

# Mealtime Tips to Help Stimulate Language Development



- Establish a family dinner routine - research shows that not only does it benefit the family's health and relationships, it is also great for language development!
- Remove distractions - Turn the TV off and try to have everything ready before sitting down.
- Include everyone in the conversation - even the baby!

## Baby

- Give your baby kitchen objects to play with in the high chair while you prepare the food - measuring cups, wooden spoons, plastic bowls.
- Label the foods that you are preparing - if appropriate let the baby taste.
- Label the actions you are doing - *cutting* carrots, *washing* lettuce, *pouring* milk...
- Talk about the sounds in the kitchen like the kettle boiling or the popcorn popping or the oven timer beeping
- When your child is finished, you can model words like "all done", "finished", "all gone."



## Toddler

- Let your little one help if possible - tear the lettuce, put napkins on the table, sprinkle the grated cheese onto the casserole
- Give your child MODELS for talking about food - for example you could say "I love milk", "This chicken is yummy"
- Encourage your toddler's pretend play skills by having him/her pretend to cook for and feed his/her teddy bear or doll.
- Talk about how food tastes - use describing words such as: the carrots are *crunchy*, the yogurt is *cold*, the lemon tastes *sour*.
- Use a spill as a catalyst for conversation - "Oh oh, we spilled some milk - what should we do?"
- The ability to request is a very important skill for your child to develop - create opportunities for them to ASK for things - give them only a little bit at a time so that they will need to ask for MORE!



## Preschooler

- Let your preschooler look through recipe books with you and help choose a meal.
- Read through the recipe with your preschooler and let them help - emphasize the sequence of the recipe - *First we put in the butter, next we add the sugar....*
- Have your preschooler draw a menu for your meal to share with the family.
- Include conversation at the dinner table - start a family ritual. Ask each member of the family - "What was the best part of your day today?" Let everyone have time to talk. If it's difficult to get a response, ask some questions - "Who did you play with at daycare today?"
- Consider allowing your preschooler to pretend to be the server and ask each family member for their drink preference for dinner - "Would you like milk, water or juice with dinner tonight?"
- Invite your child to help clean up after dinner - "Can you collect the napkins and put them in the garbage please?"



# Why not read your child a story during snack time?

## Here are some delicious titles!

*Little Mouse, Red Ripe Strawberry and The Big Hungry Bear* by Don & Audrey Wood  
*The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle  
*If You Give a Moose a Muffin* by Laura Numeroff  
*Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss  
*Blueberries for Sal* by Robert McCloskey  
*Bread and Jam for Frances* by Russell Hoban  
*Pancakes, Pancakes* by Eric Carle  
*Berenstein Bears: Too Much Junk Food* by Stan Berenstein

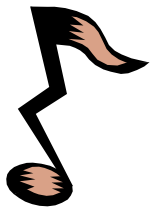


Quote:

The more that you read, the more things you will know.  
The more that you learn, the more places you'll go.

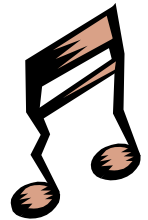
~ Dr. Seuss

## Consider adding some rhythm and rhyming to your dining with some tasty tunes!



### The Muffin Man

- do you know the muffin man, The muffin man, the muffin man,
- do you know the muffin man, That lives in Drury Lane?
  
- yes I know the muffin man, The muffin man, the muffin man,
- yes I know the muffin man, That lives in Drury Lane



### Pease Porridge Hot

Pease porridge hot!  
Pease porridge cold!  
Pease porridge in the pot  
Nine days old.

Some like it hot,  
Some like it cold,  
Some like it in the pot  
Nine days old!



### Apples and Bananas

I like to eat  
I like to eat  
I like to eat  
Apples and bananas  
I like to eat  
I like to eat  
I like to eat  
Apples and bananas.

Now change the vowel  
sounds to A, E, I, O,  
and U in each verse.

### On Top of Spaghetti

On top of Spaghetti, all covered with cheese,  
I lost my poor meatball when somebody sneezed.

It rolled off the table, and onto the floor,  
And then my poor meatball rolled out of the door.

It rolled down the garden, and under a bush,  
And then my poor meatball was nothing but mush!

The mush was as tasty, as tasty could be,  
And then the next summer it grew into a tree.

The tree was all covered, all covered with moss,  
And on it grew meatballs, all covered with sauce.

So if you have spaghetti, all covered with cheese,  
Hold onto your meatball, 'cause someone might sneeze.

