



Cutting with scissors

Cutting with scissors is a skill that takes a lot of time to develop, starting from toddler age and continuing to about 6 years. It is quite fun and children work willingly for developing this skill. Moreover, cutting with scissors has a lot more benefits than just being fun and keeping your child busy.

What does it develop?

- Independent movements of each finger and finger dexterity
- Strong hand muscles
- Coordination between the two hands
- Eye-hand coordination
- Separation between the two parts of the hand
- Concentration
- Attention to detail



How to teach cutting with scissors to toddlers?

Role model – the very first step is to show the child how to hold the scissors correctly, using scissors that fit your hand and then placing the small scissors into theirs.

Correct grasp – it is not an unusual sight to see a toddler holding the scissors upside down, with their shoulder up. To correct this posture, you may use a sheet of paper (or something a bit bigger for beginners) to place between the elbow of the cutting hand and the body of the child so that the child may hold it while cutting and try to keep it. This way the elbow stays down and this also corrects the position of the wrist.

Time to practice – Any skill needs time and effort to develop. Provide your child with the necessary time to practice. Interfere only to correct the posture but also give them opportunity to self-correct. Observe and decide when is the time to step in and when to leave them struggle on their own.

Scissors – sharp and proportional to the hand. The purpose of scissors is to cut. If you use scissors with plastic blades, they might not be sharp enough to cut through the sheet of paper and will thus create a feeling of frustration and stop the child's desire to develop this skill. Moreover, it might lead to incorrect posture. Sharp scissors doesn't mean scissors with pointy edges!

Paper – When a child starts cutting, they may cut whatever paper they see in the house. Provide them with enough cutting material and make sure to prepare it together with the scissors and a container to keep the pieces of cut paper. Explain that this is the paper for



cutting and they can cut as much as they want but only use the paper provided for them to cut and in case they are out of paper, they can ask you for more. For absolute beginners it is best to start with small stripes of soft blank paper that will be as wide as to easily fit in their hand and be possible to cut in one closing of the scissors - that would be about 1 cm wide. To make it more appealing, you can provide colour paper or stripes with some pictures between the lines. Next step would be stripes with lines. Then stripes with oblique lines. Later (mostly after toddler age but if a toddler has had a lot of practice they might be able to start early with this next step) you can move to bigger sheets of paper that would have longer lines, needing opening and closing more than once to cut. Much later will the child move to zig-zag and curves.

Additional support - using tongs as indirect preparation for cutting. The movement of the hand when picking up and dropping something, using tongs, is the same as the one when cutting with scissors. Also, it is a different activity that could be also interesting for the child when they need some change. The most important thing here is to have tongs proportional to the child's hand.