Children develop Eating Competence step-by-step throughout the growing-up years when they are fed according to a stage-appropriate Satter Division of Responsibility in Feeding. At every stage, parents take leadership with feeding and let the child be self-directed with eating.

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

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

**Older 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 their *age*, parents guide the child’s transition from nipple feeding through family foods adapted to be semi-solid, to thick-and-lumpy, to food children can pick up and feed themselves at family meals and drinking from the cup.

**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 decide *how much* and *whether* to eat. If 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.
- Show children what they have to learn about food and mealtime behavior.
- Be considerate of children’s food inexperience 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.