

## OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

### Teacher Tips

# SCISSOR SKILLS

Using scissors is a complex activity requiring the integration of postural, motor, perceptual and organisational skills.

### **Skills Needed**

#### Sitting, Balance and Posture

- Feet flat, bottom back and thighs parallel to the floor.
- Furniture should be the correct height for the child.

#### Stable Shoulders

Allow the accurate placement and isolation of the hands to use tools

#### Arm and Wrist Control

To turn the forearms to move the scissors and paper.

#### Fine Motor Skills

To hold scissors and isolate the thumb, index and middle fingers, and to move them independently and to grasp and release to open/close the scissors and to co-ordinate hand and eye.

#### Visual Perception

To distinguish the line to be cut from its background and to orientate the direction of the cut.

#### Visual Motor Integration

The ability to coordinate (integrate) visual perception and hand-eye co-ordination.

#### Bilateral Integration

2 sided coordination needed to do different actions with each arm eg. cutting and turning the paper simultaneously.

## EQUIPMENT NEEDED



1. Correct height furniture
2. Correct scissors - right/left/adapted

## HOW TO HOLD CONVENTIONAL SCISSORS



Thumb on top ("thumbs-up") with thumb and middle finger through the loops and the index finger in front of the bottom loop to provide support and help direction of the scissors.

**Holding the paper** - hold the paper in the non-cutting hand, close enough to the blades to support the paper, but avoiding the fingers. The thumb of the paper holding hand should be 'on top' of the paper.

**Direction of the cut** - when a right handed child cuts they should tackle the cutting project in an ANTI-CLOCKWISE direction. When a left handed child cuts they should tackle the cutting project in a CLOCKWISE direction. Always encourage the child to cut AWAY from their body, not across their body.

## DEVELOPING PRE-SCISSOR SKILLS



The activities listed below aim to develop the pre-requisite skills needed for cutting:-

- ❖ Crawling activities through a tunnel or home made obstacle course.
- ❖ Balloon play - using a rolled-up paper or tube from inside silver foil in each hand, try to pick up and carry a balloon.
- ❖ Balloon Volleyball - hit a balloon or light beach ball with your hands and see how long you can keep it up in the air.
- ❖ Walking on hands, pretending to be different animals e.g. bear, lion, frog, rabbit.
- ❖ Ladders, ropes and other outdoor climbing equipment in playgrounds.
- ❖ Buzz Wire.
- ❖ Wind-up toys
- ❖ Games that involve turning knobs and handles e.g. Pop-Up Pirates, Downfall, Etch-A-Sketch.

- ❖ Clapping games; alternate so that the child and then the adult claps with palms up then palms down.
- ❖ Finger or glove puppets.
- ❖ Hand and finger rhymes - e.g. Incey Wincey Spider, Two Little Dickey Birds.
- ❖ Arm wrestles - sit opposite the child with elbows on the table. Hold hands and encourage the child to push against the resistance.
- ❖ Tearing and scrunching paper for papier Mache.
- ❖ Using a single or double hole punch to make holes for lacing activities.
- ❖ Squeezing empty plastic bottles to make bubbles in water or to blow feathers or ping-pong balls across a table.
- ❖ Stringing beads.
- ❖ Lacing boards or cards.
- ❖ Pegboards.
- ❖ Use tweezers, barbeque or sugar tongs to pick up different sized objects and put them in a container as quickly as possible.
- ❖ Construction games e.g. Lego, Stickle bricks, Meccano.
- ❖ Play dough/ plasticine/clay - encourage the child to pull pieces apart, roll with rolling pin, squeeze and pinch. Making biscuits or cookies could also achieve the same goals.
- ❖ Musical instruments - trumpets, castanets, finger cymbals.
- ❖ Card games e.g. Snap and Pairs.
- ❖ Mazes.
- ❖ Dot-to-Dots.
- ❖ Jigsaws.

## **GENERAL ADVICE FOR SCISSOR SKILL ACTIVITIES**

1. Identify current skill level and areas of difficulty. (See checklist of Pupil's Scissor skills).
2. Link the activity with the child's interests and make it fun.
3. Approach the tasks in a sequential order.
4. Ensure the child has mastered each stage before moving on.
5. Progress from stiff paper e.g. thin card or sugar paper, to thinner papers. Mount standard paper projects onto sugar paper. Reduce the size of the project to be cut by removing the excess.
6. Attach a bull-dog clip to the paper for the child to hold as it gives a bigger area to hold.

7. Provide opportunities to practice staying on lines by getting the child to cut between string, dried PVA glue lines and craft sticks. This gives the child a physical and visual prompt to guide the scissors.

## **WORKING WITH LEFT HANDERS**



Provide the child with left handed scissors for all cutting activities. These should be clearly marked and identifiable for left handed users.

## **SUPPLIERS**

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## **Reference:**

Developing Scissor Skills - A Guide for Parents and Teachers.  
Revised Edition  
Sue Mahoney and Alison Markwell  
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