

# Talking Matters

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Helping your child to reach their potential



## Scissor Skills

Scissors skills require children to control the small muscles of their hands, use visual discrimination and hand eye coordination to align the scissors, initiate opening and closing of the scissors, motor planning moving forward with the scissors while holding the paper, and remaining calm to reduce impulsiveness. Children frequently use scissors in their early school years, and the ability to cut efficiently demonstrates good fine motor coordination.



**Your child will first need to develop the ability to pick up and hold the scissors** in their hand appropriately. Instruct your child to hold their thumb in the small scissor handle on top, with their index finger and middle finger in the larger scissor handle on the bottom.

- Begin with thick lines and work towards thinner lines, so that they experience success staying on the lines as they develop confidence and control.
- Then assist your child to practice making single short snips on the edge of paper while you are supporting the paper for them.
- Next they will learn to cut along a short straight lines, and then straight lines of increasing length.
- Following this your child should develop the ability to hold the paper while cutting along straight lines. Instruct your child to hold the paper on the side as opposed to the top or bottom of the paper, with their thumb on top and fingers underneath. Prompt your child to hold their hands floating above the table so they are not cutting into the table top. Prompt your child to move their hand further up the side of the page after their scissors move in line with where their hand is.
- Your child will initially start cutting with their elbow held high, however as they become more confident and in control their arms should lower.
- Next provide them with curved lines to cut around. Prompt your child to gently tilt the paper left and right to follow the curve, keeping the scissors still while they open and shut them.
- Next provide large circles, triangles and squares to cut out to practice turning corners.
- Your child will then learn to cut zigzags.
- Finally, they will develop the ability to cut out abstract shapes.



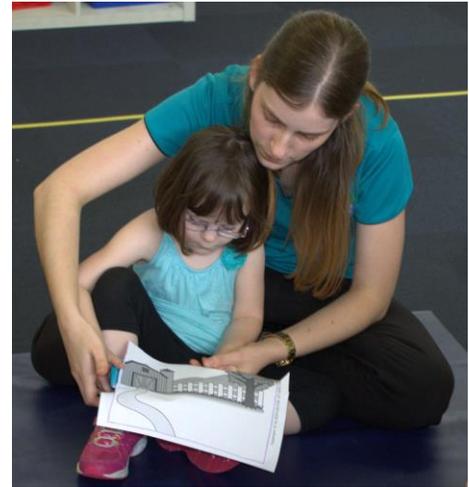
Scissor Skills

By Abbey Mengler for Talking Matters  
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**Activities to develop cutting skills:**

Different materials are easier or harder to cut into. Your child may like to cut through easier material first before learning to cut through paper. Then provide them with more challenging materials as they become more confident. For example:

- Easy – Play dough
- Easy – Thin sheets of foam
- Easy – Bubble wrap
- Easy – Cardboard
- Medium – Sandpaper
- Medium – Paper
- Medium – Alfoil
- Hard – Crepe paper
- Hard – Plastic wrap
- Hard – Corrugated cardboard

**Strategies:**

- If your child holds the scissors with their fingers on top and thumb on the bottom, gently twist their wrist so that their thumb is on top.
- If your child holds the paper with their fingers on top and thumb on the bottom, prompt your child let go and turn their wrist so that their thumb is on top.
- If your child is cutting impulsively, slowly sing the ‘open, shut them’ song and instruct your child that they are only allowed to open the scissors when the song says “open”, and shut them when the song says “shut them”.

