



Developing Scissor Skills:

Prerequisite Skills

Before a child learns to use scissors, he/she should be proficient with the following five skills:

- Use a fork or spoon.
- Open and close his/her hand.
- Use his/her hands together in a leader/assist fashion (e.g., one hand holding a jar while the other takes off the lid).
- Isolate the thumb, index, and middle fingers.
- Stabilize his/her shoulder, forearm, and wrist.

Development of Scissor Skills

Scissor skills develop in eight stages:

Stage One: The child learns how to hold the scissors (18-19 months). Initially, many children try to manipulate scissors using both hands to open and close the blades.

Stage Two: The child learns how to open and shut the scissors (20-23 months). Once children can hold the scissors correctly, they are ready to practice opening and shutting the scissors. At this point, children are not ready to use paper.

Stage Three: The child learns how to snip paper (23-29 months). In this stage, children make random snips on paper. Cutting is not directional and there is no forward movement of the scissors.

Stage Four: The child learns how to snip paper (30-35 months). During this stage, children begin to push the scissors forward to cut across a piece of paper. Heavyweight paper provides additional stability, allowing the student to concentrate on manipulating the scissors rather than stabilizing the paper.

Stage Five: The child cuts on a straight line (36-41 months). In this stage, children begin to manipulate the direction of the scissors to stay on a line.

Stage Six: The child cuts on a curved line (42-47 months). Children are now learning to turn and manipulate the paper as well as the scissors to stay on lines.

Stage Seven: The child cuts out simple shapes like circles and squares (42-47 months). Once children have mastered this stage, they are ready to cut various weights of paper and non-paper materials.

Stage Eight: The child cuts complex shapes and figures (48-57 months).

Help With Scissor Skills Mastery

If your child is having difficulty mastering scissor skills and/or the prerequisite scissor skills, please contact an occupational therapist for a screening or evaluation. An Occupational therapist can assist your child in developing these skills.

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