

Meals/Snacks: Interactions

Positive interactions and teaching during mealtimes are important for children at every developmental stage. Through positive interactions, children learn language, social norms, self-regulation, and gain a sense of autonomy, all while forming and strengthening relationships.

Infants

- Respond to infant's individual needs and communication
- Provide eye contact and warm physical touch
- Hold infants when bottle feeding
- Ask simple questions
- Teach self-help to older infants (provide finger foods or show how to use a spoon when ready)



Toddlers & Twos

- Sit with children while eating
- Ask simple questions
- Personalize conversations (Families, preferences, interests, use child's name)
- Teach self-help skills (show how to use utensils, set/clear table when ready, clean up their own spills when appropriate)



Preschool

- Sit with children while eating
- Encourage children to help with mealtime (set/clear table, serve themselves food)
- Initiate back and forth conversations
- Teach self-help skills (show how to use a napkin, fork, or child-safe knives for older preschoolers)
- Personalize conversations (families, preferences, interests, use child's name)

School Age

- Sit with children at meal table
- Small groups at tables to promote personalized conversations with teacher and peers
- Meal/snack made into a learning experience (children help prepare or cook food, discuss nutritional value of foods, talk about where different foods come from)