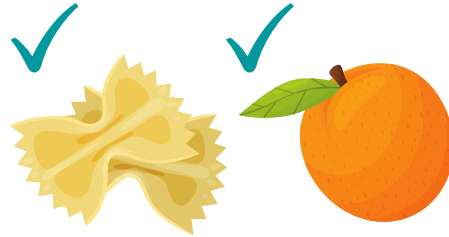# HOW TO:
Create Happy Mealtimes!

Try "self-serve" eating: serve meals/side dishes separately. Children can pick the amount & which part of the meal they want.


Aim to have 1-2 'safe foods' your child likes to eat at each meal. This reduces pressure and makes meals more enjoyable for children.

Space out meal and snack times. This helps children develop their natural 'hunger and fullness' signals.

Is the environment age-appropriate? Make sure cutlery, utensils and furniture support independent eating. Look for high chairs that have a foot rest. This can reduce frustration & improve confidence!
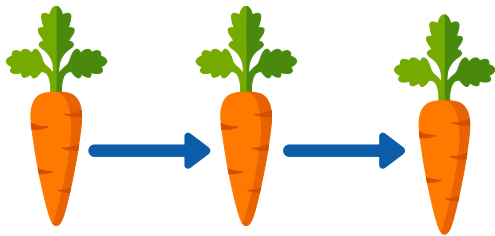

Kids will turn their nose up at food. Keep trying! Continue offering these foods without putting pressure on them to eat it. Over time, they will become more accepting of it.

Avoid food rules or bribery, as kids may take this as pressure and make negative associations with foods. This may sound like, "*you have to finish your vegetables before you get dessert.*"


Trust their instincts! Children know their bodies and appetites very well. Their appetites can also change each day. So don't be worried if they eat a lot one day, and less the next.
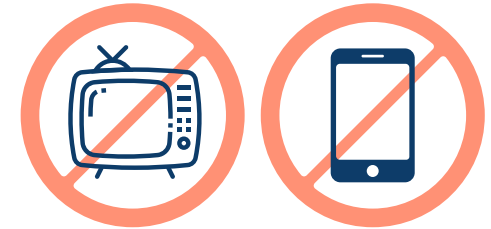

Eating and talking should be the focus of meals. Reduce or remove distractions. Turn off TVs & remove phones from the table.

Transition is key. Prepare children for meals by winding down other activities. Set a timer 5 minutes before meals. Get them to wash their hands before the meal. Ask for help setting the table.
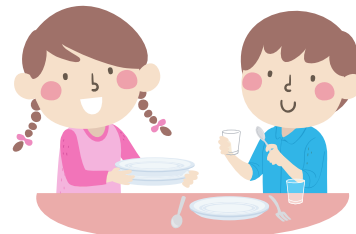
The goal is stress-free eating! When children feel stressed or pressured, their digestion slows down and they can lose their appetite. This makes them less willing to try new foods.
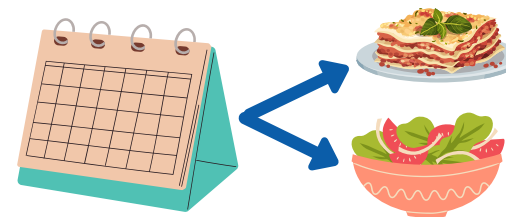
Get kids involved in decision-making. Have your child help plan the weekly menu!

As often as possible, eat meals *at a table* as a family. Family meals are so important for building attachments and social skills.

Queensland Government

Nutrition Australia QLD/NT