

Division of Responsibility for Feeding and Activities

For Feeding:

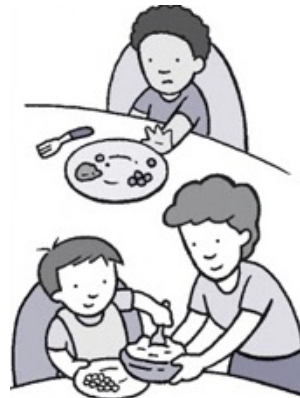
Caregivers are responsible for:

- What to feed
- When to feed
- Where to feed



Children are responsible for:

- Whether to eat
- How much to eat



For Infants (birth to ~6 months):

Caregivers are responsible for:

- What to feed (breastmilk or formula)

Infants are responsible for:

- Whether to eat
- How much

Caregiver and infant shared responsibility for:

- When
- Where

Trauma-informed Principles & Division of Responsibility

When applying this approach, it is critical to remain responsive and aware of the unique and complex feeding challenges that foster children face.

1. Caregivers decide *what, when and where*

Caregivers choose and prepare food.
Structured and regular family mealtimes.

This can be done while being transparent about the mealtime decisions you are making and explaining the why whenever possible

Caregivers trust children to be capable with eating.
Caregivers commit to pleasant mealtimes
Caregivers demonstrate, by example, how to behave at a shared mealtime.

This allows caregivers to put the quality of the relationship before the quality of the nutrition and to create an emotionally safe environment.

Caregivers are encouraged to be considerate of a child's limited or past food experiences without catering only to likes and dislikes.

This includes respecting the child's gender, culture, and history.

2. Children decide *how much and whether or not to eat.*

Children are trusted to eat the amount they need.
Children have freedom to choose if and how much they eat from the food provided.
Children are trusted to learn to eat the food the family eats.

This provides the opportunity to restore power to the child to make food choices.

Children are allowed to grow into the bodies that are right for them.

This means valuing the child no matter their shape, size, and food-related challenges.

Division of Responsibility Tips for Success

General Guidelines

- Stick with predictable routines for meals and snacks. This is typically every 2-3 hours for toddlers and preschoolers and every 3-4 hours for older children. Remember! Some foster children may need meals or snacks more frequently at first.
- Don't yell, threaten, punish, withhold, or reward with food. Don't try to shame a child for challenging mealtime and feeding behaviors.
- Avoid pressure in all ways.
- Some children may need to know that food is always available. Try keeping fruit out on the table during the day.
- Do not provide food and beverages (except water) between set mealtimes and snack times.
- Eat with children, don't just feed them.
- Give up any agenda you have for your children to eat certain foods in certain amounts.

Snack Time

If a child leaves the table having eaten little or nothing and then is back 5 minutes later wanting a cookie:

- Try saying "we just ate, but snack time will be soon."
- Always remain responsive. Some children may need smaller, more frequent meals with shorter periods of time between snacks and meals.
- Consider providing access to several nutrient-dense food items, such as keeping a fruit bowl on the table or a drawer in the fridge with prepared veggies. Foster children who have experienced food insecurity might need to know they always have access to food.

If a child seems comfortable with not eating much, but you worry they won't make it to the next meal; OR comes home from school famished and eats continuously until dinner, OR was busy socializing at breakfast or lunch so they didn't eat much and now they are famished:

- Establish a more structured, sit-down snack time routine. Separate snack time from other activities, or eating on the run.
- Snacks do not have to be just treats or convenience foods, but can be little meals. Include 2 or 3 foods with a protein, fat, and a carbohydrate. Allow the child to eat as much or as little as they want.
- Time snacks long enough before the next meal so the child has time to get hungry.
- Snacks can include foods that the child doesn't get otherwise. This might mean vegetables or it might even mean high-calorie, low-nutrient foods like sweets or desserts.

- Provide a sit-down snack before bedtime. Make it something filling and acceptable, but not thrilling.

Low-nutrient Foods

When offering foods that might be high in fat and/or sugar and relatively low in nutrients such as sweets, desserts, chips, and sodas:

- Try not to label food as “good” or “bad.” All foods have a purpose, even ones that aren’t nutrient dense. Research shows that restricting these foods actually leads to more intake when children get the chance.
- The idea is to allow a child to feel relaxed and matter-of-fact about all kinds of foods. Then, even when an adult isn’t around to supervise, the child will eat the high-calorie, low-nutrient foods in the same as other foods.

Consider these guidelines for offering low-nutrient foods:

- Include high-fat foods, like chips or fries, at mealtimes, served family style, so everyone can eat as much or as little as they want.
- When serving dessert, put a single serving at each person’s plate. They can eat it before, during, or after the meal, but there aren’t seconds available.
- If offering sweets, periodically offer them at a snack time for children to eat as much or as little as they want. For example, put a plate of cookies and a glass of milk out for a sit-down snack time.
- Provide a high-calorie, low-nutrient food or drink regularly enough so it doesn’t become “forbidden” but not in unlimited quantities.
- If offering low-nutrient drinks, like soda, only do so with a snack or at a particular type of meal, such as pizza or tacos.

Family Mealtimes

When beginning to use the Division of Responsibility:

- Try changing how first; worry about what later. Eat what you eat now, but try more regular, sit-down meal and snack times. Start with enjoyable foods that are rewarding for you to plan, prepare and eat. The priority is establishing the structure and routine, to start.
- Use snacks to support mealtime.
- Once you have the meal habit, work toward more organized and varied meals.
- Don’t get trapped by “should.” Mealtime is meant to be pleasant and enjoyable for parents *and* children.
- Settle for providing each eater with 1 or 2 foods they generally accept or enjoy at each meal or snack.
- Pair familiar food with unfamiliar food. Repeated exposure and opportunity may lead to trying new foods.

You will know it’s working when:

- Family-friendly feeding is “working” when children and adults enjoy meals, behave well there, and can cheerfully pick and choose from the food that is available.

Resources to Learn More

If you're looking to learn more about the Division of Responsibility, here's a list of a few resources that will be a good start in building your understanding of the approach and how to apply it.

Books:

- Rowell, K. (2012). *Love me, feed me: the adoptive parents guide to ending the worry about weight, picky eating, power struggles, and more*. St. Paul, MN: Family Feeding Dynamics.
- Rowell, K., & McGlothlin, J. (2015). *Helping your child with extreme picky eating: a step-by-step guide to overcoming selective eating, food aversion, and feeding disorders*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.
- Satter, E. (2000). *Child of mine: feeding with love and good sense*. Palo Alto, CA: Bull Pub.
- Satter, E. (2012). *How to Get Your Kid to Eat: But Not Too Much*. Place of publication not identified: Bull Publishing Company.

Websites:

- ellynsatterinstitute.org
- extremepickyeating.com
- thefeedingdoctor.com