

Mealtime Tips & Tricks

Be consistent

Be patient

Ensure Feeding
Readiness

offer
Supported Seating
(90/90/90)

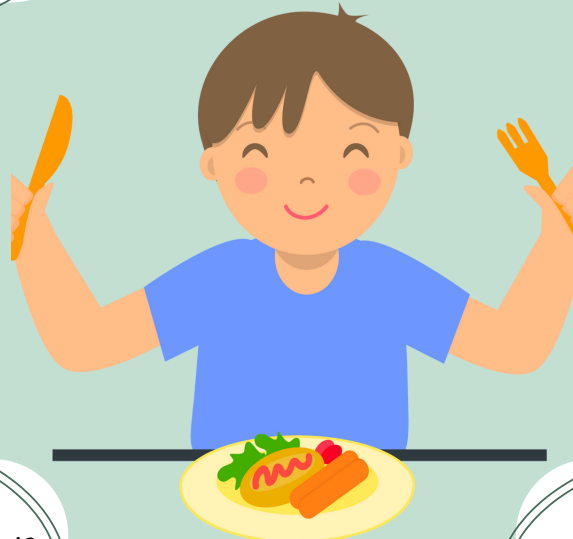
Go big!

Check the portion
size

Aim for zero
pressure eating
environments

Involve the family

offer choices



Be Consistent: Children thrive with predictable, consistent routines. Keep mealtime as a consistent but flexible activity in your family's schedule. As much as possible, aim to remain consistent with your expectations for your child at mealtime while understanding their individual needs and current developmental stage. Try to identify 1-2 goals or experiences you are hoping to help your child achieve within your mealtime routine and remain consistent in your strategies, support and temperament.

Be Patient: Successful eating practices take time. Offer a new food with a "safe" food. Many exposures help children become more comfortable with unfamiliar food. It may take 15-20+ exposures of a new food for a child to consider exploring it with their hands or tasting it. A food can sit on the child's plate and it is OKAY if they do not touch or taste it. Messy play with food is a great tool to build exposure and interest in new foods!

Offer Supported Seating (90/90/90): Ensure your child can maintain upright posture and control their neck and head. Aim to have your child sit with 90 degrees between their hips and legs, knees and feet. If they aren't in 90/90/90 sitting, consider adding extra towels to lean them forward or books to support their feet. All eaters benefit from stable, supported seating during mealtime. The less your child has to concentrate on balance, the more they can concentrate on successful eating behaviors.

Check the Portion Sizes: Toddler portion-sizes are smaller than older children and adults. Try simplifying the amount of each food offered on the plate. As an example, instead of 5 green beans, simplify down to offering 2 green beans to start. Avoid overfilling the plate with the child's preferred foods by offering balanced portions of each food.

Involve the Family: Invite your child to help prepare the food for the meal (e.g., have them dump ingredients, cut with kid-safe scissors, stir the bowl). Ensure your child is fed with the family as part of the mealtime routine. Have others (e.g., cousins, older siblings) model mealtime expectations. Show your child how you take bites of foods and taste a variety of items on your plate. If sitting independently is hard, allow your child to sit on your lap and explore foods off your plate.

Zero Pressure Eating Environments: Offer a plate of food for your child with no pressure or demands to try a food. Avoid forcing your child to touch or taste a food. Model you eating and trying the food. Keep mealtime light-hearted and engaging. Describe the food you are eating with adjectives (e.g., crunchy, sour, juicy, etc.). Offer specific, positive reinforcement when your child explores or tastes a new food.

Go Big! When in doubt, try offering the full food item instead of breaking into bite-sized pieces*. You may consider allowing your child to scoop their own portions from the communal dish. Examples: offer your child a full large stalk of broccoli instead of small florets; allow your child to pick beans from a large bowl vs. adding a few to their plate.

*ensure food is prepped appropriately to the child's developmental level. Visit [SolidStarts.com/foods](https://solidstarts.com/foods) for food prep support.

Feeding Readiness: Ensure your child is developmentally ready for table foods/solids. If your child is not eating their typical amount of food, think about additional factors that may be impacting eating such as: health status (e.g., sick, teething, tired), hunger level, amount of milk intake, amount of movement they had during the day, most recent meal/snack, distractions within the eating environment, etc.

Offer Choices: Offer 3-5 different foods on your child's plate during mealtime. Prior to the meal, allow your child to choose items such as their cup, plate, utensil, etc. Let your child choose if they want a dip (e.g., oil, hummus, ketchup, etc.), "sprinkles" (e.g., chia seeds, grated cheese, nutritional yeast, etc.) or seasonings to their food.