

Cutlery Skills Activity Sheet

Child's name:



Sitting position

- Ensure the child is sitting at a suitable table and chair (with feet supported on the floor or a box). Arms should be able to rest supported on the table.
- Ensure the plate does not slip by using a tablecloth, a damp tea towel folded under the plate, Dycem (non-slip) mat, or Blu-Tac to stick the plate to the table.
- Encourage the child to practice cutting in other situations first, and let them decide when they are ready to try at mealtimes.
- Limit distractions, e.g., turn off radio and television, and remove any clutter from the table so that the child can more easily focus on the task.

Using knife and fork

At mealtimes, do not expect the child to practise more than two or three cuts.

Encourage them to slow down and think about each stage of cutting separately (e.g., stab with the fork and then cut with the knife).

If the child will accept physical help, stand behind them and help the hand with the fork in it to stay still whilst the knife moves back and forth across the food. Expect untidy cutting and some tearing of the food to continue initially.

To increase the pressure being used, encourage placing the first finger on top of the cutlery, rather than wrapping the whole hand around the handle.

Activities to help develop cutlery skills

- Use dustpan and brush. Emphasise keeping the dustpan still while sweeping with the brush
- Use scissors - start with snipping (such as cutting a straw into pieces). Cut straight lines before progressing to more complex shapes.
- Cooking / baking activities - hold a bowl while stirring or spooning mixture.
- Colouring - encourage your child to hold the paper still during the task.

- Use playdough - use cutlery to cut.
- Draw around stencils (again holding the stencil still with one hand).
- Play with construction games (such as LEGO and Meccano).
- Make friendship bracelets or elastic band bracelets. Try using cutlery with broad or moulded handles, e.g., Caring Cutlery.
- Have an adult demonstrate cutting by eating together when possible.
- Experiment cutting with a range of food textures from very soft to hard. Talk about the different foods and how hard you need to press when cutting to increase awareness of the force required when cutting.
- When adults demonstrate cutting, a child will often copy, trying to cut in the same direction. We cut food in a diagonal stroke.

