



Scissors and Rulers

Using scissors and rulers your child needs to be able to use their hands together in a coordinated way. If your child is struggling start by following the advice on the Balance, Coordination and Strength and Developing Coordinated Hand Use advice sheets before moving to using scissors and rulers.

Pre-scissor skills

These are the skills to practise when getting ready to use scissors

- Practise grasp and release, use kitchen tongs or tweezers to sort objects.
- Shooting with a squirt gun or squirting water from a spray bottle.

Using Scissors

- When cutting with the scissors the thumb should always be up so that the child can see it (not pointing down towards the table). You can put a small sticker on the top of their thumb and tell them they always need to be able to see the sticker.
- Remember to keep both elbows on the table when cutting.
- The child should open the scissors widely and close them fully when cutting, and not use small snips in a tearing fashion.
- Try different scissors depending on the problem:
 - **Spring / flexi scissors** open automatically after being squeezed.
 - **Easy grip scissors**
 - **Two-handed (dual control training) scissors** can be used so that you hold and cut with the child at the same time.
 - Don't forget to use left-handed scissors for left-handers!
- Start with simple thick straight lines.
- Start with smaller (e.g. A5) pieces of card as this is easier to manipulate.
- Start by getting the child to snip the edge of the page e.g. to make a pretend comb with a piece of card.
- While starting to use scissors the child may find it easier if you hold the paper / card while they cut.
- Punch a hole or cluster of holes at the top and bottom of a sheet of paper and get the child to cut from one hole to toward the other holes.
- Get the child to stick craft sticks parallel on card paper and cut the card paper between the sticks.
- Make a scrapbook or a collage of things cut out from magazines.
- Make snowflakes from folded paper, using small cuts to create a design.

Curves

- Generally right handers should cut in an anticlockwise direction and left handers in a clockwise direction. As a reminder the child should be holding on to the piece they want to keep not the trimmings.
- Start with wavy thick lines before moving onto harder shapes.
- Draw a circle on a sheet of paper and lines for sunbeams. Get the child to cut off the sunbeams by cutting the small curved segments.
- Remember that the hand which is holding the paper needs to move around as s/he is cutting, in order to stabilise the paper properly.

Ruler

- Encourage the child to hold the ruler very still with their stabilising hand (their left hand if they are right handed).
- Some times a ruler with a handle can help the child learn to do this more effectively:
- If the ruler tends to move about a lot you could try putting a piece of Dycem under the ruler (this will prevent it from slipping)

A variety of Scissors, rulers and Dycem are available from [Special Direct](#) or [Peta Scissors for Children](#) or [Taskmaster](#)

Adapted with kind permission from Northumberland PCT Children's Occupational Therapy Service