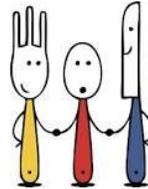


DEVELOPING CUTLERY SKILLS-KNIFE AND FORK



Firstly!!!

When practising using cutlery always sit at a table and chairs. Support the child's feet on an upturned box or step if his/her feet do not touch the floor.

Holding your knife and fork

Correct hands- Generally the knife should be held in the dominant hand (the one the child writes with) and the fork in the non-dominant hand. This is because the knife is the moving part of the task and therefore requires more accuracy.

Tips:

- ✓ Set the table so that the cutlery is laid out in the correct positions. This could be a job that the child does for extra practice.
- ✓ Make a placemat using a large piece of paper. Draw around a dinner plate in the centre and around the cutlery in the correct positions. Cover in sticky back plastic or laminate to make it wipe clean.

Finger position- To give yourself the best chance at cutting successfully, ensure you position the index finger on the back of the tool. The cutlery should be held in the hands so that the handle is "hidden" inside the palm with the index fingers pointing towards the plate. The fork should be held with the prongs arching down towards the plate.

Tip:

- ✓ It can be helpful to mark where your child needs to place their finger (use coloured electrical tape or nail varnish)



Choosing cutlery

- It's best to start with fairly chunky handled cutlery.
- Contoured cutlery can be helpful when learning this skill.

"Caring cutlery" or "Kura cutlery" can be obtained, amongst others, at the following web addresses:

<http://www.co-opmobility.co.uk> Tel: 0845 459 6006

<http://www.essentialaids.com>: Tel: 01273 719 889

<http://www.completecareshop.co.uk>: Tel: 0845 5 194 734



Stabbing and Cutting

The food should be held still by stabbing it firmly with the fork. You can use the prompt "*point your finger downwards into the table*" while demonstrating.

Instruction may need to be given to turn the food around to get it in a good position to cut.

The knife should be used in a sawing "forwards and backwards" action all the way through. Pushing the food away from the fork with the knife should be discouraged. You can use the prompt "*point your finger forwards and put the knife next to the fork*" while demonstrating.



Final tips:

- ✓ Start with easy to cut food such as toast, potatoes sausages, soft roast vegetables etc.
- ✓ Gradually increase expectations during mealtimes
- ✓ Practice out with mealtimes can reduce pressure e.g. with playdough or during meal prep.
- ✓ Treat yourself to a favourite chocolate bar – but only if you eat it with knife and fork!
- ✓ If cutting sausages is a slippery ordeal, first you can cut the sausage lengthways for the child so that it sits flat on the plate.