**Kids and Cutting Skills**

Cutting out shapes requires many underlying skills including the ability to stay on the line, coordinate both hands together, and open and close scissors.

**How to Hold Scissors**

The "cutting" hand holds the scissors with the thumb up, scissors straight forward, and elbow tucked in. The thumb and first two fingers ("super fingers") open and close the scissors while the ring and pinky fingers stabilize the hand.

The "helper" hand holds the paper with the thumb up and turns the paper. The child will have more control of the paper if s/he continues to move the "helper" hand up near the scissors as the paper is cut.

If the child begins to bend the wrist or bring the elbow of the "cutting" hand out to the side, gently guide the elbow back close to the body. Placing a manila folder between the arm and the body is one way to encourage the child to stabilize the shoulder and hold the elbow in. Also, saying "thumbs up" can be a helpful cue to remind the child how to hold the paper and scissors.

**Grading Cutting Tasks**

-Children can begin learning scissors skills by snipping items that are more rigid, such as playdough snakes, index cards, cardboard, or straws, which allows the children to focus on operating the scissors.

-Children can practice cutting thick straight lines on index cards or paper and can advance to cutting along a curve or zigzag line.

-As cutting skills improve, thinner paper can be introduced.

-Finally, the child will be ready to cut out simple shapes, and then more complex shapes.