

Effective Teaching of Scissor Skills

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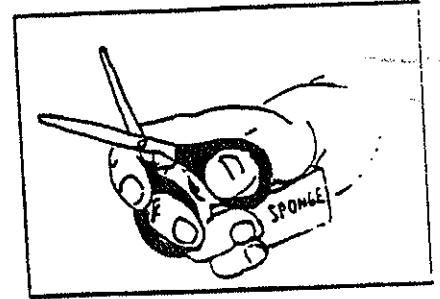
Developmental readiness

Introduce the child to scissor skills when she/he shows an interest in the materials and the process. Typically girls will be interested in this fine motor skill earlier than boys.

A good indication of readiness for scissor skills is the child's use of a spoon or fork. The tool should be held distally in the fingers, the wrist should be held up (extended) and the forearm rotate as the food is lifted to the mouth.

The child should show dominant and assistive hand usage in bilateral hand activities.

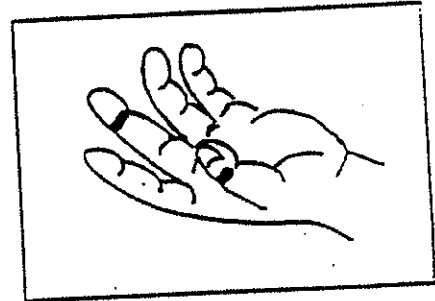
The child should have the ability to curve and open and close the skilled- tripod digits (thumb with index and long fingers) while the ring and little fingers remain fairly still. If the child has insufficient isolation of the last two fingers, an object can be pressed against the palm and held in place with the ring and little fingers. This posture helps by supporting the hand's arch and localizing skill.



Scissors position on fingers

Tiny oval handles are the easiest for young children to manipulate. Short blades will give the new cutter his/her best results. Skill development will be expected only if the scissors is fully capable of cutting the material at hand.

The middle finger and thumb should be placed into the loops only as far as the distal joints. The index finger should be held against the handle shaft to aid in closing the blades and supporting the scissors in a vertical position. A visual cue to reinforce this posture until it becomes natural is usually adequate for most new learners. With a permanent magic marker, place a line along the palmar surface of the last joint line of the middle finger and on the back side of the joint of the thumb. The child is guided in this finger placement before cutting materials are introduced.



Sequenced materials can reduce frustration

Initially make scissors "talking puppets". The instructor has an identical pair of scissors on her hand to model their position and use. Cut nothing, but open and close the blades in a pattern: slow/fast—wide/slight. To hold the child's attention and develop memory strategies while developing skill, scissor a pattern such as "slow-fast-slow" or "fast-slow-fast-slow" and have the child make his scissors "repeat" what yours said.

Introduce cutting materials in the following order: drinking straws to be cut into tiny segments 'pop corn' to be strung into necklaces. Straws require almost no control of the assisting hand. Old playing cards, magazine ad inserts or manilla paper should be mastered before regular paper is introduced. The flimsier the paper, the more skill will be required of the assisting hand to hold it taut within the blades for cutting without tearing. Line cutting should be straight and within the length of the blades before being lengthened for several cuts. Wavy lines should gradually be curved before specific shapes and circles are introduced.