

# How to teach food skills



When teaching primary aged children to work with food, it is important that they learn how to use tools correctly. This is so they can work safely, efficiently and independently. The following photographs and notes help to show children a safe way to handle kitchen tools.

## The bridge hold



### Method

Create a bridge over the food with your hand. The fingers should be on one side and the thumb should be on the other. Hold the food to be cut between the fingers and thumb creating a bridge. The knife should go through the bridge to cut the food.

### Safety

This method ensures that fingers are out of the way as the knife cuts through the food.

### Tips

To help children remember this method, they might like to think of the knife as a train which goes under the bridge and through the tunnel.

### Use

This method is useful in lots of situations. It is especially useful for cutting circular items into halves and quarters, e.g. tomatoes, apples.

## The claw grip



### Method

Create a claw by partly curling your fingers together into a claw shape. Press the tips of your fingers (nails) against the food to be gripped and then lean your fingers slightly forward of your nails so that you can't see your nails when you look down on your hand.

### Safety

This method ensures that finger tips are tucked out of the way and will not get caught by the knife.

### Tips

To help children remember this method emphasise creating a claw, gripping the food and tipping the hand – claw, grip, tip, cut.

### Use

This method is used to secure items so they can be cut safely. It is the best method to use when food needs to be cut into slices or diced.

## Fork secure



## Method

Place the food to be cut on a chopping board. If the food is likely to move or wobble, e.g. a tomato, hold it securely around the edges or sides. In a firm but controlled way, dig the fork into the food with the fork prongs going downwards towards the chopping board. Continue holding the fork in one hand, take a knife with the other hand and slice the food.

## Safety

This method ensures that the food is stable and keeps fingers out of the way while it is cut.

## Tips

Ensure that children take their time while embedding the fork in the food and make sure they are driving the fork downwards and not diagonally which could cause it to come out at the side of the food and go into their hands.

## Use

This method is used if an adult feels that the claw method would be too challenging for children, perhaps because of their age or ability.

## Peeling



Teach children to peel away from themselves while using a peeler. With long foods such as carrots they should hold one end and peel from the middle away from themselves and then hold the peeled end and repeat the same process.

## Grating



Remember, you do not have to grate every bit of the food. It is best to leave a small chunk at the end to hang on to. This means that fingers are not pressed against the grater.

## Scissors



Kitchen scissors can sometimes be a useful alternative to a knife, especially if children are quite young. Scissors are good for snipping herbs and spring onions – even pepper slices!

## Tips

### Flat surface down

Make sure that the food being cut has a flat surface or most stable surface face down on the chopping board so it is stable while being cut.

### Part prepare

It may sometimes be necessary to partly prepare foods so they are at a stage where children can handle them safely and confidently. For example, when making coleslaw, the teacher could quarter the cabbage and cut out the heart. Children would then be able to take a quarter, separate the layers of leaves with their hands and cut one or two leaves at a time using the methods previously mentioned.