

ELLYN SATTER'S DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITY IN FEEDING

Children have natural ability with eating. They eat as much as they need, they grow in the way that is right for them, and they learn to eat the food their parents eat. Step-by-step, throughout their growing-up years, they build on their natural ability and become eating competent. Parents let them learn and grow with eating when they follow the Division of Responsibility in Feeding.

The Division of Responsibility for infants:

- The parent is responsible for *what*.
- The child is responsible for *how much* (and everything else).

Parents choose breast- or formula-feeding, and help the infant be calm and organized. Then they feed smoothly, paying attention to information coming from the baby about timing, tempo, frequency, and amounts.

The Division of Responsibility for babies making the transition to family food:

- The parent is still responsible for *what*, and is *becoming* responsible for *when* and *where* the child is fed.
- The child is *still* and *always* responsible for *how much* and *whether to eat* the foods offered by the parent.

Based on *what* the child can *do*, not on how *old* s/he is, parents guide the child's transition from nipple feeding through semi-solids, then thick-and-lumpy food, to finger food at family meals.

The Division of Responsibility for toddlers through adolescents

- The parent is responsible for *what*, *when*, and *where*.
- The child is responsible for *how much* and *whether*.

Fundamental to parents' jobs is trusting children to determine *how much* and *whether* to eat from what parents provide. When parents do their jobs with *feeding*, children do their jobs with *eating*:

Parents' feeding jobs:

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

Children's eating jobs:

- Children will eat.
- They will eat the amount they need.
- They will learn to eat the food their parents eat.
- They will grow predictably.
- They will learn to behave well at mealtime.

For more about raising healthy children who are a joy to feed, read Part two, "How to raise good eaters," in Ellyn Satter's *Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family*. For the evidence, read [The Satter Feeding Dynamics Model](http://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/).



© 2016 Ellyn Satter. As long as you don't change it or charge for it and you do include the *for more about* and *copyright* statements, you may reproduce this article. See <http://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/> for more about eating and feeding and for Ellyn Satter's books, videos, and other resources.