

Ready, Steady, Cut

Using Scissors with Tiny Hands

Learning to use scissors can be scary for parents and caregivers, but fun and engaging for little ones. Children should build and practice their scissors skills over time.

Before using scissors, children need to develop strong fingers and good hand-eye coordination. Support pre-scissors skills by having your child: Tear paper. Play with playdough. Paint with cotton swabs. Pick up objects with tweezers. Practice finger play songs, like “The Itsy-Bitsy Spider.”

Tool Tips

Scissors are a tool, not a toy. Children should never walk or run with scissors. Talk about what is okay to cut (paper, playdough), and what is not okay to cut (clothes, hair). Start with plastic playdough scissors. Then, try paper scissors (only when you and your child are ready).



The Basics

Help your child learn how to use this tool. Show them how to:

- Place their thumb into the top loop.
- Slide their pointer and middle fingers into the long bottom loop.
- Loosely rest their remaining fingers outside the bottom loop to support the scissors.
- Use their other hand to hold whatever they are cutting.
- Open and close the scissors to make cuts.

Things to Try with 2 to 3-Year Olds

- **Playdough pieces.** Your child can practice early cutting skills with playdough scissors. Roll some playdough into a long “snake.” They can use the scissors to cut the long piece into short pieces.
- **Playdough snips.** Squish the playdough into a pancake. Encourage your child to use the playdough scissors to make little snips at the edge of the pancake towards the center. They can try snipping thicker pancakes and thinner pancakes.
- **Paper snips.** When your child is ready, introduce the paper scissors. Cut a circle out of thick paper. Show your child how to hold the circle and use the paper scissors to make little snips at the edge of the paper towards the center. They can snip all the way around the edge to create a fringe (like a lion’s mane or flower petals). Give them crayons to draw on the finished shape.



More!

Things to Try with 3 to 5-Year Olds

- **Follow the line.** On a sheet of paper, draw a wide, straight line from the top to the bottom. Show your child how to cut down the line. They can try it with a thinner line. A curved line. A zig-zag line. Or a line they draw themselves.
- **Basic shapes.** Draw three basic shapes on paper (square, circle, and triangle). Ask your child to cut them out. Don't worry if the shapes don't come out perfectly. They can use *glue* or tape to make a collage with the cuttings.
- **Sticker cutouts.** Let your child put some dot stickers onto a piece of paper. Encourage them to cut between the stickers until they are free from each other. Then, they can use *glue* or tape to add the dots to their collage.



Note: Supplies that are underlined can be found in your kit. Supplies in *italics* you might have in your home or you can use something similar.

Things to Say

**“Take your time.
Scissors are tricky.”**

Cutting with scissors takes practice! It's hard work for a child, so stay positive and encouraging.

**“What would you
like to cut?”**

Give your child some choices of what to cut. Provide some old flyers or recycled paper and let your child cut them any way they want.

**“Wow! I can see that
you're trying hard to
practice cutting.”**

Applaud the effort, not the product. Even if the shapes are messy, your child still worked hard to make them.