

Hand Skills

Cutting with Scissors

Proper body positioning is critical for tabletop activities. Your child should be seated in a chair that allows both of their feet to sit flat on the ground. Their knees should be slightly lower than their thighs, their back should be straight, and they should be leaning slightly forward toward the table.



Improvement of hand skills begins with the core/trunk of the body. If your child hunches over the paper when they are doing tabletop activities, it may be that they do not have enough strength in the core of their body to hold themselves up.

Things to try to improve core strength: Swinging at the park, balancing on objects, doing strengthening or stretching poses, and ensuring that your child gets plenty of exercise outside.

Cutting with scissors. Proper hand positioning of scissors consists of the scissors being held with the child's thumb up in the small loop and the other fingers placed in the larger loop with the child's dominant hand. The child's other hand should hold the paper. The non-cutting hand should continuously reposition where it's holding the paper as they cut out a shape to increase cutting accuracy and decrease the chance of accidentally cutting themselves.



Things to try if your child is new to cutting or experiencing difficulty:

- Try loop scissors instead of standard scissors. They're easier for many children to hold on to and don't require as much precision about where fingers should be placed.
- Increase your child's hand strength to help improve their cutting ability and also give them more opportunities to mimic the motion of cutting with other activities. Having your child play games with a pair of tongs to move objects or having them play with clothespins are both good ways to improve these skills.



Resources:

Case-Smith, J. (2005). *Occupational therapy for children* (5th ed.). Maryland Heights: Mosby/Elsevier.

<http://www.pediastaff.com/>

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Pictures from: <http://www.bickids.com/> ; <http://www.watchsonomacounty.com/> ; <http://www.thistlehelp.co.uk/>

