



CARE & LEARNING SERVICE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ADVICE FOR CUTLERY SKILLS

Holding cutlery

- Make sure a child is sat comfortably at a table with their feet firmly supported.
- Holding cutlery correctly is an important part of learning and developing cutlery skills. If cutlery is not held correctly, it can be harder to use.
- Encourage children to use their “pointy” (index) fingers placed on top of cutlery and pointing down towards the plate. See overleaf for more advice.
- Some children choose to hold the knife in the right hand and the fork in the left when cutting up food, then they swap the fork back to into their right hand when eating (reverse for left handed)



Cutlery

- Choosing the right cutlery can help children to achieve success.
- Cutlery that is easy to hold and has finger guides may be beneficial.
- For younger children, Junior Caring Cutlery or Kura Care Junior Cutlery are good options.
- For older children who are still having difficulty, Kura Care Adult Cutlery is beneficial.
- Possible suppliers include, Amazon, Complete Care Shop and NRS Healthcare.



Ideas to try

- Choose foods initially that are easier to cut up, eg banana for a snack, fish fingers or soft vegetables.
- Use a simple cue to prompt child to hold cutlery correctly, such as “use your pointer fingers”
- Place your hands over the child’s to demonstrate the movements and how much pressure to use.
- Practice cutlery skills away from mealtimes to allow children to practice in a fun way and when they are not hungry and focused on eating (*see overleaf for ideas*).
- Allow plenty of time for practice.

Knife

- Make some practice “sausages” for the child to cut. Playdoh works well as it is easy to shape and cut.
- Encourage the child to hold on to the sausage with their “helping hand” that keeps the food still.
- With their “doing hand” (dominant hand), help the child to use a sawing action to cut up the sausage.
- Make sure that the knife is close to the “helping hand”. If it is too far away, food tends to move and is difficult to cut.



Fork

- To practice the stabbing action, get the child to make patterns. A “pizza” made out of Playdoh works well for this.
- Make small Playdoh balls and practise picking these up with the fork. Make sure their “pointy” finger stays on top of the fork and they do not start scooping up the pieces.

Using a Knife and Fork Together

- Explain that the hand with the fork in it is the “helping hand” that keeps the food still.
- The hand that holds the knife is the “doing hand” and that cuts up the food.
- Get the child to stab the Playdoh with their fork, then use to fork to lean the knife against and using sawing action they have practiced.
- Once they have mastered this, you could use Plasticine to make it harder or move on to food items.
- As well as cutting up food, you use a knife and fork together to pick up food.
- For this, most people turn the fork over and “nudge” food on to it using the knife. Again, you can practice this action using small bits of Playdoh.

GAMES

- Pretend that you are chefs in a restaurant and must prepare a meal. Chop and slice up your Playdoh into a culinary masterpiece.
- Practice cutting up food and feeding a “friend” such as a toy or tennis ball.

