

# Feeding without the Fuss

Nebraska Extension



UNIVERSITY OF  
Nebraska  
Lincoln





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<http://food.unl.edu/food-fun-young-children>

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# Menu

- Who Does What
- Reasonable Expectations
- Coping with Picky Eaters
- Other Challenging Mealtime Behaviors
- Phrases that Help and Phrases that Hinder
- Creating a Pleasant Mealtime Environment

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# What is your greatest challenge when feeding kids?

1. Lack of preparation/shopping time
2. Little variety
3. Acceptance by kids
4. Cost
5. Other



# What was mealtime like for you as a child?



# Ellyn Satter's Division of Responsibility in Feeding

For toddlers through adolescents:

- The adult is responsible for *what, when, where*.
- The child is responsible for *how much and whether*.

For more about raising healthy children who are a joy to feed, read Part two, "How to raise good eaters," in Ellyn Satter's *Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family*. For the evidence, read *The Satter Feeding Dynamics Model*.

- See more at: <http://bit.ly/2bx6scs>

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**What are some examples of your “job” as the adult?**

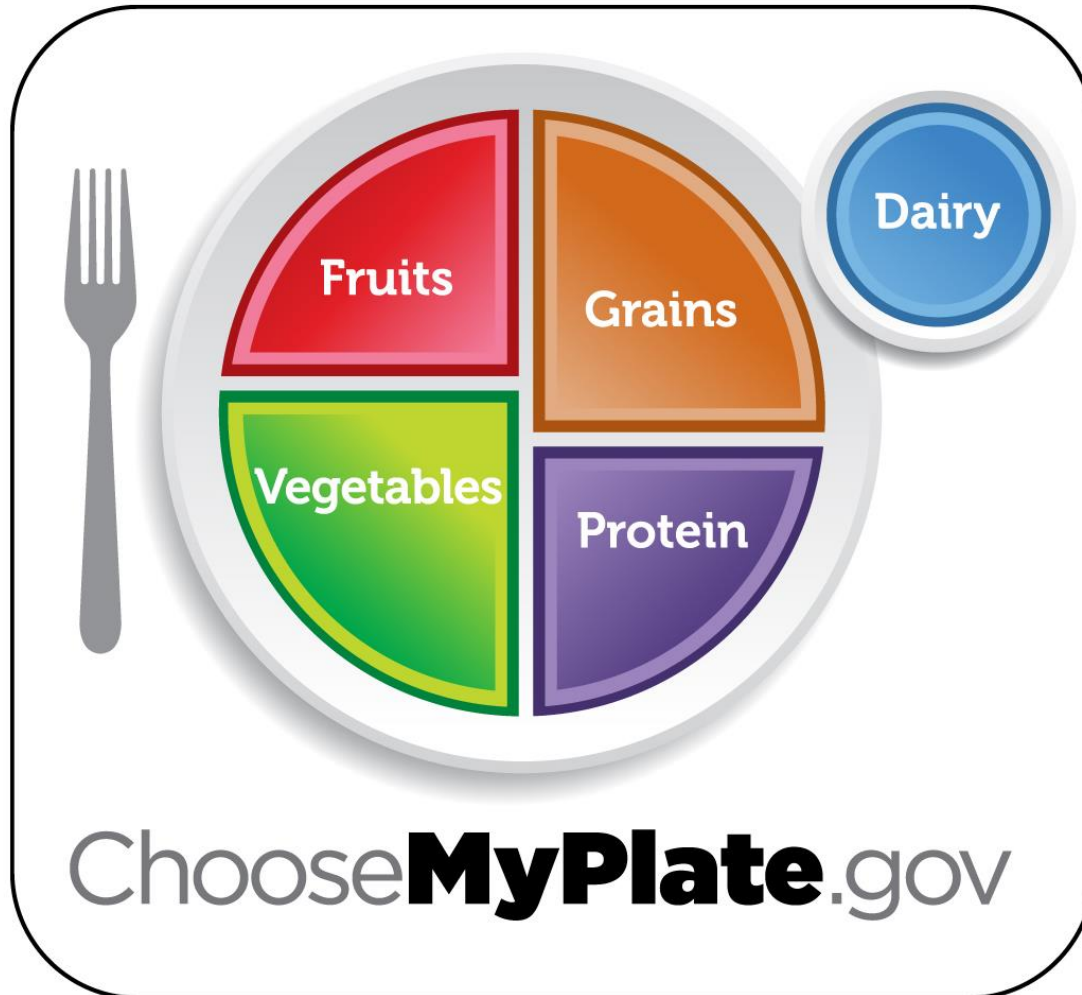




What would be some examples of the “job” of the child?

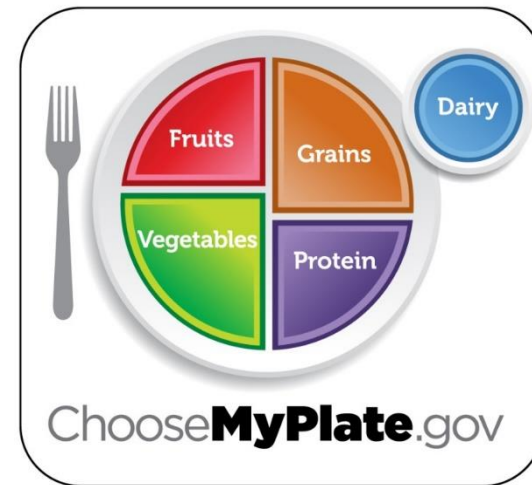
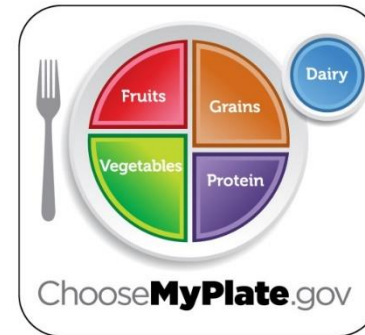


# How does MyPlate fit?



# Start with smaller portions

- Use smaller bowls, plates and utensils for your child.
- Don't insist that children finish all the food on their plate. Let your child know it is okay to only eat as much as he or she wants at that time.



# Why do children eat the way they do?

- Certain tastes are preferred
- Neophobia (aversion to new foods) is very common
- Repeated opportunities to experience food
- Influences of other children and the media





**Children are  
UNPREDICTABLE  
eaters**

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**What are your  
expectations?**

# 1 year olds:

- Appetite varies from day to day
- Drinks from a cup with assistance
- Eats with fingers and utensils
- Very messy!





# 2 year olds:

- Can use a spoon and drink from a cup
- Can be easily distracted
- Growth slows and appetite drops
- Develop likes and dislikes
- Can be very messy
- May suddenly refuse certain foods





# 3 year olds:

- Make simple either/or food choices
- Pours liquid with some spills
- Are comfortable using fork and spoon
- Can follow simple requests
- Start to request favorite foods
- Likes to imitate cooking
- May suddenly refuse certain foods



# 4 year olds:

- Are influenced by TV, media, and peers
- May dislike many mixed dishes
- Rarely spills with spoon or cup
- Knows what table manners are expected
- Can be easily sidetracked
- May suddenly refuse certain foods

# 5 year olds:

- Have fewer demands
- Will usually accept the food that's available
- Eat with minor supervision



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**Are picky  
eaters  
born or  
made?**



Twins study –  
Researchers reported 78% of neophobia (aversion to new foods) may be genetic, while 22% is due to environmental factors.



# Picky eaters – born or made?

Some studies have shown a mother's food choices during pregnancy may influence a child's taste preferences.



# Picky eaters – born or made?

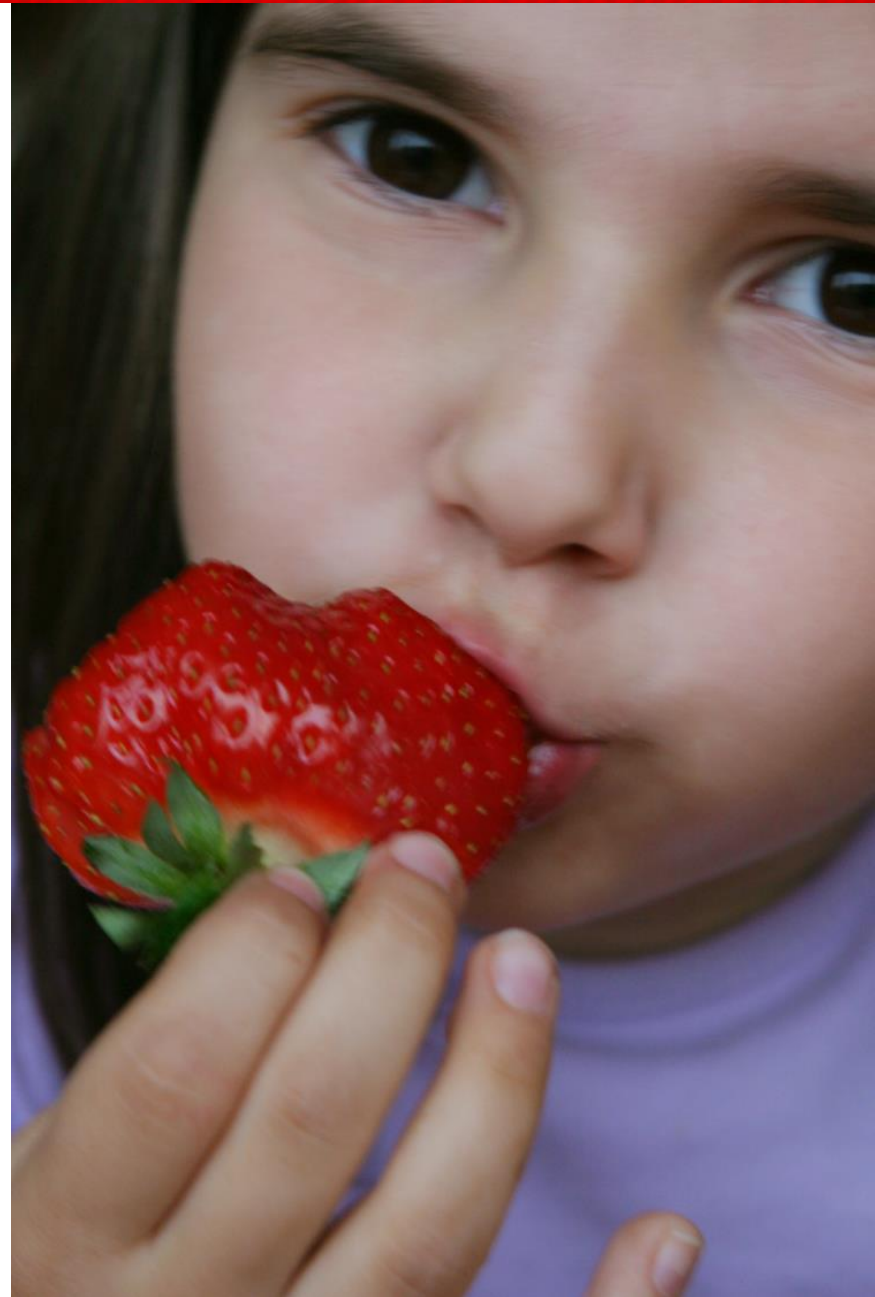
Some researchers have shown breast-fed babies are more apt to try new foods because they have experienced a variety of flavors.



# Picky eating – how to cope



Offer a variety of foods and let children choose how much of these foods to eat.





**Don't be a  
“short-  
order  
cook.”**

**Try to make meals a stress-free time and set a good example.**



# Make food fun!



<http://pinterest.com/cwellsrd/food-fun-for-young-kids>

# Mealtime tips

- Make a game out of eating by making up funny names for foods such as “broccoli trees”.
- Cut foods into fun shapes and have them try eating the smile or stars, etc.
- Add chopped broccoli, shredded zucchini or carrots, applesauce, chopped pears, etc., to make it more nutritious but not so obvious.



Help  
children  
**enjoy** fruits  
and  
vegetables







## Offer “dip” with vegetables

- Children with a sensitivity to bitterness may avoid certain vegetables.
- Offering a low-fat dip could make it easier for those foods to become an accepted part of children's diets.



**Kids like  
to try  
foods  
they help  
make.**

# A child that helps in the kitchen...



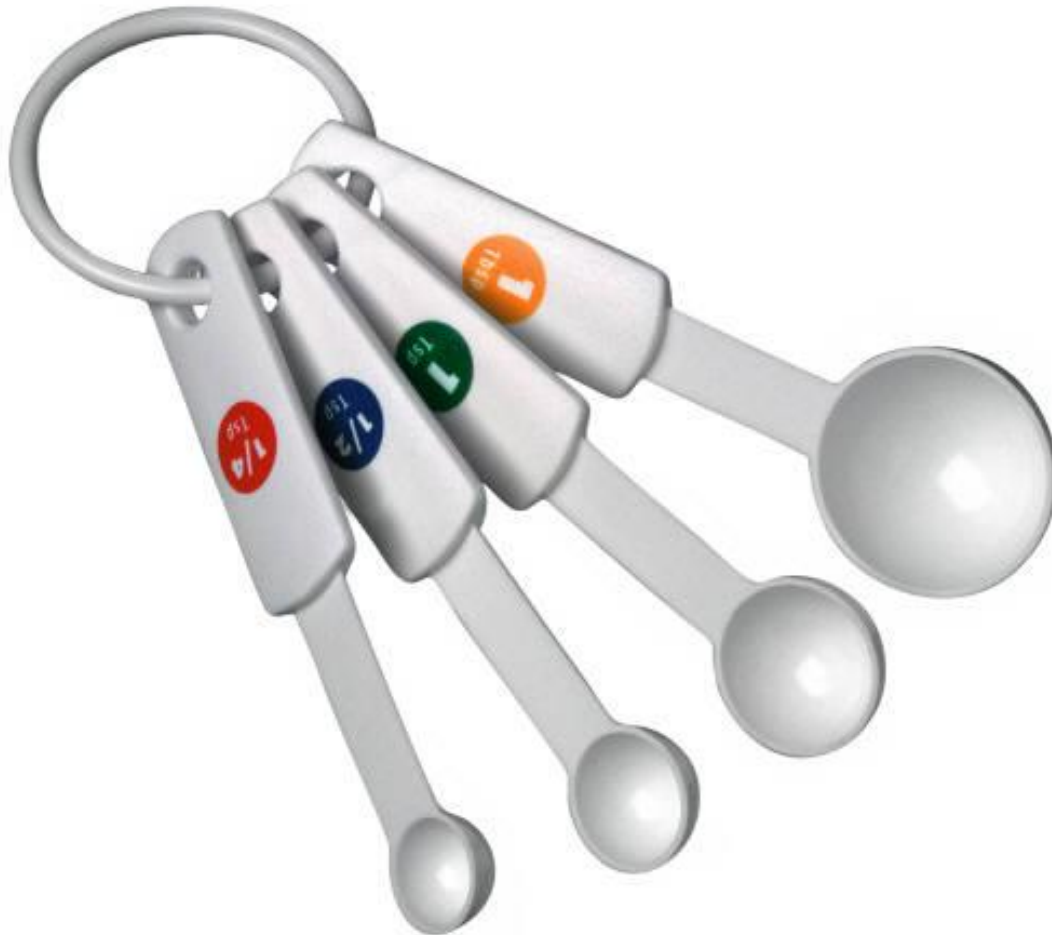
**Tries and likes more foods**



**Gains confidence, feels important and proud**



# Learns early math and science concepts



# Develops small muscle skills



# Learns new vocabulary



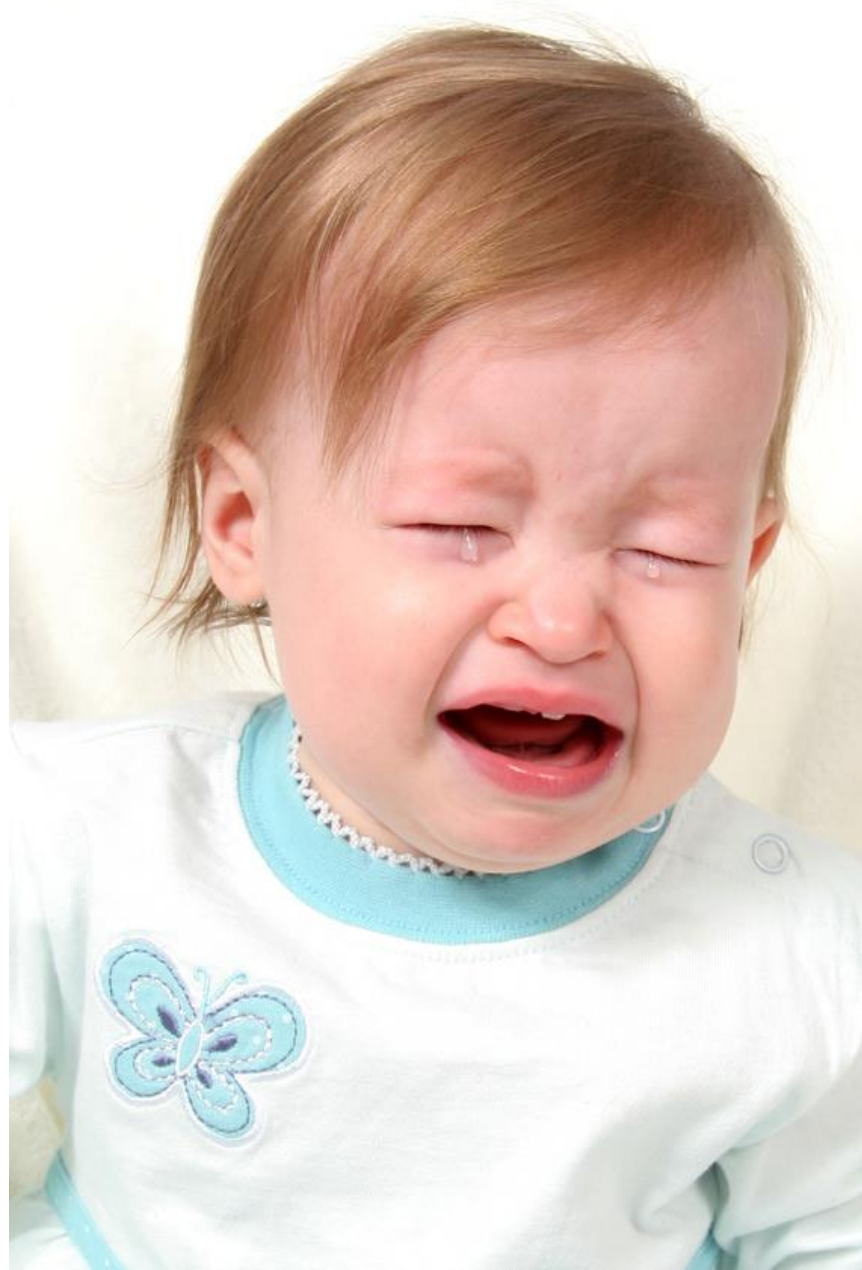


# Learns responsibility with cleanup



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**Mealtimes  
can be  
challenging**

# Food jags

- Avoid focusing on the food.
- If the desired food is generally nutritious and easy to prepare, consider offering it along with a variety of other foods at each meal.
- Most children will usually start eating other foods before too long.



# Aggressive behavior

- Serve meals and snacks at regular times
- Have transition activities before meals
- Check mealtime environment



# Help them know when they've had enough

- Let them learn by serving themselves.
- Avoid praising a clean plate.
- Reward children with attention and kind words, not food.
- Try not to restrict specific foods.



**What is the  
best way to  
handle  
“sweets” and  
“treats”?**

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**What should I say.....**



**Instead of:**

***“Eat that for me.”***

**OR**

***“If you don’t eat one more  
bite, I will be sad.”***

**Try:**

***“This is a mango; it’s  
sweet like a strawberry.”***

**OR**

***“This celery is very  
crunchy!”***

# Instead of:

*“You’re such a big boy; you finished all your broccoli.”*

**OR**

*“Look at Maria. She ate all of her peaches.”*

**OR**

*“You have to take two more bites before you leave the table.”*

**Try:**

***“Is your stomach telling  
you that you’re full?”***

**OR**

***“Has your tummy had  
enough?”***

**Instead of:**

***“No dessert until you eat your  
vegetables.”***

**OR**

***“Stop crying and I will give you  
some candy.”***

**Try:**

***“We can try these  
vegetables again another  
time.”***

**OR**

***“I am sorry you are sad.  
Come here and let me  
give you a hug.”***

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**What makes a  
great meal?**



# Eliminate distractions





**Make a smooth transition to  
mealtime**

**Show excitement and enthusiasm!**



**Stress age-appropriate  
table manners and use  
child-sized eating utensils**



**Dine “family-style” if possible**








**Teach how  
to politely  
decline  
food**

# Table Talkers

- Cut apart and place cards into bowl.
- Have children take turns drawing one each day.
- Fun for kids and a great way to increase vocabulary and creative thinking.



### Table Talkers for Young Children




Make mealtime fun with kids! Cut apart the cards and place in bowl or jar. Take turns drawing a card at a meal and have all family members answer the question. Be creative and add your own questions!

What is your favorite shape?	Make your favorite animal sound.
What crunchy food do you like the best?	What color do you like the best?
What can we do in the snow?	What toy is your favorite?
Do you like stripes or polka dots?	If you were a fish, what color would you be?
Do you have a favorite crayon color to color with?	If you could be any animal, which do you think you would be?
What game do you love to play?	Name something that goes up?
Name something you think is beautiful.	What is your favorite topping on a pizza?
What is your favorite book?	Name something a cat can do.

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