

Mealtime Moves & Counter Moves

Here are some ideas to help you use the Satter Division of Responsibility in Feeding, in response to your child's mealtime *moves*.



Child's Mealtime Moves

Your Counter Moves

They say, "I am not hungry."

You can say, "That's okay. You don't have to eat, but I'd like you to sit at the table while we eat." Arrange for them to be hungry by not letting them eat between meal and sit-down snack times. Remove distractions at meals.

They're over stimulated or too busy to eat.
They're having difficulty focusing on eating.

Have a pre-meal routine. Spend a few minutes just before the meal reading a book or washing hands. Give a warning that it's nearly mealtime so they know they'll be called to the meal.

They're too hungry to wait for meals.

Arrange for them to be hungry for meals and snacks by having regular meals and sit-down snacks throughout the day and not letting them eat in-between. Let them eat as much as they want at each meal/snack time so they can last until the next meal or snack.

They're messy and may drop, throw, or smear food for fun, or to get your attention

It's common for young kids to be messy when they eat. Try putting a mat under their chair for easier clean up. You can ask "Are you done? If you're done, you can show me with your hands (younger children), and we can put this aside (the food) and you can go play. If you don't want more, you don't have to throw it, you can let me know like this." Or, "I see you like throwing this, but we don't throw food. If you want to play and throw something, you can go and play with your ball."

They don't want to stay at the meal while you finish eating.

Let them leave when they are done. They will stay at the meal longer as they get older and learn to enjoy conversation.

They're being disruptive at the meal.

Allow them to leave. Meals need to be pleasant for everyone.

They come back right after the meal, asking for more food.

Refrain from giving them food right after the meal. Remind them they can eat again at the next meal or snack time.

They get down, but want attention, to sit on your lap and to eat off your plate.

Help them settle near you without putting them on your lap. Teach them to play quietly while you eat.

They don't eat "enough" at mealtime.

Only they know how much is enough. Don't let them eat or drink throughout the day except for water. Have sit-down snacks.

They say, "Can I get the peanut butter? I can put peanut butter on my bread."

You say, "I know you like peanut butter, but it's no on the menu today. The menu is what we serve on the table. I will offer it some other time. You don't have to eat the bread if you don't want to."