Scissor Skills

Encourage your child to use the correct scissor grasp:

- Encourage your child to use the correct scissor grasp:
  - Follow the rule “thumbs on top”. Thumb should be positioned in the top loop, facing up to the ceiling. The thumb of the helper hand should be on top of the paper, also facing up to the ceiling. If your child has difficulty remembering to keep their thumbs “on top” try placing a sticker on their thumb nail.
  - Child may have more stability if the index finger is positioned outside the bottom loop to guide direction and provide support. The middle finger is then placed in the bottom loop and remaining fingers are bent towards the palm of the hand. Note: If the bottom loop is large more than fingers (e.g. index and middle) may be placed in the loop
  - Discourage use of two hands to operate the scissors. This does not help your child to practice the necessary skills required to use scissors.

- Practice:
  - Opening and Closing the scissors. It may be helpful to use verbal cues (“open” and “close”). You may also need to use hand over hand assistance. Practicing open and closing hands can be helpful e.g. singing “open, shut them” and completing actions.
  - Snipping paper (e.g. snip along a strip of paper to make grass, snip straws etc)
  - Cutting forward along a straight line (start with short, thick lines)
  - Cutting out a square (encourage children to stop at corners so they can turn the scissors and the paper.
  - Cutting along a curved line
  - Cutting out a circle
  - Cutting out more complex shapes and simple pictures

- Start with smaller pieces of paper. Half an A4 piece of paper is much easier to manage than an A4 piece of paper.
- Thin cardboard may be less flimsy and easier to control than paper to start with. Be mindful that if the cardboard is too thick it will make it more difficult for your child to cut.
- Provide your child with clear visual cues for cutting e.g. thick, bold lines in a different colour e.g. trace over line to be cut along in green.
- It may be helpful for your child to trace along the cutting line (using their finger or a different coloured texta) before they start cutting.
- Provide interesting things to cut e.g. play dough, picture of your child’s favourite character, bright paper, catalogues/junk mail, plastic straws, leaves from the garden etc.
- It may be helpful to use a green “go” dot and a red “stop” dot to show your child where to start and stop cutting. Alternatively, you could also use stickers.
- Trial different types of scissors. Generally, spring loaded scissors are easier to operate when children first start cutting than standard traditional scissors. You can purchase spring loaded scissors from Officeworks.
- Your child will probably find it difficult initially to manoeuvre both the paper and the scissors at the same time. Assist them by helping to stabilise their hand on the paper and rotate the paper when necessary.
- Although children may still swap their choice of their dominant hand, it is useful to determine which hand will usually be used to hold the scissors and which hand will hold the paper. If your child does not yet demonstrate a clear hand dominance please discuss this with your Key Worker or EPIC OT.
- Reduce surrounding distractions (e.g. noise and visual distractions). It’s very difficult to accurately cut if your child is unable to visually attend to see where they need to cut!