

# Key Area: Movement and Motor Skills

## Developing Cutting Skills

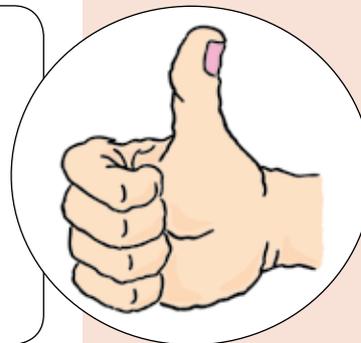
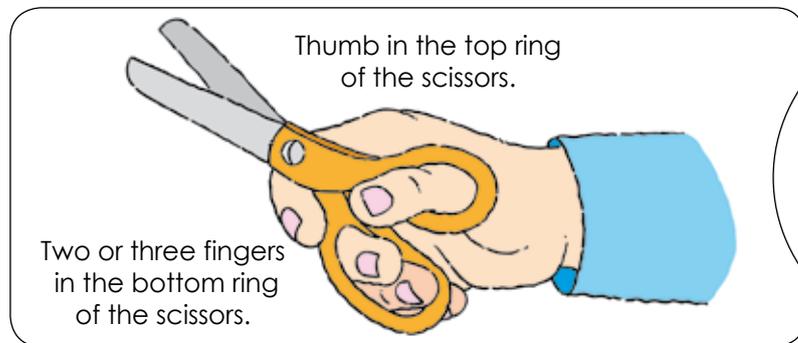
Children should progress through the following Stages 1 to 4 in order to develop good cutting skills.

### Stage 1 (Recommended Resource 1)

Children learn to hold scissors appropriately and to open and close scissors.

Children learn to place their thumb in the top ring of the scissors and their two or three fingers in the bottom ring.

At this early stage it is recommended that adults prompt children to produce the 'thumbs up' sign before taking hold of the scissors. If students require muscle strengthening or hand coordination practice, play a game of "Open Shut Them!"



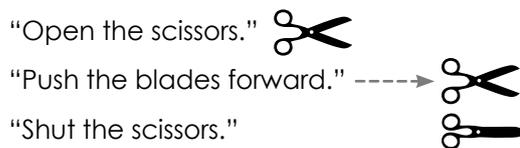
Prompt children to produce the 'thumbs up' sign before taking hold of the scissors.

### Stage 2 (Recommended Resource 1)

Children learn to hold and snip paper.

Children learn to hold the paper in their non-cutting hand and to open the scissors, push the blade forward and shut the scissors resulting in snips to paper. **Remember 'Thumbs Up'.**

To Make Snips...



#### A Note About Dominance

Research suggests that the majority of children show a dominant preference by 3 years and most by school age, however some actually establish dominance as late as 8 or 9 years old. **Making a preference is important as it allows the child to develop skill and endurance with that hand.**

If a child has not yet made a preference, it is suggested that the child be encouraged to participate in activities:

- that involve crossing the midline,
- that use both hands together,
- where both are active and
- where one hand does the work and the other one assists.

Don't try to choose the dominant hand but observe which hand is used the most often or is more skilful. It may also be helpful to refer the child to an Occupational Therapist for an assessment, prior to commencing year one.

### Developmental Norms For Children Learning To Cut With Scissors

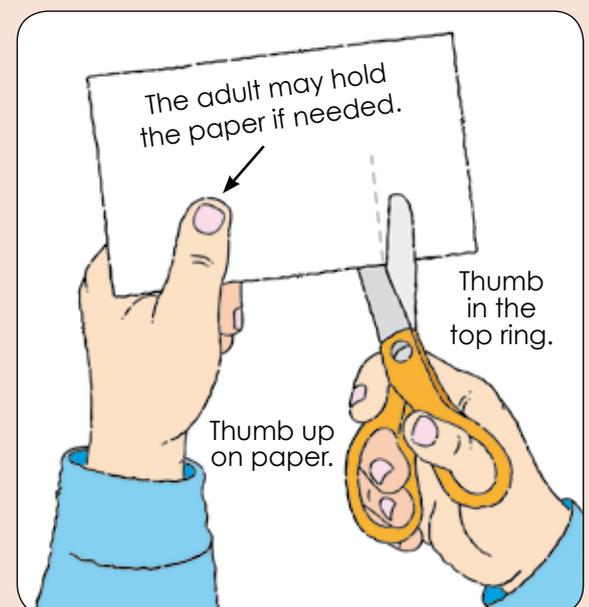
At age 2 - 2½ years...

Child is able to open and shut scissors with two hands.

### Developmental Norm

At age 2½ - 3 years...

Child is able to snip paper. Child holds scissors in one hand (dominant hand is not likely established at this stage). The paper may be held by an adult.



### Stage 3 (Recommended Resource 1)

Children learn to cut in a single direction and to cut along a line.

Children learn to hold the paper in their non-cutting hand with their thumb placed on the upside of the paper. With scissors held appropriately (i.e. 'thumbs up') children cut towards a target. Some children will need verbal guidance (e.g. "Open them, push them forward, open them, push them forward.") so that they understand how to apply the previously learned 'snipping' technique.

Some children may need adult verbal guidance.

- "Open the scissors." 
- "Push the scissors forward." 
- "Open the scissors." 
- "Push the scissors forward." 
- "Shut the scissors at the end." 

Remember 'Thumbs Up' for both hands.

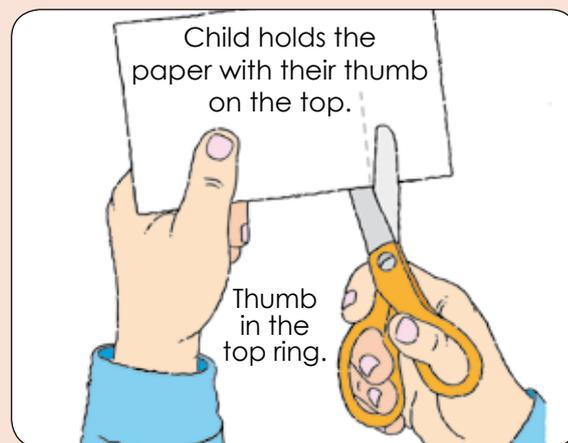
### Developmental Norms

At age 3 - 4 years...

Child is able to cut a 10cm piece of paper in approximate halves. No line is placed on the paper.

At age 3 - 4 years...

Child is able to cut along a 10cm straight line. Their cut line should not be wider than 1.7cm.



### Stage 4 (Recommended Resource 2)

Children learn to cut corners and curves.

In addition to increased cutting line accuracy, cutting tasks require a significant amount of supporting hand movement.

As cutting becomes more complex, children may be inclined to want to turn their scissor cutting hand rather than turning the paper. Model how to turn the paper with 'Thumbs Up' on the non-cutting hand. The tinted thumbs on the worksheets help to indicate the repositioning of the hand when turning the paper. The adult may also like to give verbal guidance by saying "Turn the paper".

The following resource displays examples for hand movements while cutting shapes. It also contains multiple worksheets for practising cutting skills.

### Developmental Norms

At age 4 - 5 years... Child is able to cut along a curved line. Their cut line should not be wider than 1cm.

At age 4 - 5 years... Child is able to cut out a range of squares (and with sides measuring as small as 8cm). Their cut line should not be wider than 1cm.

At age 4 - 5 years... Child is able to cut out a range of triangles (and with sides measuring as small as 8cm). Their cut line should not be wider than 1cm.

At age 4 - 5 years... Child is able to cut out a range of circles (and with diameters measuring as small as 12cm). Their cut line should not be wider than 1cm.

At age 4 - 5 years... Child is able to cut out a range of large, simple shapes while staying within a line that is 0.6cm wide.

At age 5 - 6 years... Child is able to cut around corners (with wide angles) while staying within a line that is 0.6cm wide. The child is also able to manoeuvre their non-cutting hand to support the cutting.

At age 5 - 6 years... Child is able to cut along curves while staying within a line that is 0.6cm wide. The child is also able to manoeuvre their non-cutting hand to support the cutting.

At age 5 - 6 years... Child requires frequent practise to consolidate their cutting skills.

Resources are from  
Key Area: Movement and  
Motor Skills

Available from  
[www.pld-literacy.org](http://www.pld-literacy.org)



116 Parry Street  
Perth WA 6000, Australia  
Tel: +61 (08) 9227 0846,  
Fax: +61 (08) 9227 0865  
[www.pld-literacy.org](http://www.pld-literacy.org),  
[mail@pld-literacy.org](mailto:mail@pld-literacy.org)