

Spreading and Peeling: Beginner

How We Apply the Skill Today:

- Spreading peanut butter on celery to make Ants on a Log, spreading butter on bread, peeling cucumbers and carrots.

Skills That Loop into this Lesson:

- Child should be able to hold a crayon and color.

Time Needed:

- **Hands on Time: 20 mins.**
- **Video Length: 9 mins.**

Tools Needed:

- Small plate
- Dinner knife (butter knife) or spreader or both
- Sometimes holiday dip or cheese sets have the perfect sized little spreader.
- Vegetable peeler (kid-sized are available)
- Cutting board

Food Needed:

- Celery
- Peanut butter
- Raisins
- Butter (softened at room temp)
- Bread (or toast)
(or alternative to spread: cream cheese or hummus and crackers or cucumbers, jam on toast, guacamole)
- Firm cucumbers
- Whole carrots

Today's Recipe(s):

- Ants on Log
- Buttered Toast
- Helping on a Crudité Platter

Adults Should Prepare:

- Wash cucumbers and carrots
- Wash and cut celery (unless you have an Advanced Module student; then they will cut celery)
- Set butter and peanut butter (if refrigerated) out to soften the day before
- *Optional: toast bread so it's more solid*

Extensions: how else could this basic skill be used?

- Any spreading is now fair game: frosting on a muffin, cream cheese or hummus on crackers, honey or jam on toast, etc.
- The peeling only applies to straight veggies like zucchini and parsnips. The child won't be automatically able to peel round items like potatoes or apples yet.

Allergy Notes and Substitutions:

- If kids don't like celery, try peanut butter on apple slices.
- To avoid nuts, cream cheese or hummus on crackers works. Guacamole is also yummy on veggies if you don't want to use peanut butter.
- For grain-free, try veggie slices with a thick ranch dip, hummus, or nut butter. Cucumber slices, chunks of red pepper, or apple slices are fun. One reviewer spread hummus on a cucumber so that it pulled in the veggie the child had just peeled.

Daily Nugget:

“Bread with Butter is Better”

Different foods help your body be healthy in different ways. We should eat things from more than one food group together – butter with your bread, veggies and nuts, fruits and cheese or yogurt. Balance!

Adults may want to understand: Fat slows down the digestion of starch and helps the body use vitamins in vegetables better.

Notes:

Lesson Overview: Spreading

Spreading is a great low-risk activity for little hands. A mistake won't cause an injury or mess up a recipe result. The worst thing that can happen is a delicious mess of peanut butter or butter!

For this age, adult guides will want to prepare the materials thoroughly so there's no downtime for little attention spans.

All ingredients should be accessible:

- If your peanut butter is almost empty, open a new one.
- Make sure anything you're going to spread is softened if usually refrigerated.
- Consider toasting the bread so it's easier for the child. (Frozen bread sounds like a good idea but it makes the butter too hard to spread.)

Note: It's helpful for little ones to pause the video between skills to practice that skill.

Catch Phrases to Remember:

Catch phrases help kids to remember the principles and the skills that they are learning. Try to incorporate these phrases into your lesson to help these ideas stick in your kids' minds. Additionally, be sure to print out the flash cards and keep them handy throughout the week.

Spreading

- Hand over Teeth
- Tip of the Knife in the Spread
- Corner to Corner, Edge to Edge

How to Demonstrate

It can seem like a no-brainer to adults to spread butter on toast – but if you just give your child a butter knife and let them go at it, you'll be surprised at how many different ways mistakes can be made! It's worth the time to break it down into little steps and demonstrate:

1. Show your kids the teeth on the butter knife. Let them feel how the teeth are not very sharp – but can be a little bit if you press hard or saw back and forth.

2. Hold the knife firmly with the palm on top. We call it “hand over teeth” so the hand is on top and the teeth on bottom.
3. Explain that it's not like holding a crayon or a pencil, nor like holding a fork – more like holding a hammer.
4. Use the very tip of the knife to dip into the peanut butter or butter. Demonstrate how much they should scoop.
5. Spread the pile around on the bread. Remind kids to spread their piles in different places so that they have butter from corner to corner, edge to edge.
6. Tell your child how you want them to hold the food – should they set it on the plate and steady the plate with their non-dominant hand or hold the food? It depends on how big they are. (If the item you're spreading on is large like bread, leave it on a flat plate. If it's small like celery, it's ok to pick it up, but if you're having trouble, set it back down.)
7. Set the knife down before you pick up food to eat or move it. This doesn't seem important with dull knives but is a key safety habit!
8. Demonstrate some common mistakes:
 - No fingers on the butter.
 - We never lick knives (unless we have permission).
 - If you lick the knife on accident, don't put it back into the serving dish.
 - What to do if you get too much? Don't put it back.
 - Pull the piles out (when there is too much in one area of the bread).

“Hold the knife firmly with the palm on top. We call it ‘Hand Over Teeth’ so the hand is on top and the teeth on bottom.”

How To Guide

For just a swipe or two (more for very young children) allow your child's hand and your hand to be on the knife at the same time. This will help them learn the stroke pattern and how to hold the knife.

Many young children will need to choke up on the knife and hold it at the top of the handle, unlike how an adult might do it. This will give them greater control.

“Many young children will need to choke up on the knife and hold it at the top of the handle....”

How to Coach to Independence

As quickly as possible, allow your child to move on to experimenting for themselves – a low risk activity means it's easier to just let the child go at it!

Lesson Overview: Peeling

Note for adult guides with 2-3-year-olds: If you're not comfortable with your child having anything with a blade (which includes veggie peelers since they could actually nick skin and hurt), then just focus on the spreading for today, or add something blade-less like separating orange sections, snapping beans, or peeling leaves off kale stems.

Both shapes of peelers (Y-shaped and straight) should work fine for peeling, although I personally prefer a Y-shaped peeler, and many reviewers agreed. We even have one that fits little hands. (See the resources page.)

Feel free to include your little ones in the produce washing process or do it before you start – your preference.

Catch Phrases to Remember:

Peeling

- Don't Cross the Wall
- Turn Your Veggies
- Clear Your Peels

How to Demonstrate

We start with the carrot because it's far easier to peel. The solid carrot allows the peeler edge to "catch" better than the cucumber.

Note: I don't usually peel organic carrots, only conventional ones – both for nutrition and as a time saver. However, bitter cucumber peels need to go!

The peeler goes in the "Crayon Hand" (that's the hand the child uses with a crayon, or the dominant hand). Show your child how you hold the peeler with your fist on top, firmly. The other hand holds the carrot on the far end. Holding the vegetable with your thumb down and out of the way is good practice for knife skills.

We show kids that there's an imaginary wall in the middle of the carrot to keep our hands safe. The peeler and the hand both never cross the imaginary wall – "Bonk!" We tell kids to keep the peeler far from their hands "so you don't peel yourself!"

Demonstrate how to get the peeler to "catch" the vegetable and the angle you have to hold it at (not straight up and down). Talk about nice long strokes and touching the lines together. Only peel away from your other hand. Show how you turn the vegetable bit by bit as you peel. You can have some fun demonstrating what

happens if you don't turn it – you'll end up with carrot "tongues."

"Talk about nice long strokes and touching the lines together."

When one half is done, turn it around "like a board game spinner." Get the same invisible wall in place and peel the other side. Your hand still never crosses the center!

Show the kids how to "Clear the Peels" from the cutting board, always with the peeler out of your hand. Kids like to help with this and that's perfectly acceptable even at the demonstration level.

"We show kids that there's an imaginary wall in the middle of the carrot to keep our hands safe."

How To Guide

Because angles and pressure are key to making the peeler work properly, the guiding step is important for this skill. Start with your hand on the peeler and the child's hand over yours, then switch.

As the child is working, they'll likely miss some spots. Ask them, "Do you see anything else you'd like to peel?" or somehow use a question rather than a correction. This helps the child learn how to evaluate their own work and set expectations for themselves.

"Have fun reminding them not to cross the wall – "Bonk!"

Have fun reminding them not to cross the wall – "Bonk!"

How to Coach to Independence

In our house, we have cucumbers and carrots at almost every dinner, so our little ones get plenty of chances to practice peeling. A cucumber shows what you miss better, but a carrot is easier to peel by a long shot. Try to find firm cukes OR just stick with carrots for practice until they're more proficient.

"DO NOT clean up for them! It's an investment in your future." Always insist that the children clear the peels to trash before moving on. DO NOT clean up for them! It's an investment in your future.

Let them do and redo if they need to / want to. Practice makes perfect! (or at least close enough!)

Challenges You Might Encounter

The Licker. It might take too much self-control for your child to NOT lick the knife while they're working. If you want to avoid contaminating the serving container, scoop out a small amount of peanut butter or hummus into a bowl for them.

Big Ol' Pile of Butter. Kids can get stuck in a rut, literally, and keep putting butter on the same part of the bread (or whatever you're using). We just say "pull the pile out" and remind "corner to corner" and they'll get it eventually!

The Painter. Look out for those who wish to paint the table with their spreads! :)

Stamina. With two skills today, you might need to split the lesson into two parts. Gauge the child's stamina after spreading and see if they seem ready for more.

Tough cucumber peels. We peel carrots first because they're easier for the peeler to "catch" the peels. If the child has trouble getting the peeler to "catch," help them angle it more upward a bit or ask them to get on their knees to get a better angle for themselves. You might even need to peel a stripe around the middle of the vegetable so there's a piece of peel for their peeler to grab hold of. Use firm cucumbers to try to avoid this problem.

Don't forget to create opportunities to practice this skill throughout the week!

You might integrate this one into daily life by inviting someone over for a snack and letting the child make and serve Ants on a Log. Give the child the responsibility of buttering the whole family's toast for breakfast or a soup-and-bread dinner this week – they'll be so proud to use their skill to help!

Extension Recipes to Apply this Skill:

- [Apple Squares](#) or your favorite quick bread with a simple [yogurt cheese](#) frosting: Whip yogurt cheese with vanilla or almond extract and a touch of honey or maple syrup.
- [Homemade Hummus](#)
- [Fruit Pizza](#)
- Homemade Guacamole (recipe in eBooklet) is great on veggies too

Next Week's Grocery List:

- Bananas
- Melon (cantaloupe and honeydew are great)
- Cheese (softer cheese better than an aged sharp cheddar)