

15 Tips for Hair cutting

Hair cutting can sometimes feel painful, uncomfortable or distressing for a child – making it stressful for both them and their parent/carer. Below are some suggestions for you to try.

1. **Find out what they do not like about it** – Is it the place they go to get their haircut, is it wearing the cape, the noise of the hair clippers or scissors, is it that they haven't experienced it before?
2. **Try to schedule the haircut appointment at a time of day your child is most happy and calm, and/or when the hair salon is least busy.** This may differ for each child (morning vs. after naptime) and each salon (weekday or weekend morning vs. evening).
3. **Visit the salon/barber shop** in advance and have your child meet the person who will be cutting their hair. Talk to the hairdresser/barber and try to come up with a "game plan" that will work for your child. Let them observe you or another family member getting hair cut.
4. **Role play** – Use safety scissors and pretend to cut your child's hair prior to their actual haircut. You can also allow them to do this to you.
5. **Social story** – use a social story with pictures of what the haircut will be like. Go through steps such as arriving at the salon, sitting down, putting on the bib, etc. **Read books or watch videos about getting haircuts** to help your child to become familiar with what will happen during a haircut.
6. **Be intentional about the words you use.** The word "cut" may invoke additional undue fear leading up to the big day. Or it may cause confusion — you may always tell your child scissors aren't safe, and then all of a sudden you are wanting her to be okay with scissors coming toward his head to cut at him?! Consider using other phrases such as they are going to "get a trim", "get handsome hair", "get pretty hair", or "get a handsome/pretty hairdo"!



7. **Firm gentle pressure is calming** - Try to give a deep pressure massage on your child's head prior to cutting hair. Try proprioceptive strategies prior to hair cutting, such as hugging or wrapping your child up snugly in a towel whilst cutting their hair. Sometimes some extra sensory experiences can help. Holding a vibrating toy, squeezing a stress ball, hugging a stuffed animal. Some children like to sit on their hands whilst having their hair cut.
8. **Consider hiring a mobile hairdresser/barber** who can cut your child's hair in your own home – a familiar environment. Alternatively, you may also want to learn to cut their hair yourself.
9. **Reduce noise** - Look into purchasing **quiet clippers**, or asking your hairdresser/barber to use the least noisy equipment they have.

10. **Take the focus off the hair cutting** - Have your child bring one or a few preferred items into the haircutting chair, such as a handheld toy, book, or video. You could also talk to them about something they are interested in or if you know how long the haircut will take use a visual timer or play a video that will last approximately the length of the haircut.



11. **A mirror can be useful** – your child will be able to see what is happening.
12. **Give your child a hairdryer on cool setting or a brush to wipe away stray hairs** – this helps to give child some control on situation.
13. **Bring your own haircutting cape if needed.** You can use a familiar towel from home and then secure it with a safety pin, clothespin, or clip clip
14. **Have your child wear a button-up or zip-up top if possible (with a shirt underneath)**, so it can be removed as soon as the haircut is over. Sometimes those tiny hair remnants can fly off the shoulders of your shirt and make your neck itch
15. **Plan something fun after the haircut**, so that they have something to look forward to. For example *'First this then, ice-cream.'*