

# A GUIDE TO CHOOSING & USING SCISSORS

## What To Look For When Buying A Pair Of Scissors

Scissors are available in many different types, but generally speaking you get what you pay for. A good pair of scissors will have stainless steel blades, which cut cleanly through paper and thin card. The blades should be riveted such that they are neither too tight (thus hurting fingers when in use) nor too loose (resulting in the paper slipping between the blades).

The handles should be comfortable and free from any sharp edges. The finger contact area needs to be as large as possible (see diagram) so as to optimise the amount of energy and control in the cutting action.

Size should also be considered, particularly when buying scissors for children. The scissor should sit comfortably in the child's hand and not cause the hand to be over-stretched which results in a loss of control when the scissor is used.



## Left Handed & “Ambidextrous” Scissors



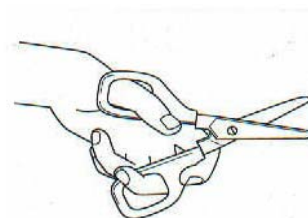
When using right handed scissors in the left hand the bias of the grip results in the blades being pushed apart rather than together, consequently the paper slips in between the blades. Additionally the cutting line is obscured making it impossible to cut with any degree of accuracy.

No conventional style scissor is truly ambidextrous. It is true that when new, a pair of right handed scissors with good riveting, may cut successfully in the left hand, but with use the stress on the riveting will render a short life-span for the scissor and discomfort for the child who will try to compensate by gripping the scissor too tightly.

Left-handed scissors in the Peta Easi-Grip range are distinctive by their green handles.

## How To Hold Conventional Style Scissors

Conventional style scissors should be held with the thumb and middle finger (see diagram). The index finger is used to supply additional direction and control of the cutting action.



## Special Scissors For Special Needs

Some children may have difficulty using conventional style scissors. The needs of many such children have been met through the design of the Peta Easi-Grip range of scissors with self-opening blades and/or adapted grips. These scissors have all been developed after careful consultation with Paediatric Occupational Therapists.

## The Importance of Postural Stability When Using Scissors

As with writing, when a child is using a pair of scissors for maximum stability he/she should be seated, with feet preferably on the floor, with bottom to the back of the seat and with the desk-top at right angles to the elbows. If this is not possible with available furniture try using a telephone directory to place the feet on, or a cushion to fill the space at the back of the seat.



## The 14 Steps in Scissor Skill Development

1. Child enjoys tearing paper during play activities
2. Child shows an interest and understands the use of scissors
3. Child able to maintain correct grip when positioned by an adult
4. Child able to hold scissors appropriately without assistance
5. Child begins to open and close scissors
6. Child able to open and close scissors using a controlled action
7. Child able to hold paper and make random cuts
8. Child able to make consecutive cuts with a forward movement
9. Child able to cut in a straight line avoiding unintentional lateral movement
10. Child able to cut out simple shapes involving one change of direction
11. Child able to cut out simple shapes, more than one directional change
12. Child able to cut along curved lines
13. Child able to cut out circles
14. Child able to cut more complicated shapes with straight and curved lines

## A Thought About Special Equipment in the Inclusive Classroom....

The view is often taken that, where possible, the equipment used by the child with special needs should not be remarkably different to that used by his/her peer group. However, often that child will find a task easier and gain a better quality result by using specialist equipment. The pride in this good work and recognition of a developing skill will therefore quickly eliminate any initial reservations about using different equipment.

**REMEMBER! Scissors should always be used under an appropriate level of supervision and stored safely.**

*This paper was written by Peta (UK) Ltd and includes extracts from the publication "Developing Scissor Skills – A Guide for Parents & Teachers" (Mahoney/Markwell). For further information, please visit our website [www.peta-uk.com](http://www.peta-uk.com).*