



## Scissor Skills Development

Throughout their school years, and particularly in elementary school, children are often required to complete tasks involving the use of scissors. They must have the skills necessary to manipulate the scissors effectively.

### Prerequisites for scissor skills

- ✓ Ability to open and close the hand
- ✓ Ability to use hands together in a “dominant-assistor” fashion
- ✓ Ability to isolate and/or combine the movements of the thumb, index, and middle fingers
- ✓ Ability to coordinate arm, hand and eye movements
- ✓ Ability to interact with the environment in the constructive developmental play stage

### Developmental sequence for developing scissor skills

1. The child shows an interest in using scissors
2. Child holds and manipulates scissors appropriately
3. Child opens and closes scissors in a controlled fashion
4. Child cuts short random strips
5. Child manipulates scissors in a forward motion
6. Child coordinates the lateral direction of scissors
7. Child cuts in a straight, forward line
8. Child cuts simple geometric shapes
9. Child cuts simple figure shapes
10. Child cuts complex figure shapes

Children typically learn cutting skills at the following ages:

- ✓ 2 years: can snip with scissors
- ✓ 2 ½ years: cut across a 6-inch piece of paper
- ✓ 3-3 ½ years: cut on a line that is 6 inches long
- ✓ 3 ½ -4 years: cut out a circle
- ✓ 4 ½ -5 years: cut out a square
- ✓ More complex cutting skills develop between 6 and 7 years

### Activity ideas for developing scissor skills

1. Use tongs or tweezers to pick up raisins, cereal, pasta, cotton balls, etc. to put into an egg carton or bowl. Count the objects as the child places them or have a race.
2. Use small water guns to water plants or clean shaving cream off a balloon.





3. Tear paper or tissue paper of various colors into strips and then pieces, and glue the pieces onto paper to make a design.
4. Use pickle forks to pick up and release all kinds of small objects. You could have a race to see who can pick up the most or put colors into a pattern.
5. Use eye droppers to squeeze paint onto paper or coffee filters.
6. Glue yarn to clothespins for “hair” to put onto a cardboard face, or squeeze clothespins to put onto the sides of a box.
7. Draw a maze on paper and glue pieces of thread or pipe cleaner along the maze to create an “obstacle course”.
8. Glue sandpaper along both sides of a line to help the child control the direction of his/her scissors.
9. Glue a small toy onto the scissors and cue the child to make the toy move forward toward a picture or sticker at the other end of the line (i.e. rabbit hopping toward the Easter egg).
10. Punch holes along a line or design to provide tactile and visual cues as the child is cutting.
11. Use a hole punch to punch out various designs, follow a maze, create a lacing card, or make an insect-eaten leaf.
12. Make snowflakes by folding a piece of paper two to three times and show the child how to cut different designs around the sides.
13. Make a paper doll chain or create a simpler design. Help the child fold paper like an accordion and cut a design into the paper.
14. Cut out strips of paper and glue or staple them into circles to make a paper chain. Write numbers on each strip to count down the days to Christmas/child’s birthday/summer vacation, etc.
15. Draw lines across a paper lunch sack approximately 1” apart. Place a toy or piece of candy in the sack and staple the bag together between each line. Have the child cut across the lines to work his/her way down to the reward.
16. Put a sticker or the letters of the child’s name inside envelopes and have the child use a letter opener to cut open the top of the envelopes.
17. Insert feathers into a Styrofoam ball and have the child pluck the “chicken’s” feathers with tweezers.
18. Cut flaps onto the edge of a piece of paper and have the child cut each one off.

### **Adaptations**

Hold the paper for the child or tape it to the edge of the table as he/she learns how to manipulate the scissors.

Wrap rubber bands around clothespins to make them more difficult to open.





As the child's skills increase, grade the activity up by introducing material that is more difficult to cut.

You can follow this order:

Cardstock, Construction paper, Brown paper bag, Regular paper, Wax paper, Aluminum foil

