://www.peta-uk.com/acatalog/Self_Opening_Scissors)



### Dual Control Scissors

Priced from: £5.95  
Supplier: Peta UK Ltd  
Contact Details: Tel: 01376 573 476 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)  
[http://www.peta-uk.com/acatalog/Peta\\_Dual\\_Control\\_Training\\_Scissors](http://www.peta-uk.com/acatalog/Peta_Dual_Control_Training_Scissors)



### Pushdown Table Scissors

Priced from: £5.95  
Supplier: Peta UK Ltd  
Contact Details: Tel: 01376 573 476 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)  
[http://www.peta-uk.com/acatalog/Childrens\\_Pushdown\\_Table\\_Scissors](http://www.peta-uk.com/acatalog/Childrens_Pushdown_Table_Scissors)

