



Cutlery Use

Dyspraxia DCD Ireland ADL Clinic Resource

See the intro document for support in teaching and learning steps as well as further safety precautions and info.

It is encouraged to practice the skill yourself beforehand and to try teaching the skill to someone else to troubleshoot any issues that your child may encounter along the way.

Sequence of Steps:

Gather the equipment needed:

- ✓ Knife and fork
- ✓ Desk/table/counter
- ✓ Item to cut (Play-Doh, banana, etc.)
- ✓ Non slip surface or plate

1. Place the item on a steady, non-slip surface at waist level.
2. Take the fork in your non-dominant hand.
3. To grasp the fork, point your pointing finger down the back of the fork, the prongs should be pointing down.
4. Take the knife in your dominant hand and point your pointing finger down the smooth side of the blade.



5. Using the fork, stab the food, keeping the food in one spot.
6. Place the knife parallel to the back of the prongs of the fork.
7. Move the knife forward and backwards in a sawing motion, to cut the food to the size you need.
8. To remove the food from the fork, use your knife to hold the food in place and pull the fork out.
9. Using your fork, stab the piece you have cut off and dig in.

Steps with information for parents/carers:

1. Place the item on a steady, non-slip surface at waist level.
2. Take the fork in your non-dominant hand and the knife in your dominant hand – if this doesn't work for your child, swap hands and find what works best.
3. To grasp the fork, point your pointing finger down the back of the fork, making sure to place the pad of the finger at the heel of the fork, the prongs should be pointing down.
4. Take the knife in your dominant hand, point your pointing finger down the smooth side of the blade, place the pad of your pointing finger halfway down the knife.
5. Using the fork, stab the food, keeping the food in one spot – take your time, cutting one piece at a time.
6. Place the knife parallel to the back of the prongs of the fork.
7. Move the knife forward and backwards in a sawing motion to cut the food to the size you need – do this with slow and controlled strokes.
8. To remove the food from the fork, use your knife to hold the food in place and pull the fork out.
9. Using your fork, stab the piece you have cut off and dig in.

Practical Tips:

- Ensure correct finger placement when using knife and fork. If you place your pointing finger too far back, your cutlery will be hard to control and too far forward your fingers will end up in your dinner.
- In the beginning, trial the use of a single piece of cutlery – begin by using a spoon, then trial the use of a fork, then the use of a knife, and finally trial the use of both a fork and knife simultaneously.
- Ensure appropriate set-up – place the plate directly in front of the child, place the fork on the non-dominant side of the plate and knife on the dominant side.
- Start by cutting 1 item at a time – in the early stages, cutting food items individually on a side plate may be preferable.
- Practice in a less pressurised situation, such as outside of mealtime. Practice knife and fork skills using playdough or foods such as a banana.

Adaptability:

- Spike board.
- Dycem non-slip sheeting.
- Thicker handled cutlery.
- Finger placement cutlery.

Disclaimer:

It is the responsibility of the caregiver to ensure that the child is supervised by an adult/caregiver while completing all exercises or recommendations during activities outside of the OT calls and that if there is any doubt in relation to the strategy or you or your child's ability to perform this safely, it should not be completed.

It is the responsibility of the caregiver (or the individual if over 18) to ensure that the location of any activities or interventions being undertaken is deemed safe.

If you or your child experiences any discomfort or strain the activity should be stopped immediately.

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