

## Preparing your child's eating space (plain version)

Things to consider in the environment where your child eats and drinks:

- ☐ **Consistent pre-meal routine**  
Activities such as handwashing or setting the table might help your child anticipate mealtimes. You could use enjoyable movements to help your child prepare their body, or favourite song that signals it is time to eat.
- ☐ **Guide your child through the mealtime sequence**  
Visual schedules and timers can help with navigating through the various steps involved in mealtimes.
- ☐ **Seating to support posture and sensory preferences**  
Proper seating can help your child feel comfortable and focused during meals.
- ☐ **Control noise levels**  
Consider the use of sound-dampening materials in the kitchen like table cloths, or providing ear defenders if your child is sensitive to external noise.
- ☐ **Adapt lighting in the dining area**  
Comfortable lighting can reduce stress. Options can range from natural, soft lighting to dimmer settings depending on their needs.
- ☐ **Regulate smells in the eating environment**  
Consider ventilating the dining area to neutralise strong food odours, or choose foods with less intense smells.
- ☐ **Keep the table setting simple and free of clutter**  
Using plain dishes and mats without busy patterns can help reduce visual distractions and overload.
- ☐ **Have you made it into an activity?**  
You could engage your child with simple table activities such as helping to serve or positively describing colours, sounds, shapes and smells.
- ☐ **Flexibility at mealtimes**  
You could allow your child to start or end meals at different times to the rest of the family to reduce stress.

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Let's make a goal!

This guide will help you fill out a personalised plan to help your mealtime experiences for you and your child. SMART goals are a way to set clear and achievable goals. They help you focus on what you want to achieve and plan how to get there. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound. Feel free to visit our website for more ideas and resources.

### 1. What one thing will I change?

Focus on one simple activity that can help you manage the environment (see page 1 for some examples).

*Example: Before mealtime, I will handwash/sing a special song/do some calming movements.*

Your Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. How will I keep track of what works?

Think about how you'll know if the change is helping.

*Example: I will tick a box in my diary when I complete the routine before a meal.*

Keeping track: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. How will I make sure this goal is enough for me to manage?

It's helpful to keep this small and focus on one thing at a time.

*Example: I will pick a simple activity like singing their favourite song.*

Your Plan: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. How will I link this to something we already do?

Try to fit the new activity into something you're already doing. This makes it easier to remember.

*Example: I will do the activity at breakfast time because that is when it is just the two of us.*

Your link: \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. How long will I try the new strategy before reviewing what worked well or less well?

Set a time frame to see how things go, then review and change if needed.

*Example: I will do this routine for 1 week and then see how it's going.*

Your Time Frame: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Additional things to consider**

#### **Track progress and seek support**

It may be helpful to keep a log to track each mealtime. Use a journal, app, or visual chart to monitor your progress. You can speak with family members or friends to discuss how things are going.

#### **Review as often as you can**

Keep in Mind that what works one day might not work the next, and that's okay. If something isn't working, it's perfectly fine to change your plan. It can also be really helpful to talk to professionals whenever you can. They can help you figure out what's going well and offer support with any challenges.