



Helping Your Child Learn to Cut

Now is a good time to introduce your child to cutting with scissors. Cutting is a skill requiring the use of small muscles in the hand, which are the last to be fully developed.

Many 3-year-olds find using scissors to be challenging. The purpose of introducing the scissors earlier, when he is 2, is to provide your child with some practice activities to strengthen those developing small muscles. The more he practices now, the more skillful he will be at cutting in his preschool years.

There are lots of fun activities that strengthen the muscles used in cutting.

- > Squirting water from squeeze bottles in the bath or wading pool.
- > Squeezing wet sponges, Nerf balls, or play dough.
- > Squeezing barbecue or ice cube tongs (with a spring action). Your child can use them to pick up colored pompons and place them in the cups of a muffin tin, egg carton, or nesting cups.
- > Using an eye dropper to decorate a paper towel with colored water.
- > Punching holes with a single-hole paper punch.
- > Squeezing spring-type clothespins and clipping them to the edge of a box.

Steps in teaching cutting

1. Get your child good-quality preschool scissors with rounded tips. Make sure they are sharp enough to cut paper. If they are not, your child will get frustrated. (If your child seems to prefer his left hand, buy left-handed scissors.)
2. Begin by teaching your child to open and close the scissors with both hands, one on each loop of the scissors. Let him cut paper like that, while you hold the paper tightly. Hold it at an angle that helps him to succeed at cutting.
3. Allow your child to use the grip he finds comfortable. When he begins to use the scissors with one hand, it is likely he will cut with the back of his hand facing up and his thumb down, because that is the position of his hand when he uses a pencil. This is a good first step.
4. As your child's hand becomes stronger, he will turn his hand over and hold the scissors with his thumb up.
5. Teach your child to close the scissors by squeezing his thumb and fingers together and opening them by spreading his thumb and fingers apart.
6. Flatten a piece of play dough and have your child cut through it. The play dough doesn't move, and your child doesn't have to concentrate on holding it.
7. Get strips of stiff paper that are 1 inch wide. Construction paper or strips cut from junk mail will work well. Hold the strip tight with two hands and have your child snip through the part between your hands.
8. When your child is ready, have him hold the paper to snip it.
9. After much practice, your child will be able to cut on a line, cut out shapes, and cut in a circle.