



It can be hard to know the right things to do or say around your fussy eater but this guide is here to help you avoid the common mistakes and give you some helpful tips!

DONT...

Allow children to graze all day

Children who graze all day are less likely to feel hungry for meals or have motivation to eat. This makes it even harder to introduce new foods!

Make different meals for everyone

This can be tempting, especially when you have multiple fussy eaters, but it doesn't give your child the chance to be exposed to new foods. Children will learn if they don't like something, they'll get something else they do like so they have no incentive to try anything new!

Only offer dessert if they finish their meal

This puts 'dessert foods' on a pedestal and teaches children that dessert food is better than all other food. This may lead them to develop a greater dislike for food served at main meals.

DO...

Plan snacks into your routine

Snacks are a great way to keep children going in between meals but it's best to keep them to **2 a day max!** Try and plan snacks for the same time every day and keep them 1-2 hours away from mealtimes.

Try 'family-style' meals

It's important to include foods that you know your child will eat in a meal but this doesn't mean making something separate. Try 'family-style' meals that can be assembled according to everyone's preferences, for example, tacos or fajitas or a jacket potato with different toppings.

Try serving dessert **WITH** a meal

This might sound strange and counterintuitive but it allows your child to develop a healthy relationship with food in the long-term and learn that food is **not** a reward. (P.S dessert doesn't always have to mean cookies and chocolate, it can be yoghurt and fruit too!)



DONT...

Label them as a 'fussy eater'

Calling your child a 'fussy eater' will only reinforce the idea in their minds that they are fussy and will make it harder for them to branch out and try new foods. In most cases, fussy eating is only temporary and it's important for children to know this.

Force your child to eat

Pressuring your child to eat is only likely to backfire. This includes bribing them, praising them and rewarding them. All of these 'tactics' put too much focus on mealtimes, which are supposed to be relaxed and enjoyable - not a battleground!

Only offer foods once

It's common to never offer your child a food again if they refuse to eat it or claim they don't like it first time round, but it's really important to keep trying. If you don't give them the option to try it again, you're standing in the way of them ever learning to like that food.

DO...

Teach them how to explore new foods

Put aside the aim of getting your child to eat new foods and allow them to become comfortable around different foods at their own pace without the pressure of eating them. Focus on taste, texture, smell, sound and appearance instead - make it into a science experiment!

Make mealtimes a 'no pressure' zone

As a caregiver, it's your job to provide the food and it's the child's job to determine how much they eat. The more relaxed you are around mealtimes, the more likely your child is to feel less anxious about eating the food on their plate.

Try offering at least 10-15 times

It can take at least 10-15 exposures to a food, if not more, before a child even tries it! The more exposure (on the table, on their plates, watching you eat it), the more likely they are to try it for themselves. You can also experiment with different cooking methods (e.g. roasting, steaming, boiling)