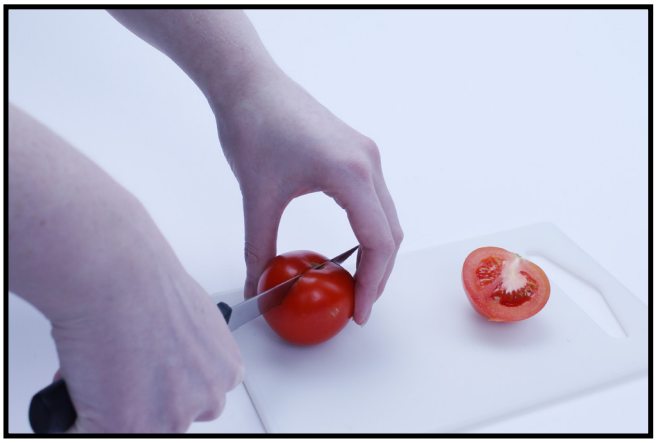
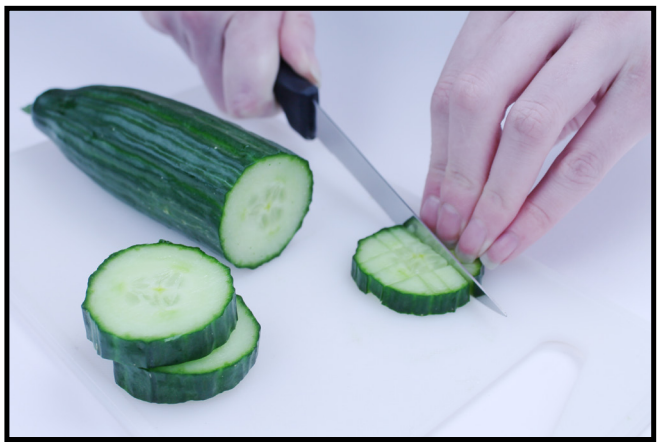
Safe Preparation Skills

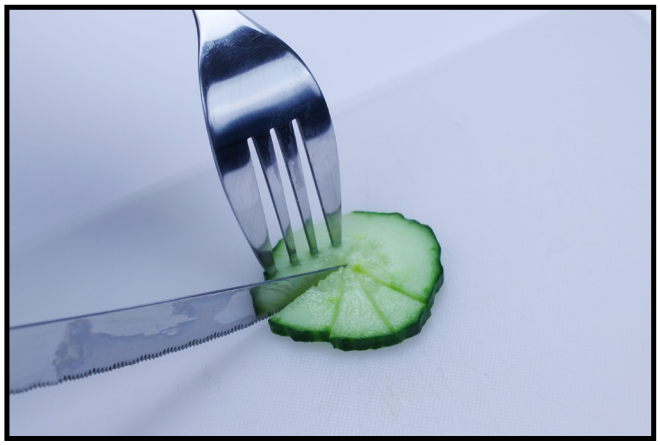
When teaching young children to work with food, it is important that they learn how to use tools correctly. This is so they can work safely, efficiently and independently. The following are some photographs and notes to help teachers show children a safe way to handle kitchen tools.



The Bridge

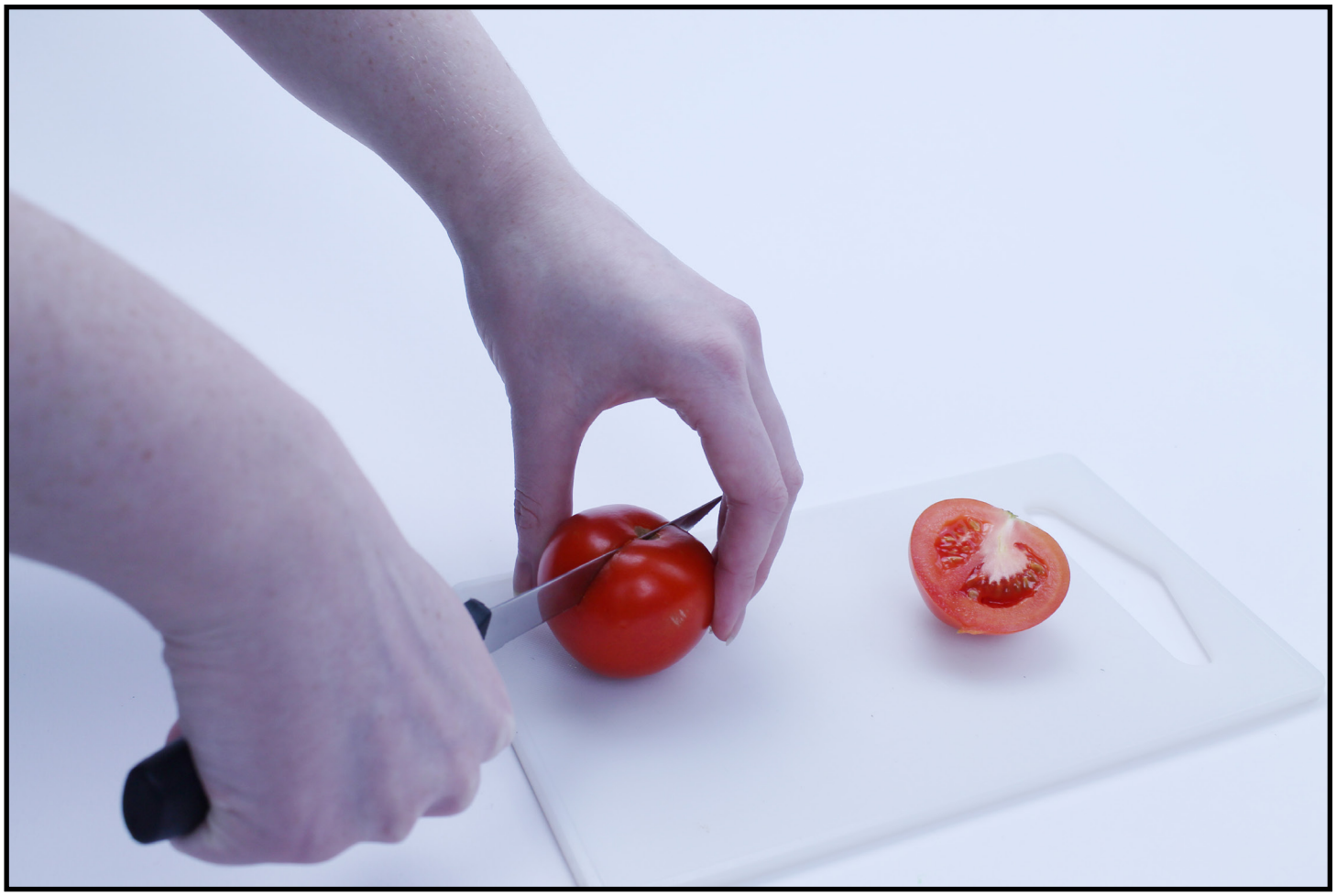


The Claw



The Fork Secure

The Bridge



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

Use: This method is especially useful for cutting circular items into halves and quarters, e.g. tomatoes, apples.

The Claw

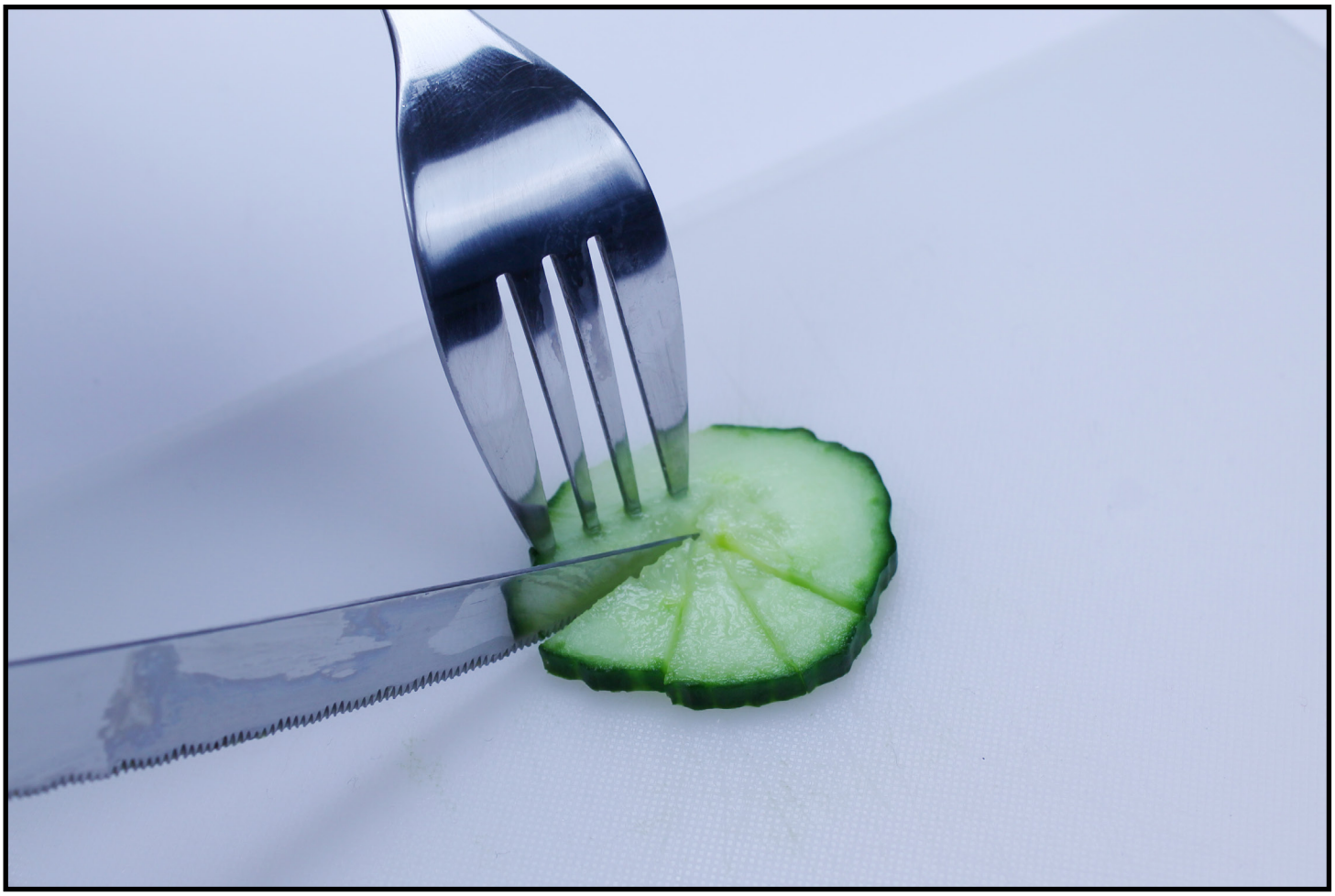
Method: Create a claw by partly curling your fingers together into a claw shape. Press the tips of your fingers (nails) against the food to be gripped and then lean your fingers slightly forward of your nails so that you can't see your nails when you look down on your hand.

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

Tips: To help you remember this method think about creating a claw, gripping food and tipping the hand; claw, grip, tip, cut.

Use: This method 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 makes sure that the food is stable and keeps finger out of the way while it is cut.

Tips: Take your time while pushing the fork in the food and make sure you are pushing the fork downwards and not diagonally which could cause it to come out at the side of the food and go into your hands.

Use: This method is useful if you find the claw method quite challenging.

Other Tips

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

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.

The 'two spoon' method: The two spoon method is used in some of the recipes, this means taking two teaspoons, one of which you fill with the ingredient or mixture, the other one is used to push the ingredient or mixture off. This can be a coordination challenge for your child the first time, but with practise becomes much easier.

Grating: You can use a multi-purpose grater which has a suction facility to stick it to the table. You can also use other types of grater but be very careful of little fingers. When 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 often useful to cut up ingredients such as cooked bacon, herbs and spring onions. Choose standard metal-bladed nursery scissors and keep them only for food use in the kitchen.

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 would 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.