

This rubric is intended to assist you, the nutrition educator and/or clinician, in developing educational materials and programming that are consistent with the principles of the Satter models:

- The [Satter Eating Competence Model \(ecSatter\)](#),¹ which has a validated inventory, [ecSI 2.0](#),² and is implemented by the [Joy of Eating](#).³
- The [Satter Feeding Dynamics Model \(fdSatter\)](#),⁴ which is implemented by the [Satter Division of Responsibility in Feeding \(sDOR\)](#),⁵ which has a validated inventory, [sDOR.2-6y](#).⁶

The evidence supports using the Satter models as the foundation for nutrition education, counseling, and medical nutrition therapy. Both ecSatter and sDOR are associated with good nutrition.^{1, 7} ecSatter is associated with positive health parameters.¹ Children whose parents follow sDOR have lower nutritional risk.⁷ Other child outcomes associated with sDOR are yet to be tested.

But proceed with caution. In order to get the best ecSI 2.0 and sDOR.2-6y scores when using your materials and programming, your interventions: 1) Have to be consistent with the Satter models and 2) Don't add on anything not contained in the models. Even though you may feel thoroughly familiar with and committed to the trust-based Satter models, change is difficult. The nutrition and food world are steeped in control-based thinking and messages, and that thinking and those messages may creep in. The insidious nature of this controlling mindset presents a serious problem, as it dilutes, distorts, and undermines the effectiveness of fdSatter and ecSatter.

Take a trusting approach

ecSatter and fdSatter are [trust-based](#)⁸ with respect to your attitude toward and relationship with your audience. The conventional, control approach is to tell others what and how much they should eat and what they should weigh, motivate them to do the "right" thing with food selection and weight management, and get children to eat certain amounts and types of food and weigh within certain limits. In contrast, the trust models are based on confidence in people to naturally learn and grow, act on their own behalf, and bring themselves along with nutrition and food selection.⁹ Your role is to collaborate with your clients in finding their own practical and rewarding ways of managing food, eating, and feeding. That allows you to offer your services, invite clients to work with you, encourage them to identify their food-related conundrums, join with them in finding solutions, and identify those solutions as *possibilities*, rather than as shoulds and oughts.

Help yourself be consistent with the Satter models

Use this this guide to help you consider whether you have conveyed the principles that 1) Healthful eating is based on enjoyment, comfort, relaxation, as well as self, food, and body acceptance; and that 2) Raising children to be Eating Competent supports the development of their lifelong eating habits that are healthful, composed, consistent, and rewarding. "When the joy goes out of eating, nutrition suffers."¹⁰

- Follow the hyperlinks in this article or visit <https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/> for more information, resources, and references related to the Satter models.



- Reflect on your attitudes: Do you trust your target audience or clients to bring themselves along? Or do you feel obligated to motivate them and/or try to *get* them to eat certain foods in certain amounts or achieve a particular BMI? The former is Satter-model consistent; The latter is Satter-model inconsistent.
- Consider checking your understanding of ecSatter, fdSatter, sDOR, and Joy of Eating with [ESI continuing education exams](#).¹¹
- Consider deepening your understanding and expertise of Satter-model principles and intervention with ESI [advanced training](#).¹¹
- Use the checklists below with your resources and programming to help you determine whether you have included Satter-model-consistent key messages¹² and avoided messages that are contradictory to the models.

Nutrition education for adults

ecSatter provides guidance for building positive attitudes and behaviors to help individuals feed themselves well, being matter-of-fact and reliable about getting enough to eat of food they find enjoyable. ecSatter dignifies eating, encourages making eating important, and supports being positive, comfortable and flexible with eating. According to ecSatter, Competent Eaters have: 1) Positive **attitudes** about eating and about food; 2) Skills and resources for managing the food **context**, including finances, and orchestrating family meals. 3) **Food acceptance** skills that allow taking a positive interest in food and therefore eating an ever-increasing variety of the available food; 4) **Internal regulation** skills that allow instinctively consuming enough food to give energy and stamina and to support stable body weight.

The goal with ecSatter-based nutrition education is to enhance the individual's Eating Competence. *Period*. The many positive and stable benefits correlated with ecSatter follow and grow out of the eating attitudes and behaviors defined by ecSatter. Even though ecSatter says nothing at all about what or how much to eat or what to weigh, adults who are Eating Competent—who score above the cutoff point on ecSI 2.0—have better diets, more-effective food-management skills, the same or lower BMIs, superior metabolic profiles, more-positive quality of life indicators, and better oral health.¹ Parents who are Eating Competent do better with respect to following sDOR.⁷

ecSatter-based nutrition education for adults

- Stress the practical task of getting fed.
- Assess and build food-management skills that consider the values, resources, and capabilities of the individual.
- Work toward individually defined routines for eating that are intrinsically reinforcing.
- Maintain a positive tension between permission and positive discipline:
 - The permission to eat preferred foods in satisfying amounts.
 - The positive discipline of having structured meals and snacks and giving time and attention to eating.



Attitudes

- Endorse food and eating enjoyment.
- Emphasize relaxation and comfort with eating.
- Endorse the individual's eating food that they enjoy, not what they *want to* or *should* enjoy.
- Emphasize self-trust with respect to what and how much to eat.

Context

- Emphasize having meals and snacks with food the individual finds rewarding to plan, procure, prepare, and eat.
- Use neutral language to discuss food selection. Use descriptors such as "low-calorie," "high-sugar," "low-fat," "high-fiber" instead of labeling food as "good" or "bad," or "healthy" or "unhealthy."
- Prioritize structured sit-down meals, and sit-down snacks as needed.
- Start where the individual is with respect to building the meal habit. Define meals as sitting together sharing the same food.
- Use the Satter Hierarchy of Food Needs⁷ to guide particular attention to the needs of individuals experiencing food insecurity.
- Dignify individuals' own food traditions and preferences. Join with them in using familiar, rewarding, and enjoyable food: food they prefer and find accessible.
- Teach food groups only to provide categories to support individual meal- and snack-planning; give permission for as many helpings and helping-sizes as desired.
- Enhance mealtime importance by making food taste good: use salt, sugar, fat, and other seasonings.
- If the individual asks for it, gradually offer strategic collaboration with respect to budgeting, planning, purchasing, storage, and cooking.

Food Acceptance

- Give strong permission to eat food the person finds rewarding to plan, procure, prepare, and eat.
- Emphasize food *seeking* rather than food *avoidance*.
- Endorse the individual's own food traditions and preferences.
- Stress trusting their appetite to eat what appeals at a given sit-down meal or snack.
- Frame all food positively; Avoid making value judgments about *any* food.
- Trust the Satter Hierarchy of Food Needs:⁹ to help them achieve nutritional quality based on genuine food enjoyment. First people need food security based on the worthiness of their own food, then they plan, then they take an interest in novel food.
- Use experiential programming: Support enjoyment of new foods with repeated neutral food exposure.
- Support using fat, salt, and sugar to make food rewarding and satisfying.
- Depend on the structure and variety that go along with Eating Competence to moderate fat, salt, and sugar intake.
- Identify the nutritional value of preferred food.
- Be sparing with giving theoretical information (e.g. nutrition and food composition), offer only in response to requests.



Internal Regulation

- Give strong permission to eat as much the person wants.
- Support individuals in trusting their body to regulate what and how much to eat.
- Do experiential programming. Teach permission to eat and positive discipline (structure and self-awareness) to support sensitivity to hunger, appetite, and satiety.
- Emphasize getting enough to eat, including choosing ordinary food, not “diet” food.
- Stress going to meals and snacks hungry, eating until satisfied.
- Stress using sit-down snacks between meals to allow being hungry but not famished at mealtime.
- Stress saving hunger and appetite for meal- and snack-time by avoiding munching and sipping (except for water) between times.
- Stress letting body weight/BMI be what it will in response to genetics as well as to Eating Competence and sustainable activity.

Approaches to adult nutrition education that are inconsistent with ecSatter

- Directly or indirectly teaching numbers of servings from food groups or portion sizes.
- Emphasizing the consumption of certain foods, such as fruits and vegetables, whole-grain or low-fat, low-sugar, low-salt food. Individuals are likely to become more interested in eating these foods as they develop Eating Competence.
- Emphasizing avoidance of certain foods, such as sweets, high-fat foods, high-salt foods, or fast food. Restriction heightens their appeal and the drive to seek them out.
- Teaching target weights or target BMIs.
- Prescribing food-selection standards; applying external motivation to promote adhering to those standards.
- Introducing food rules or emphasizing “shoulds” rather than “wants.”
- Categorizing foods as good or bad; better and worse; healthy or unhealthy.
- Prioritizing the presumed health benefits or health consequence of eating certain foods.
- Characterizing individuals as incapable of regulating food intake and body weight.

Nutrition education for parents

fdSatter provides parents with feeding guidance throughout children’s growing-up years. Being able to follow sDOR is grounded in 1) Parents’ trust in their own food acceptance and food regulation abilities and well as their understanding of normal child development, including growth, and 2) Parents’ understanding of and trust in children’s behavioral, nutritional, psychosocial, oral-motor, and physical competence. sDOR teaches authoritative parenting as it relates to feeding. Authoritative parents are warm and supportive and maintain a balance between taking leadership with feeding on the one hand and giving children autonomy with eating on the other.¹³

- **Infants.** The parent does the *what* of feeding then feeds on demand, supporting the infant in being calm and organized by depending on information coming from the infant about everything else: how often, how much, at what tempo, and at what level of skill.

- **Babies making the transition to family food.** Parents are still responsible for *what* the child is offered to eat and they are becoming responsible for *when* and *where*. The child is still and always responsible for *how much* and *whether* they eat.
- **Toddlers through adolescence.** From children's joining in with family meals through their leaving home at the end of adolescence, parents are responsible for the *what*, *when*, and *where* of feeding and the child continues to be responsible for the *how much* and *whether* of eating.
- **Preadolescents and adolescents.** Parents are responsible for gradually teaching older children to do food management for themselves at school, at friend's homes, and elsewhere and, after they leave home, to independently manage the *what*, *when*, and *where* for themselves.

Children whose parents follow sDOR have lower nutritional risk.⁷ The goal with fdSatter/sDOR-based feeding is for children to grow up with positive eating attitudes and behaviors consistent with ecSatter. Period. It is not to get children to eat their vegetables or have BMIs that are within certain ranges. Positive, Eating-Competence-consistent eating attitudes and behaviors, in turn, support children's nutritional status and growth. ecSatter outcomes:

- **Attitudes.** Children retain their good feedings about food, their drive to eat, and their interest in eating.
- **Eating Context.** Children develop skills that allow them to participate comfortably and appropriately in family meals.
- **Food Acceptance.** Children learn to enjoy food their parents and other valued adults enjoy and take an interest in new food.
- **Internal Regulation.** Children eat as much or as little as they need to grow predictably in the way nature intended for them.

ecSatter- and fdSatter-based nutrition education for parents

- Parent-focused. Materials and programs address the parent's role in feeding.
- Emphasize sDOR.
- Teach child development as it relates to feeding: Give accurate and concrete information identifying children's stages in feeding and parents' tasks in feeding in a developmentally supportive fashion.
- Teach parents that children move themselves along to learn and grow when parents follow sDOR and thereby provide them with a positive feeding and food environment.

Parent leadership

- Teach and support parents in doing their tasks with feeding.
- Prioritize regular and enjoyable family meals and sit-down snacks.
- Help parents find their own ways of having rewarding, sustainable family meals.
- Stress being considerate without catering: Plan menus that don't limit menus to foods children readily accept but do include 1 or 2 foods family members generally eat.
- Recommend mealtime inclusion of high-fat condiments (butter, regular salad dressing, gravy) to support children's appetites and satisfy their energy needs.

- Stress offering regular sit-down snacks with two or three food groups.
- Stress avoiding between-times food and beverage handouts, except for water.
- Stress allowing children to eat as much as they want at meals and snacks.
- Demonstrate how to appropriately and flexibly include high-fat, high-sugar foods, such as chips, cookies and candy.
- Encourage regular, unlimited availability at sit-down snacks of high-fat, high-sugar foods, such as chips, cookies and candy. Regular access makes these food more neutral, tones down sneaking and binging.
- Stress allowing children to eat what they want from what parents offer.
- Encourage moderating fat, salt, and sugar intake by emphasizing variety.

Child autonomy

- Based on parents' having done their tasks with feeding, teach their trusting children to do their tasks with eating; Trouble-shoot interference.¹²
- Teach parents normal child food acceptance behaviors: eating many foods or a few, eating one or two foods and rarely some of everything offered, gradually learning to enjoy the food parents eat.
- Teach parents normal child food regulation behaviors: Eating a little or a lot, eating more some meals and some days than others, having high or low energy needs.
- Teach parents that children can be depended upon to grow in the way nature intended, even if weight is relatively high or low, provided weight follows a generally consistent growth trajectory.
- Raise parents' awareness of child's increasing Eating Competence: saying "yes please" and "no thank you," comfortably ignoring new food, providing themselves with repeated neutral exposure: allowing new food near, then on their plate, then tasting and spitting out, then swallowing, then eating more—or not.

Approaches to parent education that are *inconsistent* with ecSatter and/or fdSatter

- Putting young children in charge of food selection.
- Encouraging parents to directly or indirectly tell or manipulate what or how much their child eats.
- Encouraging parents to directly or indirectly address weight management with their child.
- Endorsing euphemisms such as "good nutrition," "health" or "fitness" in order to influence children's food acceptance or regulation.
- Encouraging parents to manipulate family menu-planning in order to achieve a defined weight outcome, e.g. loading menus with low-fat dairy or a lot of fruits and vegetables.
- Directly or indirectly categorizing types of family *meals* as good or bad, such as home-cooked (good) or fast-food (bad).
- Directly or indirectly emphasizing children's eating certain foods or categorizing those foods as "healthy," such as fruits and vegetables.
- Directly or indirectly emphasizing children's eating low-fat foods or categorizing low-fat foods as "healthy," such as low-fat milk and dairy products.

- Directly or indirectly emphasizing the exclusion of certain foods or categorizing these foods as “unhealthy,” such as sweets or chips.
- Directly or indirectly encouraging or endorsing any means of attempting to manage what or how much children eat, including motivating, reasoning, forcing, bribing, coercing, nudging, applauding, rewarding, explaining, teaching, restricting, tricking, running out of food, or conspicuously modeling the eating (or not-eating) of certain amounts or types of food.
- Characterizing individual children or children with certain maladies, e.g. neurologically or developmentally atypical children, as being incapable of learning to enjoy a variety of food or being able to regulate food intake and body weight.

Nutrition education for children

Children of all ages are entitled to be free from worry about eating, weight, or activity. At every age, fdSatter-consistent nutrition education enhances children’s Eating Competence by emphasizing repeated, neutral exposure to foods, preserving their inclination to experiment with new foods, and trusting children to eat and grow in a way that is right for them.^{6, 14} Such education provides children with a positive, neutral food environment, supports their comfort with a variety of foods, and enhances their self-trust with respect to eating and growing. fdSatter-consistent food-exposure-based nutrition education is completely food-neutral and weight-neutral. In every age group, fdSatter-consistent nutrition education accepts children just the way they are, maintains their instinctive eating capabilities, builds their cognitive and behavioral capabilities in a stage-related, developmentally appropriate fashion, and avoids telling children or implying to them in any way what and/or how much they should eat or what they should weigh.

ecSatter- and fdSatter-based nutrition education

- Provide children with regular and reliable access to a variety of food that is chosen by adults.
- Maintain structure with feeding: Don’t give food and beverage handouts (other than water) between meals and snack times.
- Within the context of adult leadership with food management, give children autonomy with respect to choosing what and how much they eat from what is offered, and even if they eat at all.
- Provide experiential learning opportunities that support children in being relaxed and curious about unfamiliar food and able to eat as much or as little as they are hungry for.
- Give children repeated neutral exposure to unfamiliar food rather than persuading or motivating them to eat it.
- Strongly and consistently reassure children there is enough to eat but that they don’t have to eat anything they don’t want to.
- Give children a “way out” from eating: leave it on their plate, put it in a napkin, , such as putting unwanted food in a napkin



- Do menu planning that is considerate without catering: Pair familiar with unfamiliar food, liked with not-yet-liked foods. Having familiar foods at mealtime makes children braver about exploring the unfamiliar.
- Have trusted adults sit down to eat with young children.
- Generate parent-education materials that are consistent with the previous section, *Nutrition Education for Parents*.

Young children up to age 12 years

- Frame all food neutrally; Avoid making value judgments about any food.
- Respect children's instinctive ability to eat as much as they need by giving structured access to ample food.
- Let children serve themselves or reassure them they don't have to eat what is served by others.
- Let children learn about food by experience instead of teaching nutrition principles.
- Teach children how to manage unfamiliar food in unfamiliar places: how to say "yes, please," and "no, thank you," ignore unfamiliar food, use a tissue to take unwanted food out of their mouth.
- Teach foods and food groups neutrally in a staged fashion: identification, sorting, categorizing, history, culture, ecology.
- Teach "your body knows how much you need to eat."
- Teach about energy needs from the perspective of fueling the body for getting through the day.
- Emphasize individual differences related to food intake, body size and shape, and growth
- Teach that people come in a variety of sizes. Create an environment that is respectful and considerate of all body types to allow all children to feel positive about their body.

Children age 12 years and older

- Continue to frame all food positively; Avoid making value judgments about any food.
- Continue to offer repeated neutral exposure to food.
 - Elaborate by studying food-related issues, such as cultural differences, production, transportation, and food in history.
 - Explore food in the context of other lessons such as language arts and social studies: How people talk about food, what role does food play in their lives, what societal stresses revolve around food acquisition/shortage.
- Teach foods and food groups neutrally: food composition and nutrient contribution, role of nutrients in the body.
- Within the context of meals and snacks, introduce the possibilities of considering nutritional contributions of foods in choosing what to eat, e.g. if soda, milk, and juice are equally appealing, consider choice based on nutrient content.
- Teach how to apply food group information to meal and snack planning. Avoid teaching portion sizes, numbers of servings from food groups, and/or fat, sugar, and/or salt avoidance.

- Explore personal attitudes about food and eating, how they reflect social attitudes, and how attitudes impact eating behavior.
- Do consciousness-raising with respect to their attitudes and behaviors toward eating new food.
- Endorse personal food preference; In a neutral fashion, teach how to experiment with new food.
- Support identity formation with respect to accepting their own size, shape, fatness or thinness.
 - Address diversity in size, shape, BMI, and physical capability.
 - Encourage exploration, awareness, and trust in their body's signals that support internally regulated food intake.
 - Explore and endorse individual differences with respect to energy needs.
 - Address their concerns about weight/striving for weight loss by exploring "what holds true for you" with respect to energy regulation and body weight: their own history of eating, activity, and weight: Eating Competence: likely outcomes of forced change.
- Help them master the practical skills they will need for feeding themselves by the time they leave home.

Approaches to nutrition education that are inconsistent with ecSatter and/or fdSatter

- Making young children responsible for choosing food for themselves.
- Categorizing foods as good or bad, healthy or unhealthy, better or worse.
- Directly or indirectly motivating children to choose certain foods by use of words such as "benefits," "healthy," "low-fat," "low-sugar," and "moderation."
- Using indirect good-food-bad-food classifications, such as "sometimes foods" and/or "red light/green light foods."
- Telling children of any age what and how much to eat.
- Putting pressure on children to eat certain amounts or types of food, such as so many servings of fruits and vegetables.
- Teaching numbers of servings and/or portion sizes from any food group.
- Setting up good-food, bad-food dichotomies; Warning children to avoid certain foods, such as foods of low nutrient density.
- Teaching calorie prescriptions for food intake and physical activity and/or assigning and critiquing calorie tracking.
- Promoting weight management, restricting food intake, encouraging direct or indirect means of lowering body weight.
- Motivating children to eat "healthy" food with nutrition lessons on nutrients, food requirements, food composition, planning "healthy" meals/snacks, counting calories, portion sizes, reading food labels, listings of good-food-bad-food and/or junk food, and management of obesity and nutrition-related diseases.
- Teaching children to manage their intake by following rules such as the Dietary Guidelines, MyPlate, Five-a-day, and go-slow-whoa foods.



- Challenging children to taste food, giving stickers and praise for eating fruits and vegetables, teaching teachers and/or peers leaders to give rewards or do exaggerated modeling of eating “healthy” food.
- Teaching parents strategies to get children to eat fruits and vegetables or other “healthy” food.
- Showing muckraking food documentaries: Those that search out and publicize scandalous information about food, food production, food businesses, etc.

Guidelines for citation/reproduction

Ethically, Ellyn Satter must be cited in articles and educational materials based on her principles and guidelines. Here is how you can handle these citations:

The Satter Division of Responsibility in Feeding (sDOR)

You may reformat and reproduce the [Satter Division of Responsibility in Feeding \(sDOR\)](#)⁵ handout on the ESI website if the wording is exactly as it is in the current version on the ESI website and you include the entire copyright and “for more information” statements. To abbreviate, use sDOR, which searches on the web. DOR does *not* search. Note that sDOR says “choose and prepare the food.” It does *not* say “choose and prepare *healthy* food.” Inserting the word “healthy” constitutes incorrect and unethical reproduction.

The Joy of Eating

You may reformat and reproduce the [Joy of Eating](#)³ handout on the ESI website if the wording is exactly as it is in the current version on the ESI website and you include the entire copyright and “for more information” statements.

What is Normal Eating

You may reformat and reproduce the [What is Normal Eating](#)¹⁵ handout on the ESI website if the wording is exactly as it is in the current version on the ESI website, you include the entire copyright statement, and you reference *Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Eater* as the “for more information” statement.



References

1. Satter E. The Satter Eating Competence Model: the Satter approach to eating. Ellyn Satter Institute. Accessed August 27, 2021. <https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/satter-eating-competence-model/>
2. Satter E. Using the Satter Eating Competence Inventory (ecSI 2.0). Ellyn Satter Institute. Accessed December 14, 2021. <https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/how-to-feed/the-division-of-responsibility-in-feeding/>
3. Satter E. The joy of eating: Being a competent eater. Accessed April 27, 2021. <https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/how-to-eat/the-joy-of-eating-being-a-competent-eater/>
4. Satter E. The Satter Feeding Dynamics Model. Ellyn Satter Institute. Accessed December 3, 2021. <https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/satter-feeding-dynamics-model/>
5. Satter E. The Satter Division of Responsibility in Feeding (sDOR). Ellyn Satter Institute. <https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/how-to-feed/the-division-of-responsibility-in-feeding/>
6. Satter E. Family Meals Focus #110: Giving children autonomy with eating: What it *is*—and *isn't*. Accessed April 1, 2021. <https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/family-meals-focus-no-110-giving-children-autonomy-with-eating/>
7. Lohse B, Mitchell DC. Valid and reliable measure of adherence to Satter Division of Responsibility in Feeding. *J Nutr Educ Behav*. 2021;211-222.
8. Satter E. Family Meals Focus #68: Control vs trust in nutrition education. Accessed April 1, 2021. <https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/family-meals-focus/68-control-vs-trust-in-nutrition-education/>
9. Satter E. Hierarchy of food needs. *J Nutr Educ Behav*. 2007;39:S187-S188.
10. Satter E. Chapter 1, The Secret in a Nutshell. *Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family: How to Eat, How to Raise Good Eaters, How to Cook*. Kelcy Press; 2008:1-14.
11. Satter EM. Advanced training and continuing education exams. Ellyn Satter Institute. Accessed April 27, 2021, <https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/product-category/selfstudy/>
12. Satter E. Family Meals Focus #06: Are you tired of feeling bad about your eating? Accessed January 24, 2022. <https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/family-meals-focus/81-troubleshooting-with-the-division-of-responsibility/>
13. Baumrind D. Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology Monograph*. 1971;4:1-103.
14. Satter E. Appendix H: Nutrition Education in the Schools. *Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family: How to Eat, How to Raise Good Eaters, How to Cook*. Kelcy Press; 2008:255-261.
15. http://www.letsmove.gov/taskforce_childhoodobesityrpt.html