



HIGH 5 COMMUNICATION RESOURCES

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SPEECH + FEEDING THERAPY • BABY SIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES • INFANT + TODDLER ENRICHMENT

TEACHING YOUR CHILD TO BE A GOOD EATER

(Borrowed from Ellyn Satter, the guru of feeding – check out her website/books!)

Step by step, starting with breastfeeding or formula feeding, then solid foods, then table foods, you teach your child to be a good eater. Your child will learn to eat the food you eat.

To feed your child, you must do your own jobs and let your child do her jobs.

- You decide **what**, **when** and **where** your child gets to eat.
- Your child decides **how much** and **whether** she eats (of what you make).

Don't get your jobs mixed up with your child's jobs.

- If you don't do your jobs, your child will eat poorly and not behave at the table.
- If you get bossy and try to do his jobs, he will fight back and not eat.

Your jobs:

- Have a schedule for meals and snacks.
- Choose what to buy, cook and put on the table.
- Enjoy your own meal. Pay attention to your own eating.
- Keep meals pleasant. Talk and listen. Don't fight or scold. Turn off the TV.
- Let your child use her fingers, fork or spoon. Let her get messy.

Your child's jobs:

- Learn to eat at the family table and snack times
- Comes to the table hungry and ready to eat.
- Pick and choose from what you have put on the table. Not make a fuss.
- Sneak up on new food and learn to like it.
- Decide how much and if he will eat. Enjoy his meal.
- Behave nicely at the table. Be good company.
- Try to eat. Not make a mess to bug you.



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RULES FOR MEALTIMES

- Children do not have to eat.
- Children feed themselves.
- Children are encouraged to interact with food (and to eat!) with the use of positive language, modeling, and praise, following the food interaction hierarchy.
- Child may spit food out (into their napkin or bowl), or take food out of their mouths if they choose. No attention is paid to spitting out food, in order to avoid reinforcement of this behavior.
- Children need to sit at the table for all eating/drinking and need to stay at the table (highchair, booster chair, or clip-on seat may be helpful) until the meal or snack is over.
- Plan regular mealtimes. A meal should last no more than 1/2 hour. Remove food after 10-15 minutes if your child is simply playing with the food, but require that he/she sit with the family for the rest of the mealtime. Don't let your child get down early just because he/she doesn't want to eat.
- Accept that meals make a mess. Fill cups 1/4 to 1/2 full. Put a plastic mat under your child's plate and make sure that all surfaces are washable. Keeping a handheld vacuum handy is helpful. Involve children in the cleanup process whenever possible.
- Present solid foods first and liquids at the end of the meal.
- All distractions are eliminated during mealtimes, including toys, books, TV, videos, etc.
- Children should not sit at the table alone, and they should not eat alone. Even if a child does not eat, the parent or caregiver must eat to model the behavior.
- Children need child-sized bowls, plates, cups, spoons, and forks.
- Portions offered should be small and easily managed, with packages opened, food cut up appropriately, etc.
- Consistent routines for starting and ending the meal should be established.
- Food items stay on the table in front of the child, preferably in the child's bowl or on a napkin.
- No negative comments, body language or facial expressions during mealtimes (even if you don't like the menu!)
- The focus of mealtimes is on the food.
- Don't coax or force your child to eat. At the end of the mealtime, if your child hasn't eaten, simply allow him/her to leave the table. Save your child's plate of food to warm up if he/she gets hungry later. Don't offer alternative foods.