

## KNIFE AND FORK SKILLS

Try some of the following ideas to encourage independence with knife and fork skills:

- 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, 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.
- Encourage your child to practice using the correct grasp when using utensils. E.g.



- To help your child position their hands on the knife and fork, mark the correct index finger placement on a specific knife and fork. An 'x' marked on with twink, permanent marker or a sticker may be helpful. Encourage them to cover the 'x' or sticker with their "pointer fingers" when using the utensils.
- Verbalise the actions in a simple sequence, such as 'stab first, then cut'.
- Consider using utensils with large handles/grips, or using tubigrip on your standard cutlery to widen the handle/grip.
- Try cutting simple, soft foods first and progress to more difficult food types. E.g. practice cutting up a banana. Make this into a fun and light-hearted activity that your child is motivated to participate in (some ideas follow).
- Practice spreading. Ensure you use an easy spread to begin with. Use a spread that is soft and not sticky.

The following activities use some of the same skills necessary for using cutlery. They will give your child opportunity to practice the skills, other than at mealtimes.

- Using a dustpan and brush – emphasise keeping the dustpan still and moving the brush. Your child may be tempted to move both together at the same time.
- Using scissors – start with easy patterns and progress to more complex designs.
- Using playdough – practice cutting using cutlery as the consistency of play dough means it does not move away whilst you are cutting. You can make it different shapes and sizes.
- Playing with clay (or other modelling material)
- Cooking / Baking – holding a bowl while mixing with a spoon or spooning the mixture out of the bowl.
- Colouring – ensure the paper is held with one hand whilst the other hand does the colouring.
- Opening screw top bottles and jars.
- Construction games – E.G. meccano, kinnex.

Any games or activities which encourage the child to hold one hand still whilst moving the other hand will help with the foundation skills for using cutlery.