

Using cutlery

Top tips for children

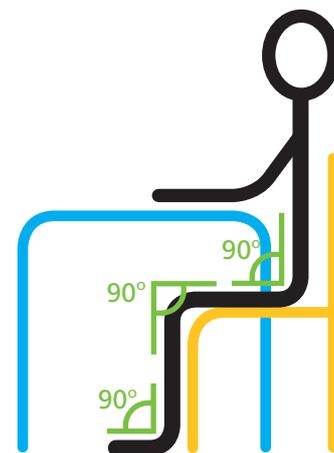
Below are some ideas for supporting children with learning cutlery skills, try different things to see what works for your child. Our 'Daily Living Skills - Top Tips for Parents and Carers' sheet may also be useful when thinking about the best approach.



Things to consider:

How does your child sit?

- Can they reach the floor with their feet when sitting up to the table? Are they sitting at the right height in relation to the table surface? Are they well supported?
 - Pull the chair close to the table
 - Use a foot stool, small step or box to place their feet on



Have the right tools for the job!

- A serrated knife is easier for cutting tougher foods, while a non-serrated knife is easier for spreading butter on bread.
- Cutlery designed for young children is often very blunt and makes cutting tougher foods more difficult.
- Use a heavier plate that doesn't slip around. Non-slip mats can be useful (e.g. silicone or dycem)
- Use the right sized cutlery! Cutlery with a chunky plastic handle is often easier to grip. Specialist cutlery like Caring Cutlery can be useful for some children.



Adult Caring Cutlery



Plastic handle cutlery



Good Grips Cutlery



How do they hold their knife and fork?

- Hands should be pointing down towards the plate.
- Show your child how to point their index fingers down the knife and fork, using their "pointy fingers" to push down more strongly.
- Their other fingers need to stay wrapped tightly around the handle.

Try breaking the activity down into steps

- 1) First, get a good grip on the cutlery with it pointing upwards
- 2) Get your "pointy fingers" in the right place
- 3) "Stab" (push) with the fork
- 4) "Saw" with the knife (backwards and forwards motion – no tearing)

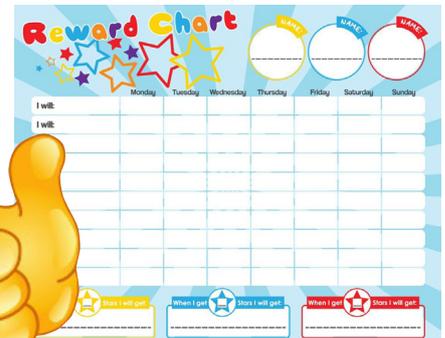
More ideas

- Practice using a knife and fork during fun activities e.g. play-doh or cookie dough, or their favourite food.
- Use a hand-over-hand technique by standing behind and placing your hands over theirs to guide while cutting. This allows your child to feel the movements needed for cutting.
- It is easier to practice cutting with soft foods, such as fish fingers, boiled potato, well-cooked vegetables. Cut round food (e.g. potatoes or sausages) in half to stop them rolling around the plate.
- Gradually increase the amount of cutting they do. Allow extra time for practice. Make a deal with your child about the number of items they cut or how many times they try before you help them.



This can be increased over time as they become more skilled and confident. Practice little and often!

- Many children need ongoing adult prompting to maintain their hand position and cutting technique – try asking questions about what they need to do, rather than giving instructions. Demonstrate how you use your knife and fork and make it obvious.
- Support your child to come up with a plan – how can they complete this task? What will help them remember? What comes next?
- Use a reward chart to record and praise their achievements at each step.



Help us get it right

If you have a complaint, concern, comment or compliment please let us know by speaking to a member of our staff. We learn from your feedback and use the information to improve and develop our services.

If you would like to talk to someone outside the service contact the **Patient Experience Team** on **0113 220 8585**, Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm or email lch.pet@nhs.net

We can make this information available in Braille, large print, audio or other languages on request.

Contact us

ICAN Admin
3rd Floor Stockdale House
Headingley Office Park
Victoria Road
Leeds LS6 1PF
Tel: 0113 843 3620