

Scissor Skill Cutting Tips...Write Out of the Box®

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Fine motor development is necessary for acquisition of scissor skills and handwriting by young children. Having a "Cutting Box" in your classroom or home is the perfect way for children to practice ripping, snipping, and cutting. A "Cutting Box" can be a large cardboard box filled with a variety of media that children stand or sit around to practice their skills. If you have room, a baby pool is a fabulous way for children to "get into" ripping, snipping, and cutting - Fun! Here are some easy cutting tips strategies to increase proficiency when learning how to use scissors:

Sequence Progression: Rip, Snip, Cut

Ripping a variety of thick papers (i.e. construction, index cards, magazine inserts) is a pre-cutting activity for young children. The ripping action facilitates the tripod grasp with hands ripping the paper in opposite directions. Long Animal Grabbers, Bug Catchers, and Wooden Tongs help children experience the "open-close" movement associated with cutting before they actually use scissors.

Snipping with scissors means that one cut does the job. Children love to snip many different items other than paper (see media types below). Try Fiskars®, which are available at Wal-Mart, Office Depot, etc.... Fiskars® are good for use with both right and left-handed students.

Cutting using multiple cut strokes is best practiced on thick paper types initially without lines. Next, incorporate bolded, straight lines to encourage cutting accuracy. Cutting on curves can start on round paper plates. Cutting on angles and complex patterns is most challenging. Termination of cutting (knowing where to stop) takes practice. Your "Cutting Box" is the perfect place to practice cutting everyday and build skills.

Media Types: Thick to Thin and Short to Long

The increased stability of thicker papers (see examples above) helps children hold paper when ripping and hold/guide the paper while cutting. As they become more proficient in their cutting and bilateral coordination skills, thinner paper types may be introduced (i.e. copy paper) for practice. Start with short bits of paper progressing to larger sheets as skills improve. Snipping is fun on non-paper types of media such as Play Doh®, grass, sandpaper, straws, and Cheetos®. Using non-paper media is a great way to increase interest in learning how cut with scissors!

Positioned for Success: Strategies to Try

Some students perform cutting practice better when they are seated away from the desktop or table surface. Often, scooting the chair back from the table will improve positioning and holding of scissors and/or paper automatically.

Positioned for success means that the thumb is facing up on the hand holding the scissors and that the arm is moving away from the body when cutting instead of toward it. Try these strategies when the hand or arm is curved or being used in an unorthodox position:

1. Color code thumbhole on scissors by wrapping it with tape in a contrasting color. Electrical tapes works well.
2. Tape paper to edge of desk or middle of easel so student can cut upwardly and make "fringe." This is a great technique to correctly position the arm for cutting.
3. Have the child "hold" a small roll of paper towel or newspaper under the cutting arm to ensure that the arm stays in the correct position. This is a gem of a tip!

Special Note about Left-Handed Children

A reminder that left-handed children will often use scissors with their right hand, which is perfectly typical and appropriate.

Final Note: Safety Comes First!

Young children must be appropriately supervised when learning how to use scissors.

Please visit www.writeoutofthebox.com for more information about how to develop fine motor skills in young children.