



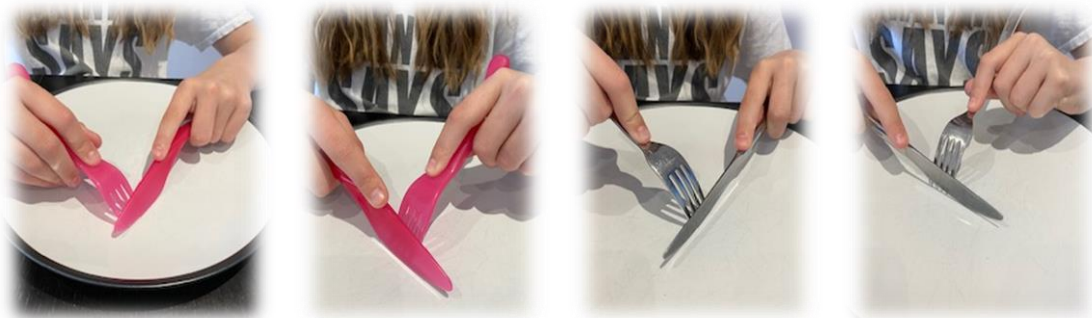
## Using Cutlery

Meal times are an important aspect of family life but learning to use a knife and fork together is a complex activity that many children struggle with as it requires many skills like hand-eye coordination, fine motor skills and postural control.

### Using Cutlery

- **Posture** is important so make sure they are in a good sitting position with their feet flat on the floor, sitting back in the chair with an appropriate height table. Try:
  - Putting a cushion under the child if the table is too high.
  - Support the feet with a stool or box if they do not reach the floor.
  - Whenever possible ensure that your child is sitting at a table.
- **Sit at the table** if you can but if not try using a lap tray with a cushion underneath.
- **Teach** them how to position the cutlery correctly, try not to correct hand preference.
  - The most functional grasp is having the index fingers pointed down to the cutlery
- If the child is having difficulty in remembering finger position it can help to put stickers or dots or paint on the cutlery or look for alternative adapted cutlery with grooves to help reinforce this.
- Often children learn to stab things with a fork first, if they are able to do this already encourage finger positioning.
- Practice using easier and softer foods first.
- If the food moves around the plate too much try using a smaller plate or one with high ridged sides.
- If the plate keeps moving, try using a non-slip mat under the plate to keep it steady.
- Make sure they are not too hungry when they practice as they might become more frustrated and give up.
- Practicing with cutlery separately – knife to spread butter, fork to pick up.
- Use **hand-over-hand** technique to help them to understand the required movement.
- Sit next to them and show them what to do, provide a clear and consistent running commentary.
- Children learn in different ways so you might need to vary your approach.
- Practice, practice and practice

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**Allow extra time for your child to practice these new skills**