

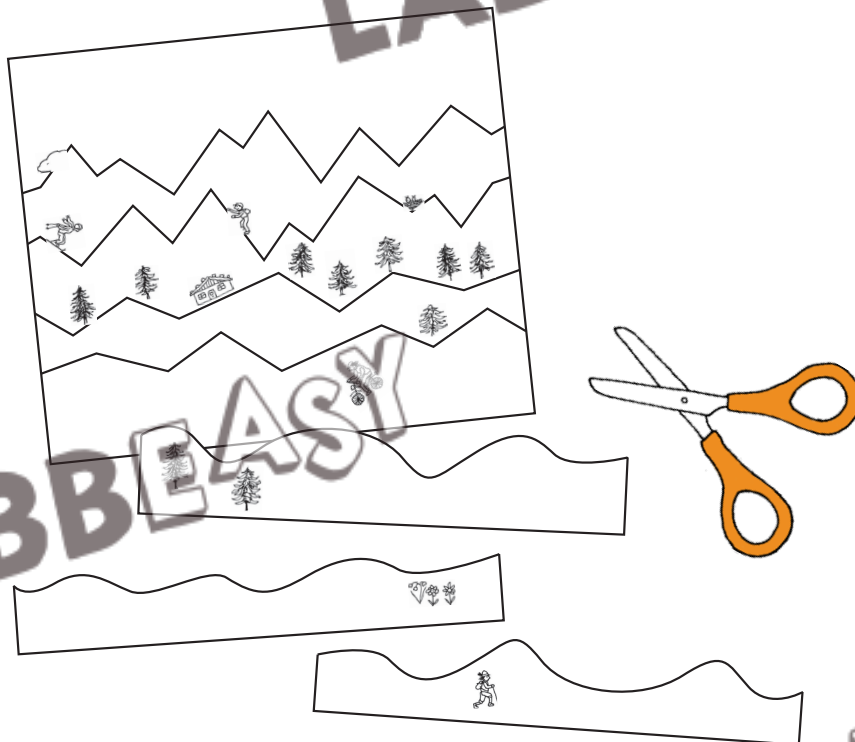
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First Cuts with Strip Pictures

2 x 6 templates for cutting exercises that help to develop cutting skills

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First Cuts with Strip Pictures

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PRINT SETTINGS

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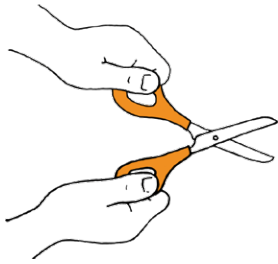
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Learning to Cut

Cutting with scissors is a skill that takes time to learn. The ability to cut develops progressively and only with a lot of practice, as cutting calls upon fine motor and coordination skills. A child who is learning to cut should be able to independently use a fork and spoon, and also use the thumb, index finger, and middle finger separately.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CUTTING SKILLS



Children learn how to hold scissors around the age of 18 - 19 months. To begin with, they hold the scissors with both hands and try to open and close them.



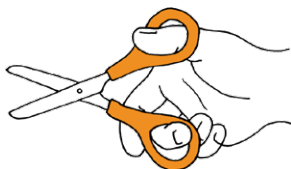
Next they try to put their fingers through the grip holes. They often do this using the middle and index fingers, rather than the thumb.



The most ergonomic way to hold scissors is to put the thumb through the upper grip hole and the middle finger through the lower hole - or both the middle and ring finger through the lower hole if it's big enough. The index finger is placed beneath the underside of the lower handle, giving greater stability and allowing you to cut in a straight line.

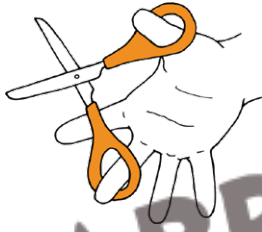


If a child doesn't yet possess the necessary shoulder, underarm, and wrist stability, or the scissors are too big for their hands, they often put their index finger through the lower grip hole to hold them.



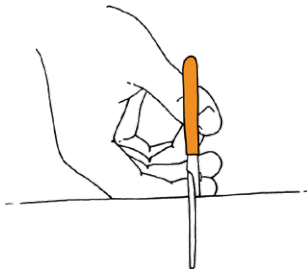
The best cutting control comes from holding the scissors with the upper joint of the middle finger.

Once children have learned to hold scissors correctly, they then learn to open and close them at around 20 - 23 months. At this point they're still not yet able to cut paper. Great ways to practice cutting movement are with a water pistol, a spray bottle or pliers. Children can also try to use scissors like pliers by picking things up with the blades.



Children learn to cut paper at around 30 – 35 months. In this phase kids tend to cut paper rather randomly, as they can't yet cut along pre-marked lines or make longer cuts. Children often open the whole hand whilst cutting, which leads to an excessive opening and closing of the hand.

In the next phase, again at around 30 – 35 months, kids learn to cut paper in an intentional way. They begin to push the scissors forward as they cut. At the beginning it's helpful to make short cuts in sturdy cardboard, such as index cards. Sturdy material offers an extra bit of stability while cutting so that the child can concentrate on their cutting hand. As the child's cutting skills improve, they can begin to practice with papers of varying thickness.



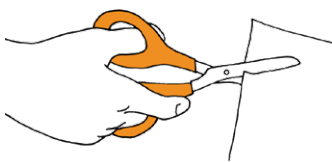
At around 36 – 41 months children start to cut straight lines. In this phase they begin to correct how they hold the scissors in order to cut straight. Stability is improved by correcting the paper with the other hand. Ideally, the scissors are held at 90° to the paper.



This position requires forearm stability, since a child's thumbs are pointing upwards and the forearms have to be bent.



For children with weaker forearms it is at first very difficult to hold the scissors at a 90° angle to the paper. This leads to the paper kinking and tearing or the scissors tilting off course.



At around 42 – 47 months children start to cut wavy lines. Kids now begin to move the paper intentionally and in coordination with scissor movements in order to follow a pre-drawn curve. In this phase kids can already open and close the scissors with more control so that the cuts are more precise and less ragged. The way they hold the scissors also becomes less cramped.

At around 42 – 47 months children can cut out simple shapes such as circles, triangles and rectangles. They can now work with all types of paper. The sturdier the paper, the easier it is to cut. Kids have great fun cutting other materials such as raffia, wool, string, etc.

At around 48 – 57 months children can cut out complicated shapes and figures.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT SCISSORS

Beginners should work with children's "safety scissors", which have rounded tips and are easy to use. Left-handed kids should use left-handed scissors.

SCISSOR HANDLING

Scissors are tools and not toys! For this reason it's important to remember how scissors should be handled:

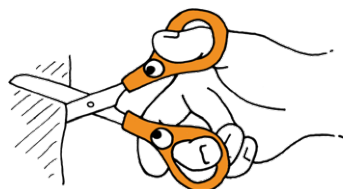
1. You should never run with scissors.
2. When moving around with scissors they should always be held closed and with the tips pointing downwards.
3. When passing scissors to someone they should be held by the closed, downward-pointing blades. The person taking the scissors grips them by the handles.

FEAR OF SCISSORS

If a child is scared of scissors or cutting, let them practice with other, similar tools first such as spaghetti tongs, barbecue tongs, pliers, etc. They can then pick up nuts or stones with them. The next step is getting the child to practice shredding paper. For this you begin by cutting thin strips of paper, and then progressively wider strips, letting the child cut up bits of paper in whatever size they like. It's easier to cut when the scissors and paper are held slightly upright.



You can also make scissors from lightweight card, using a brass paper fastener for the pivot that joins the blades. With these the child can approach cutting in a playful way.



If the child is scared of cutting you can stick wobbly eyes to the handles. Then, as the child cuts, the scissors resemble a crocodile that's "chomping" its way through a piece of green paper.