

Writing and Cutting Skills

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Your child uses many skills during writing and cutting activities. These include posture, eye coordination, strength and endurance of hands, and grasp of tools to write and cut.

Commonly Asked Questions

Should my child learn how to write when keyboarding is such an important part of today's world?

Yes. Writing activates more areas of your child's brain than keyboarding. It is the same areas of your child's brain that are activated by reading.

Your child's writing success is a strong predictor of his or her reading and math success.

Research has shown that:

- children who learn how to write are able to write more words, write them faster and express more ideas than children who only learn keyboarding
- children who take notes by hand learn more of the content and are able to focus more on the key messages than if they took notes by keyboard.

What are the general steps for learning to cut?

1. Holding the scissors
2. Opening and closing the scissors
3. Snipping (making random snips)
4. Moving the scissors forward
5. Making cuts across the paper – increasing lengths
6. Making cuts across the paper – staying closer to lines
7. Cutting a straight line
8. Cutting simple geometric shapes
9. Cutting simple figure shapes
10. Cutting complex figure shapes
11. Cutting non-paper materials

How do I know if my child needs help?

Talk with your child's health care provider if your child:

- has writing that is not clear enough to be read
- takes a long time and a lot of effort to write
- refuses to participate in writing, cutting or craft activities
- uses very light pencil pressure that makes the marks hard to read

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- uses very heavy pencil pressure that breaks pencils or goes through paper
- has trouble using both hands together to complete writing and cutting tasks.

He or she may refer your child to an occupational therapist.

What can an occupational therapist do?

An occupational therapist will:

- evaluate your child's fine motor skills needed to be successful at writing and cutting
- determine what is affecting your child's ability to be successful with drawing shapes and letters, and using a scissors
- suggest play activities and games to do at home to improve your child's writing and cutting skills
- work with you to create a home program that works best for your child and your family
- show your child ways to use his or her arms, hands, head and vision to improve his or her writing and cutting skills.

What can parents and families do?

You and your child's family can encourage him or her to:

- participate in play-based art, craft and writing activities
- journal
- play activities that promote writing (keep a variety of writing materials on hand).

You and your child's family can also:

- use encouraging instructional words such as, "thumbs up when we cut"
- give your child opportunities to use his or her writing skills by sending notes and letters to family and friends or making name tags for family dinners
- work with your child's occupational therapist to keep writing activities fun and play-based.

Activities to Try at Home

- Family journaling time: Take 10 minutes each day to journal.
- Paint: Do sponge painting, finger painting in the bathtub, use water on a chalkboard or sidewalk, put cornmeal in a cake pan or use bingo paints.
- Racetrack drawing: Dip toy racecars into paint and draw shapes or letters on newspaper.
- Play letter- and shape-matching games.
- Use a spray bottle to water plants or water the grass outside. Fill the spray bottle with colored water to paint the snow.
- Use tools to play such as kitchen tongs, paper punches, clothespins and hammers.