



The Satter Division of Responsibility in Feeding

The best way to feed your child is to follow the Satter 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

- 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:

- Choose and serve the food.
- Make eating time pleasant.
- Show your child how to behave at meals.
- Maintain structure: Provide regular meals and snacks. Offer your child water between regular meals and snack times but not other drinks or food.

Trust your child to do their eating jobs:

- Let your child grow in their own way. They will eat the amount they need.
- They will learn to eat the foods you eat.
- They will learn to behave well at family meals.
- They will grow to have the body that is right for them.

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 at 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 don't need a table (even a blanket on the floor will do) and the food does not need 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 no 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, they 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 them, "Snack-time is coming soon."



Offer several types of food at snack time.



Allow your child to eat as much of the snack as they want.



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.

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



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.

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 foods than they do on their own? If so, it is pressure.



Make mealtimes pleasant and talk about things other than food.



Food waste is a 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 themselves more than they can eat. Encourage them to take small servings but reassure them that they can always have more if they want.



Do not make your child eat all of their food, even if they take a little.

If you pressure your child to clean their plate, it will teach them to ignore their hunger and fullness.



Eventually, your child will learn to make 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 will eat as much as they are hungry for then stop. Children who are not allowed regular access to these foods eat a lot when they get the chance and tend to overeat them. The trick is to include these foods regularly enough that 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. Plan 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.



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 they want. At first, they may eat a lot but later they will not have as many.



Have soda occasionally for snack time or with a particular meal.



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 their part with the Division of Responsibility.

Parenting with the Division of Responsibility in Feeding

Your Child's Move:	Your Move:
They are too worked up and busy to eat.	Spend a few minutes with them just before the meal, reading a book or washing hands. Set a 5-minute timer.
They cannot take time to eat.	Arrange for them to be hungry by not letting them eat between times.
They are too hungry to wait for meals.	Have sit-down snacks between meals.
They are messy on purpose — they drop, throw, or smear food — for fun or to get a rise out of you.	Give them one warning, then have them leave the meal. Don't let them come back.
They do not want to stay at the meal until you finish eating.	Let them leave when they get full. They will stay at the meal longer as they get older and enjoy the conversation.
They are naughty or otherwise disruptive at the meal.	Have them leave. They are full or they would eat—and behave!
They come back right after the meal, begging for a food handout.	Don't give them food until snack time. Ignore their tantrums.
They get down from the table, but want your attention, to sit on your lap, or to eat off your plate.	Pat them on the head and send them away. Teach them to play quietly while you eat.
They do not eat "enough" at mealtime.	Only they know how much is enough. Don't let them eat or drink between times, except for water. Plan a snack for a set time between meals and stick to it.
They want 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..."

Additional resources, skills, and strategies for parents are available at no cost through the online Thrive Initiative programming. Visit the Thrive website <https://thrive.psu.edu>, and sign up today!