

The Division of Responsibility in Feeding

The best way to feed your child is to follow the Division of Responsibility in Feeding. The Division of Responsibility encourages you to take leadership with feeding and give your child autonomy with eating.

- As a parent, you provide structure, support, and opportunities to learn.
- Your child chooses how much and whether to eat from what you provide.

The Division of Responsibility Toddlers through Adolescents	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are responsible for what, when and where to feed your child. • Your child is responsible for how much and whether to eat the foods you offer. 	
Do your feeding jobs:	Trust your child to do her eating jobs:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose and serve the food. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let you child grow in her own way. She will eat the amount she needs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make eating times pleasant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She will learn to eat the foods you eat.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show your child how to behave at meals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She will learn to behave well at family meals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain Structure: Provide regular meals and snacks. Offer your child water between regular meal and snack-times but not other drinks or food. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She will grow to have the body that is right for her.

Structure is essential!

- Your child will eat and grow well if you maintain structure. Have a schedule for sit-down family meals and sit-down snacks and stick with it.
- Structure lets your child know they will be fed. It helps them eat what and how much their bodies need.

Have family-friendly meals.

- Have food you enjoy. Put together what you enjoy and ordinarily eat and provide it for the family mealtime. Family meals need to be rewarding to plan, prepare,

and eat.

- Lighten up your definition. A family meal is when you all sit down together, share the same food, and pay attention to each other. You do not need a table (even a blanket on the floor will do!) and the food does not have to be fancy.
- Start by getting in the meal habit. Make meals your idea, based on food you usually eat. Do not just offer meals when somebody asks for food.
- Remember whose meal it is. It is yours, and you are inviting your child to join you. You know more about food than your child does. Sooner or later your child will eat many foods that you like to eat.
- Make mealtimes pleasant. Talk with and enjoy each other. Now is not the time to scold or fight. Your child wants to be at family meals because you are there. Turn all electronics off.
- Let everyone decide what and how much to eat from what you provide for the meal.
- Make only one meal, but include easy-to-eat foods. Include one or two foods that each person generally likes to eat and can fill up on, such as bread, pasta, rice, fruit, etc. Don't worry if your child eats only that one food meal after meal, day after day. Eventually she will eat something different.

Have structured, sit-down snack times.

- Regularly scheduled, sit down snacks are an essential part of feeding and eating. If your child complains about being hungry in between meals, you can tell him "Snack-time is coming soon."
- Offer several types of food at snack time.
- Allow your child to eat as much of the snack as he wants.
- Manage amounts by managing timing. Have a snack long enough after the last meal so your child is hungry and long enough before the next meal so your child can be hungry again.

Once you start providing regular meals and snacks at set times, make sure you stick with your schedule. Help your child understand that...

- Food will be available at mealtime and snack time. Other than that, the kitchen is closed.

- You do not have to eat anything you do not want to eat.
- You do have to say “yes, please,” and “no, thank you.”
- You will not say “yuck”
- There will always be bread** on the table and you can eat as much of it as you want (even if your child does not eat anything else).
- When I make something new, I will also make something you usually enjoy.
- Some nights, I will make one person’s favorite meal and sometimes I will make your favorite meal.

**bread or another food that generally everyone likes and can fill up on such as rice, pasta, fruit, etc.

Try not to make a big deal about eating and avoid pressuring your child to eat.

- Ask yourself why you are doing something with feeding. Is it to get your child to eat more, less, or different food that he/she does on their own? If so, it is pressure.
- Make mealtimes pleasant and talk about things other than food.

Food waste is part of learning to eat.

- Avoiding food waste is important but it is to be expected while your child is learning to eat. At first, your child may serve himself more than he can eat. Encourage him to take small servings, but reassure him that he can always have more if he wants it.
- Do not make your child eat all of their food even if he takes a little. If you pressure your child to clean their plate it will teach him to ignore his hunger and fullness.
- Eventually your child will learn to take more appropriate portion sizes and waste less food!

Make wise use of “forbidden” foods.

Children who regularly get to have “forbidden” foods during meals and snacks eat as much as they are hungry for and then stop. Children who are not allowed regular access to these foods eat a lot of them when they get the chance and tend to overeat

them. The trick is to include “forbidden” foods regularly enough so they don’t feel like “forbidden” foods. Provide these foods to your child at certain times. For instance:

- Include chips or fries at mealtimes. How often you do this is up to you. Arrange to have enough so everyone can eat as much as they want. Unlike sweets, fatty foods do not compete as much with other mealtime foods.
- Have sweets for dessert, but limit everyone to one serving. Put that serving at each person’s place. Let your child - or yourself - eat it before, during, or after the meal. Don’t provide seconds of dessert.
- Offer unlimited sweets at occasional snack-times. How often is up to you. Offer milk and a plate of cookies. Have your child sit down and eat as many cookies and drink as much milk as she wants. At first she may eat a lot, but later on she will not have as many.
- Have soda occasionally for snack time or with a particular meal so that it doesn’t become a “forbidden food”.

Your child will experiment to be sure the rules are really the rules. Your reactions can pull you into being controlling: into trying to do his part with the division of responsibility. This table gives some ideas for how to stick to the division of responsibility in response to your child’s experiments.

Parenting with the Division of Responsibility in Feeding	
Your child’s move:	Your move:
He says, “I am not hungry.”	You say, “You do not have to eat; just sit with us for a while.

Parenting with the Division of Responsibility in Feeding	
Your child's move:	Your move:
She is too worked up and busy to eat.	Spend a few minutes with her just before the meal reading a book or washing hands. Set a 5-minute timer.
He cannot take time to eat.	Arrange for him to be hungry by not letting him eat between times.
She is too hungry to wait for meals.	Have sit-down snacks between meals.
He is messy on purpose (he drops, throws, or smears food) for fun or to get a rise out of you.	Give him one warning, then have him leave the meal. Don't let him come back.
She does not want to stay at the meal until you finish eating	Let her leave when she gets full. She will stay at the meal longer as she get older and enjoys the conversation.
He is naughty or otherwise disruptive at the meal.	Have him leave. He is full or he would eat – and behave!
She comes back right after the meal, begging for a food handout.	Don't give her food until snack-time. Ignore her tantrums.
He gets down from the table, but wants your attention, to sit on your lap, or to eat off your plate.	Pat him on the head and send him away. Teach him to play quietly while you eat.
She does not eat "enough" at mealtime.	Only she knows how much is enough. Don't let her eat or drink between times, except for water. Plan a snack for a set time between meals and stick to it.
She wants to make something different.	Part of family meals is sharing the same food. You do not have to eat anything if you do not want to..."