



# family style dining

Children establish eating habits as early as age 2! Build healthy eating habits early by serving meals family style.

Check out these ideas to support learning activities during mealtimes!

## Practice fine and gross motor skills (help children to):

- Set the table with plates, silverware, and cups.
- Wipe up spills with a paper towel or sponge.
- Use thumb and index finger to pick up finger foods.
- Pass a bowl of food or pitcher of milk from one person to another.

## Engage in small talk...

- Listen while others are talking.
- Name and discuss food groups—“These peas are in the vegetable group.”
- Discuss likes and dislikes—“Rachel, what is your favorite fruit?”

## Help children to gain independence by allowing them to:

- Decide (and serve themselves) on how much they will eat.
- Pour drinks.
- Try new foods.

## Take time to build math skills...

- Count—“How many apple slices are left on the plate?”
- Make and name geometric figures—“Fold the square napkin in half”.
- Create and understand fractions while cutting a whole sandwich in quarters.
- Measure liquids—“The pitcher has enough milk to fill six cups.”

“At first I was nervous because I wasn’t sure how the children would do (having never practiced these skills before), but with a little coaching from a Specialist we tried it and it went much smoother than I thought it would! The children enjoyed learning a new skill.”

~Wallela Bergsten, Family Child Care Provider, Clay Center, KS



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Source: [www.naeyc.org/tyc/article/turn-mealtime-into-learning-time](http://www.naeyc.org/tyc/article/turn-mealtime-into-learning-time)

