

# Talking About Food: A Caregiver Guide

## Keep Mealtimes Pressure-Free!

Children learn best when they feel safe!

Instead of “Just try it” or “take a bite”, consider:

- “We’re learning about it. Let’s make it feel safer.”
  - “We can explore it together.”
  - “Let’s listen to our bodies.”

## Describe, Don’t Judge Foods and Eaters

If a child says “I don’t eat vegetables” or “That’s yucky,” model neutral, sensory-based language, such as:

- “It feels smooth and cold.”
- “It makes a crunchy sound.”
- “That’s too wet for my body! Let’s dry it.”
- “We don’t need to try it YET. We can learn about it instead.”

## Model Calm Exploration

Show curiosity without directing it at your child:

- “I’m going to smell my strawberry.”
- “I wonder what sound this makes when I bite it.”
- “I’m learning about this food, too.”

## Respect Their Pace!

Praise the action, not the child

Celebrate participation with specificity:

- “You touched it today—that’s great learning.”
- “You smelled the soup—what a big step.”
- “It stayed on your plate the whole meal.”

## How We Talk About Food: And Each Other!

Instead of labels like “he’s picky,” encourage the entire “food explorer” language. Our goal is to build your child’s confidence and skills to try new foods over time, and positive, curious language about your child support that process.

## Quick Phrases to Use

- ✓ “We’re learning about it.”
- ✓ “It’s okay if we’re not ready to eat it yet. We can explore it instead!”
- ✓ “Food stays on the table! We can put it on the learning plate.”
- ✓ Describe what you as the caregiver notice about each food.

