



Children's Treatment Network

Building Brighter Futures Together

Developing Scissor Skills

Being able to use scissors correctly is a skill that develops in stages. It requires shoulder, forearm and wrist stabilization, fine motor dexterity, hand-eye coordination, coordination of both hands working together, muscle strength and motor skills.

Typical Developmental Milestones

2 to 3 years:

- Often hold scissors with two hands to open and close.
- Begins to open and close the scissors with a mature grasp.
- Learns to snip paper and there is no forward movement of the scissors.
- May be able to use “helping hand” to hold paper and bring into scissors.

3 to 4 years:

- Cuts on straight lines with some accuracy.
- Cuts on curved lines and around corners, but without accuracy.
- Begins to turn the paper with “helping hand”.

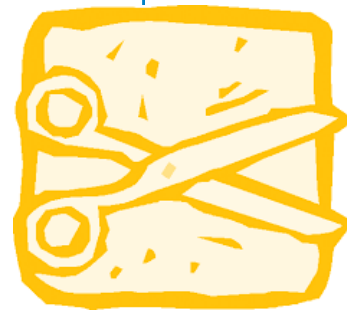
4 to 5 years:

- Can cut fairly accurately along curved lines and around shapes (circle, square and triangle).
- Turns the paper fairly effectively with “helping hand” to stay on the line.

5 to 6 years:

- Progresses from cutting out simple to complex shapes and figures.
- Consistent grasp of scissors.
- Hands work in coordinated manner to cut with scissors, hold and turn paper.
- Cuts smoothly i.e. no jagged edges or paper tears.

For information, visit for [CanChild](http://CanChild.ca).



For printable cutting worksheets and activities, visit:

DLTK Kids

OT Mom
[Cutting activities](#)
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IF YOU SEE: Child holding scissors with awkward grasp.

TRY THIS:

- Place their thumb in one scissor loop and their index and middle fingers in the larger loop.
- Keep their elbows tucked into their sides with their forearm resting on the table or their lap.
- Teach that the thumbs on both hands must point to the ceiling, place a sticker/dot on the thumbs as a reminder “THUMBS POINT UP”.



IF YOU SEE: Child having trouble with snipping.

TRY THIS:

- Use scissor-like tools such as squirt toys, spray bottles, hole punch, etc. to reinforce the opening and closing motion.
- Use tongs to pick up lightweight objects such as cotton balls or pom poms and drop them into an open container.
- Practice snipping plastic straws, old playing cards, strips of playdough or paper, construction paper, etc. that are stiffer and easier to manage (smaller sheets of paper).
- Have the child hold the paper straight up as this helps keep the thumbs up.

IF YOU SEE: Child having trouble cutting a line or simple shapes.

TRY THIS:

- Remind the child that both hands have a job – one holding the scissors is the “worker hand” and the other holding the paper is the “helping hand”.
- Put stickers or dots beside the cutting line. Remind the child to use his/her “helping hand” to hold the paper and move their thumb to the next dot as they snip.
- Start with very short lines 2”- 3” and increase the length of the line until the child can cut across a sheet of paper.
- To cut curved lines or simple shapes, the “helping hand” must turn the paper while the scissors stay pointing up. Put stickers/dots beside the shape to be cutout to show where to move the “helping hand” when turning the paper.
- Add a red dot at the corners to cue the child to stop, turn paper and then cut.
- Make the cutting line wider by tracing with a marker or highlighter.

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