



ALL ABOUT KNIVES: SAFETY TIPS

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- Always start by securing the chopping board with a silicone mat or damp cloth to stop it from slipping while you work.
- Never wave a knife in the air.
- Keep the knife handle clean – if you get grease or oil on it, stop immediately, wash it off and dry the handle to ensure a good grip at all times.
- If the ingredient being chopped is round or uneven, slice a small bit off to create a flat, stable surface to lay on the board while cutting.
- Always chop flat-side down.
- Never chop quickly – work slowly and steadily, and get to know the knife – practice makes perfect.
- Once finished with a knife, either clean it and put it away immediately, or put it somewhere where others can see it. The worst place to leave a knife is in a sink of soapy water or hidden among other things – if anyone puts their hand into the sink to wash something up, they stand a good chance of cutting themselves. Children should not wash up knives.
- Keep the knives sharp – a blunt knife can do more damage than a sharp one.
- Always hold a knife using your dominant (writing) hand.

TECHNIQUES FOR CHILDREN

These safe knife skills can be used with lots of different ingredients and encourage best practice. The teacher should always demonstrate before letting the children have a go, explaining clearly and showing them the techniques every time a recipe is demonstrated. Ask the children to show you their technique before allowing them to continue. The two most common techniques are the bridge and claw.

The bridge technique is used to cut ingredients into smaller, more manageable pieces. Form a bridge over the ingredient with your hand, making the sure the arch is nice and high so there's plenty of room for the knife to fit underneath. Hold the item securely with your fingers on one side and your thumb on the other. Now pick up the knife with the other hand – get the children to check the blade is facing downwards – and guide the knife under the middle of the bridge.

Cut into the middle of the ingredient by pressing down and sliding the knife back towards you out of the bridge. Then take one half at a time and place them flat-side down. Repeat the bridge over each half one at a time and cut into quarters. Keep going until you've got the number of pieces you need. Never rush – it's important to take your time – stop between each slice to check your fingers are out of the way.

The claw technique is used to slice ingredients into strips. Place the item onto the board, flat-side down. Make a claw by partly curling your fingers closely together, making sure you tuck your fingertips and thumb out of the way.

Pick up the knife with your other hand, check the blade is facing down and place your claw on top of the ingredient, with your fingers facing the knife. Keep the tip of the knife on the board and slowly slice through the item, sliding the knife back towards you. To make your next slice, move your fingers back along the item, keeping your fingers together and keeping a grip on the top. Remember, stop between slices to look at where your knife is and make sure your fingers are tucked out of the way – it's not a race.

When children are learning, don't encourage them to chop all the way to the end of the item – it's better to have safe fingers than get that extra bit of carrot or celery.