

Raise a healthy child who is a joy to feed

ESF ellynsatterinstitute.org/how-to-feed/the-division-of-responsibility-in-feeding/



Follow the division of responsibility in feeding

Division of responsibility in feeding

When you follow the division of responsibility in feeding (sDOR), your child will become and remain capable with eating. The division of responsibility in feeding (sDOR) encourages you to take leadership with the *what*, *when*, and *where* of *feeding* and let your child determine *how much* and *whether* to *eat* of what you provide. The division of responsibility in feeding applies at every stage in your child's growing-up years, from infancy through the early years through adolescence. sDOR says to feed your baby on demand, letting him determine the timing and tempo of feeding. As he develops and becomes more regular in his eating patterns, you gradually take on responsibility for *when* and *where* to feed. Most children are ready to join in with the meals-plus-snacks routine of family meals by the end of the first year or the beginning of the second year. After that, parents need to maintain the structure of family meals and sit-down snacks throughout the growing-up years. When you do your jobs with *feeding*, your child will do his with *eating*.

Your jobs with feeding are to . . .

- Choose and prepare the food.
- Provide regular meals and snacks.
- Make eating times pleasant.
- Step-by-step, show your child by example how to behave at family mealtime.
- Be considerate of your child's lack of food experience without catering to likes and dislikes.
- Not let your child have food or beverages (except for water) between meal and snack times.
- Let your child grow into the body that is right for him.

Part of your feeding job is to trust your child to . . .

- Eat the amount he needs.
- Learn to eat the food you eat.

- Grow predictably in the way that is right for him.
- Learn to behave well at mealtime.

For a PDF of Ellyn Satter's division of responsibility in feeding, [click here](#). For a PDF of Ellyn Satter's división de la responsabilidad al alimentar (sDOR in Spanish), [click here](#).

For a free, printer-ready division of responsibility poster in a size that is right for your office, [click here](#).

Division of responsibility for feeding infants

When you feed your baby, you are responsible for *what* your child is offered to eat: Whether she will be breast- or formula fed. She is responsible for everything else: how much, how fast, how frequently.

Your responsibilities

- Choose breast or formula feeding.
- Help your baby be calm and organized.
- Pay attention to her sleeping, waking, and feeding cues.
- Feed smoothly, paying attention to her cues about timing, tempo, frequency, and amounts.

Division of responsibility in feeding: solids introduction to family food

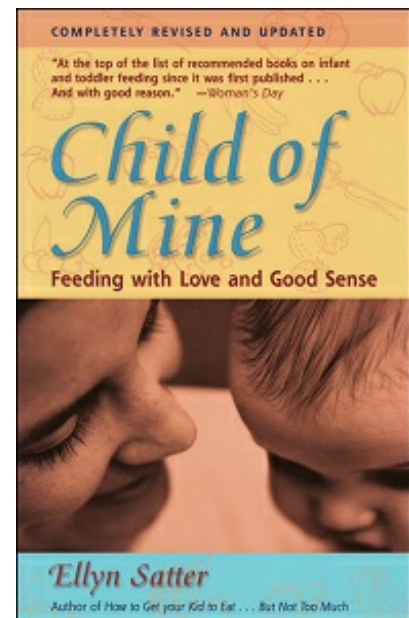
The division of responsibility for introducing your older baby to solid foods is based on what he can *do*, not how *old* he is. developmental maturity, not his/her age. Based on his stage in development, you can guide your child's transition from nipple feeding through semi-solids, then thick-and-lumpy food, and finally to finger food at your family meals.

- You are still responsible for *what*, and you are becoming responsible for *when* and *where* your child is fed.
- Your child is *still* and *always* responsible for *how much* and *whether* he eats of the foods you offer.

Division of responsibility in feeding toddlers through adolescents

- You are responsible for *what, when, and where*.
- *Your child is responsible for how much and whether*.

Feeding is parenting



From *Child of Mine*

Chapter 1; page 4; letters from parents

"I have raised my children according to Ellyn Satter's guidelines, and their eating habits are so good my coworkers comment on them," wrote one young mother. Another added, "My son is cautious in all things, and offering him new foods wasn't much fun at first. If I am careful not to push him, however, I have found he ever so slowly pushes himself along to learn to like new foods. He is so proud when he tries something new!" Parents who are worn out and fed up with generating three or four meals to get their child to eat comment about what a relief it is to them to realize that it isn't their job to get food into their child. They also are surprised at how much better their children eat when they stop their short-order cooking."

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Be faithful with family meals and snacks

Structured meals and sit-down snacks are the backbone of the division of responsibility in feeding from the time your child first joins you at family meals until she leaves home. To keep up all the work, you have to enjoy your food. Be considerate without catering with meal planning, but, for the most part, prepare what you enjoy. Even if you worry that your food isn't very "healthy," keep in mind that the least healthy meal is tons better than no meal at all! Studies show that family meals are tremendously important. Adults who have regular meals eat better, are healthier, and are slimmer. Children and teens who have family meals eat better, feel better about themselves, get along better with other people, and do better in school. They are less likely to gain too much weight, abuse drugs, smoke,

and have sex. In fact, family meals have more to do with raising healthy, happy children than family income, whether the child has one or two parents living in the home, after-school activities, tutors, or church. But as children move through the teen years, families are more likely to eat on the run than have meals together. But hang in there! Family meals *are* important!

Family meals and snacks

Trust your child to eat

Your child wants to eat and he wants to grow up to eat the food you eat. Beyond doing your part with structured, sit-down family meals and snacks, you don't have to do anything to get it to happen. Just be there and enjoy your own food. Keep in mind that grownup food is all new to your child, and he has to learn. For him, it is like any other skill such as reading or bike riding – he learns it bit by bit, at his own pace, because he *wants* to, not because it is your idea. He will eat like a child: some days a lot, other days not so much, only one or two foods and not everything at a meal. What he eats one day he ignores the other. Don't try to pressure your child in any way to eat certain amounts or types of food. Don't try to get him to eat less than he wants. Such controlling tactics backfire. Instead, relax, enjoy your own meal, and teach your child to behave nicely at mealtime. Sooner or later (for some kids *much* later) he will eat almost everything you eat.

Prevent and solve feeding problems

To prevent feeding feeding problems, follow the division of responsibility in feeding that is appropriate for your child's stage in development. To solve feeding problems, establish the division of responsibility in feeding. Whether your child is picky, eats too much or too little, or is too fat or too thin, the solution is the same: do your jobs with feeding and let your child do his jobs with eating. Children who are allowed eat on the run eat poorly, are picky, and have trouble growing consistently. They may become too fat or too thin. Children worry about food and eat a lot when they can when they can't depend on being fed and aren't sure they will get enough to eat when they *are* fed. Children get turned off to certain foods and avoid them when they can when they are pressured into eating certain amounts and types of food.

Prevent and address child overweight and obesity

To prevent child overweight and obesity, follow the division of responsibility from birth and throughout your child's growing-up years. For guidance, read *Your Child's Weight: Helping without Harming*. As long as your child's growth is consistent, it is normal for her, even if it is above the 85th or 95th percentile cutoff points defined by policy makers as constituting

child overweight or obesity. The way to treat child overweight and obesity is to determine factors that disrupt the division of responsibility in feeding, to address those factors, and to restore the division of responsibility in feeding. Children eat more for a while, but then they discover their internal regulators and their eating settles down to become like that of other children. Only time will tell whether their weight remains the same or slowly diverges downward to follow a lower growth curve. What this weight-neutral approach offers, however, is the possibility that children will grow up appreciating their bodies and making the most of them, remain eating competent, and being as healthy as they can be. However, if adults try to slim children down, or if children try to slim themselves down, it is virtually guaranteed that children's weights will accelerate. Despite all the hysteria about obesity, there is no cure. In fact, the cure in many cases is worse than the disease: Lifelong misery about eating and weight, repeated, costly, and medically damaging failed weight loss attempts, shame, and self-loathing.