

Top Tips for using a Knife and Fork

Before carrying out any of the activity suggestions below, always prepare your child by discussing the strategies beforehand and let them take the lead as much as possible. Choose the ones that you feel are most appropriate for your child. The lists of activities are not prescriptive and you can vary them. Use a little and often approach to ensure your child has fun with these activities.

Preparation	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the child is in a secure and comfortable seating position. • Ensure that plate does not slip by using a tablecloth, Dycem (non-slip) mat, or blu-tac to stick the plate to the table. • Encourage them to slow down and think about each stage of cutting separately (e.g. stab with the fork and then cut with the knife). • Remember a quiet environment, free from distractions aids learning.
Holding the Utensils	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place spots with nail varnish on the back of the fork at the wide point, and on the knife on the top just before the blade part begins. • Have your child grasp the fork with a fist and then isolate the index finger onto the spots. • Thicker handles may be easier, alternatively try 'Caring Cutlery', moulded cutlery with a shaped indent on the top for the index finger to help with directional control (available from wide range of suppliers).
Cutting	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have your child firstly push the fork into the food to hold it steady. • Then with the blade of the knife placed in front of the fork, cut across the food, back and forth. • Expect untidy cutting and tearing of food initially.

Practise	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practise with play dough, softer foods (e.g. banana), cooked vegetables and soft chocolate bars before moving on to harder foods. Talk about different textures of food and how difficult it is to cut/pressure required.• After the child has mastered some of the skills move onto using the knife and fork at mealtimes, encouraging them to use the knife and fork at every meal, when needed. Do not expect your child to practise more than two to three cuts initially.