



Using a combination of cutlery requires the development of many skills including hand-eye co-ordination, fine motor skills and postural control.

#### **Sitting Posture**

It is important that a child has good sitting posture by having their feet flat on the floor, sitting well back in the chair and having the table at elbow height.

- If the table is too high try a cushion to raise the child.
- If their feet don't touch the floor, support the feet with a footstool or box.
- If the child has difficulty sitting still at the table, try a cushion such as movin' sit.
- If sitting on the sofa to eat, you could try a lap tray with cushion underneath.

#### **Holding the cutlery**

Encouraging a good grasp from the start will help with learning how to use a combination of cutlery. The most functional cutlery grasp is having the index fingers pointed down the cutlery. On the fork the index finger pointing down the back, and on the knife pointed down the edge towards the blade.

If the child has difficulty remembering to point their index fingers down the cutlery, place stickers on the cutlery or paint a dot where the tip of their finger should be. If the child continues to find this difficult, caring cutlery with grooves for the index finger to be placed can be a reminder.



#### **Knife and Fork Practice**

Practice is the best way for a child to learn how to cut using a knife and fork! Practice could take place at meal times or through cutting play-doh.

1. Stabbing the fork into the food/play-doh and holding the fork steady.
2. Placing the knife behind the fork and cutting with a back and forth action. Children sometimes place the knife very close the fork prongs. Therefore encourage them to listen for when they are doing this as they can hear the knife against the fork.
3. Practice picking up the pieces of food/play-doh through stabbing with a fork.

#### **Hints and Tips**

- If the child has trouble with the plate moving while they are eating, a non-slip mat could be put underneath the plate to hold it steady.
- Practicing away from meal times. For example practice cutting play-doh or soft foods such fruit.
- Practicing with individual cutlery, such as practicing with a knife to spread butter on bread, or cutting various foods. Practice with fork in picking up food/playdoh and then placing them in a bowl.
- Hand over hand guidance, through placing your hands over the child and guiding their hands through the activity.
- Show the child what to do, sit next to them and talk them through the task.