

The Importance of Teaching Your Child How To Use Scissors

How important is it to teach your child how to cut at such a young age? The use of scissors requires and enhances many developmental tasks. Some parents have stated that their child is “too young to cut”. Believe it or not, but a child who is following the appropriate developmental track should start cutting at the age of 2 years old. There are many reasons for this. One reason is that cutting allows a child to build up the tiny muscles in the palm of his/her hand, since he/she has to continuously open and close the hand. These muscles are also used when the child is writing/painting or holding onto anything with a grip. For example, a child needs to hold onto a toothbrush, spoon or fork, and pull up their pants on a daily basis. A second reason is that cutting also enhances the use of eye-hand coordination. This means that the child must be able to use his/her vision, process what they see, and then be able to move their hand while they are looking at something. This can be a difficult task because it requires the brain to be working with two systems. However, eye-hand coordination is used throughout your child’s day. It is used when your child catches or throws a ball, uses a spoon to scoop up the food that they want, and zips up his/her coat. A third reason is that cutting encourages your child to use bilateral coordination. This means that your child can use both sides of their body at the same time. For example, when cutting a circle, a child must hold the paper with one hand (and continuously turn it) while the other hand is opening and closing the scissors and moving forward to cut. You may need to try this to understand the true meaning. Bilateral coordination (using both hands, while each one is doing something different) is used throughout everyday life. For example, it can be used when you are zipping up a coat or pants, washing dishes, opening up an envelope, and driving. Think about all of the little things that you do everyday and how you constantly use the tiny muscles in your hand, eye hand coordination, and bilateral coordination.

So now that you know **why** you should teach your children to use scissors, here are some tips of how you can help them learn.

This is the proper developmental sequence of when children should be cutting:

2 years: snip the ends of a piece of paper

2.5 years: cut through a piece of paper

3.0-3.5 years: cut on a ½” darkened line (can not cut off of the line more than 3 times)

3.5-4.0 years: cut out a circle with darkened lines (has to stay close to the line for ¾ of the circle)

4.5-5.0 years: cut out a square with darkened lines (corners should be sharp)

Each time your child has mastered one of the above sequences, make sure that he/she can cut through various materials. Cutting through thicker material is easier than cutting through thin material. So, start with cutting through play dough, then go to Manila folders, then to construction paper, then to regular paper, then to tissue paper. This will ensure that your child is **really** able to cut. Keep in mind that when children are cutting on lines, the lines should always be very dark, and at least a ¼” - ½” thick so that they are easy to see and the child does not get frustrated. Also, the Fiskar scissors are the best to use for right or left handed children because they allow for the most stability when

cutting and they come with rounded edges so that they are not as sharp. You may want to hold the paper for your child when they first start to cut, since bilateral coordination can be a difficult thing to learn. A child should first just learn how to open and close his/her hand and feel the sensation of cutting a piece of paper. If your child is having difficulty with opening and closing his/her hand or getting frustrated, you may want to try using other instruments or doing other tasks that are associated to cutting. For example, tongs and tweezers require the same open-close motion of scissors. Have your child pick up interesting objects with the tongs or tweezers and drop them into a bucket. You can make this a race or have them crawl on the floor to encourage shoulder strength at the same time. Also, a hole-puncher is a fun tool to use and most children think that this is really cool! After they are able to cut out a shape, have them color it, put their name on it, or hang it up so that they can be proud of their work! Please note that scissors can be dangerous and children should be supervised at all times when using scissors. Most of all do not be scared or nervous to let your child use scissors if you are with them. This is a task that will help them to succeed in many areas as they grow up! Share this experience with your child, be creative, and **HAVE FUN!**

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