



# Fuel Their Minds

Ideas for Better Eating and Active Play with Young Children



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## A Child's Veggie and Fruit Consumption

Do you often struggle with a picky eater at home? Did you know role modeling, play, and multimedia are proven methods of promoting a healthy diet in young children? A recent study described in the journal of Nutrition & Dietetics monitored fruit and vegetable consumption of kindergarteners before and after participating in the study. The study concluded the participating kindergarteners were more likely to eat fruit and vegetables if presented in a fun and interactive way such as taste-testings, cooking classes, cartoon icons that promote vegetable or fruit consumption such as Popeye (who enjoys spinach), and gardening.

### Role Modeling

We know children are closely monitoring our actions. As adults we often say, "Eat your fruits and vegetables please," but we occasionally forget to follow through with our own suggestion. As a role model, we must always take advantage of each opportunity to set positive examples for our children. For instance, when children see you as the adult eating the same foods as them, they often feel special.



Being a positive role model sets a foundation for healthy behavior habits and, if continued throughout childhood, are later exhibited during adulthood.

### Food Preparation & Cooking

Children are also more susceptible to trying new foods if they are involved in the food preparation

process. Involving children in the preparation of meals not only helps them learn the names and colors of foods, but also assists in the development of their hand-eye coordination.

Children learn cooking can be fun and also very educational, while focusing on components of language arts and mathematics. When preparing a meal, remind the child that a healthy diet consists of eating a variety of foods that are the colors of the rainbow. Begin by selecting an easy recipe for a healthy snack and then gradually build to a more advanced recipe for breakfast, lunch, or dinner.



### *Interactive Activity*

#### *Supplies Needed:*

- ◆ Plain white paper or recycling paper
- ◆ Crayons or color pencils

#### *Instructions:*

1. Draw a rainbow, and for each food item prepared, draw the food on the corresponding rainbow colored arc. **Example:** If preparing a banana, draw a banana on the yellow arc.
2. Next, tally up the food items for each color of the rainbow and write the number next to the corresponding arc color.
3. Ask the child to tell you which colored food was prepared the most and the least.

*Adapted from Medline Plus® Nutrition & Dietetics, August 6, 2010*

## Learning their ABC's

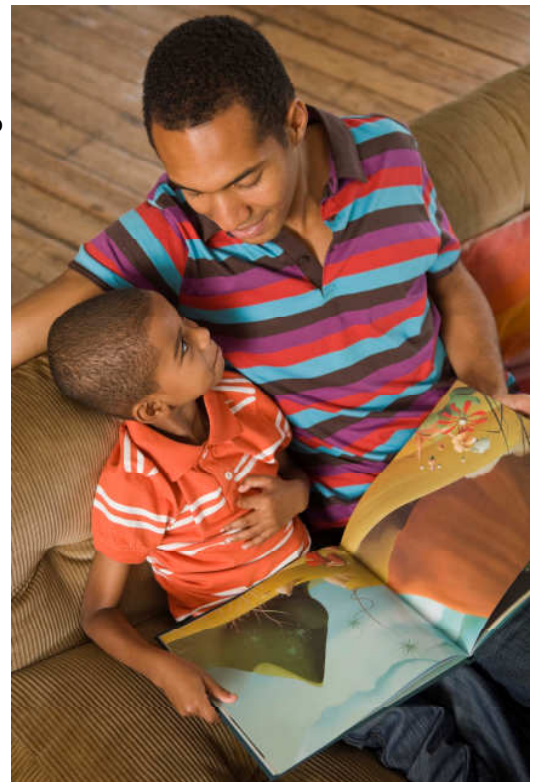


Does your child seem uninterested in being read to, or chooses video games over books? Setting aside at least 30 minutes every day for “fun” reading will develop the skills and confidence your child needs to be proficient readers during the early years of elementary school.

Begin creating a positive environment for your child by setting aside quiet family time for reading, and making special trips to the library and bookstore several times each month. Consider allowing your child to receive his or her own library card. Children who own their own library card feel a sense of empowerment and will have an increased interest in reading activities. Have the child assist in returning books to the library. This will teach them the responsibility of taking care of and returning items that do not belong to them.

Here are fun and interactive games you can do with your children to encourage learning their ABC's.

- ◆ **Create An ABC Book.** Compile several sheets of plain white or colored construction paper. For each paper, write one upper and lower case letter (A,a). Ask your child to go through old newspapers, magazines, or old food packages and match each alphabet letter to a picture. Cut out and glue the pictured object onto the corresponding sheet of paper next to the beginning letter. After completing all 26 letters of the alphabet, compile and transform the pages into a memorable book.
- ◆ **The Alphabet Hunt.** Ask your child to assist you with writing the letters of the alphabet on a piece of paper. Next, ask your child to identify household or classroom items that start with each letter. After identifying items, ask your child to draw each item below the corresponding letter. To extend this activity, ask your child to identify items for each alphabet letter the next time you're at the grocery store.
- ◆ **Create Stories.** Make up stories with your child as you are reading out loud. As you are reading, ask your child to add their own ideas into the story. Incorporate physical activity by acting out the story.
- ◆ **Predicting the Outcome.** Before you begin to read, flip through the storybook with your child and ask him or her to predict the outcome of the story from what they see in each picture. Next, read the story to your child and discuss his/her predictions.
- ◆ **Repetition.** Ask your child to tell you the story after you have read it to him or her. This will reinforce his/her reading comprehension skills.
- ◆ **Cooking.** Choose a simple recipe and ask your child to help you make it. Ask your child to help measure and add in the ingredients. Following recipes not only reinforces their cooking skills, but also assists with their math skills.



*Adapted from Modern Parent Magazine©; Fun Ways To Encourage Your Child To Read*

## "Give Me That" — Teaching Children to Share



All preschools and child development centers desire to have children who demonstrate positive sharing behaviors with their classmates. You may have good intentions when creating classroom rules about sharing, but these rules may be *forcing* children to share instead of allowing each child to fully comprehend the social benefits of sharing.

Young children are trying to find their identity. To them, sharing may demonstrate a sense of vulnerability that they are not ready to experience. Keep in mind that patience is critical as the act of sharing takes time.

Here are some ways to encourage sharing:

- **Be a Role Model.** Nothing is more powerful than a parent or teacher modeling the behavior you want the children to display. Consistently utilize the word “share” throughout the day as this will reinforce that sharing is a positive behavior.
- **Build Empathy.** When children are not sharing, use this as a teaching opportunity. Explain to the child, “See how upset she is when you grab her toy,” or “See how happy she is that you shared your toy.” Pointing out emotions as a direct result of a child’s actions is an easy and positive way to reinforce the results of sharing or the consequences of not sharing.
- **Validate Ideas.** When you notice a child is not sharing, offer ideas of how to share. An example would be, “I notice that you both want to play with the kitchen set. Is there a way that you could *share* and both be able to play with the kitchen set?” This will allow the children to take ownership of their actions.
- **Recognize Efforts.** When you notice a child displaying a positive sharing attitude, take the time to say, “you both seem happy taking turns with the toy.” This will reinforce the good behavior and the child will naturally want to exhibit this action again.

*Adapted from parenting247.org*

## A Sweet Treat to Gobble

Try this easy and interactive recipe with your child during the month of November. This is a healthy and delicious snack your child can create for their classroom Thanksgiving feast.

### Ingredients Needed:

#### For the Turkey’s Body

- ◆ Bosc Pear
- ◆ Cheddar Cheese
- ◆ Peanut Butter or Cream Cheese
- ◆ Mini Chocolate Chips
- ◆ Cashew Nuts
- ◆ Dried Cranberries

#### For Turkey’s Feathers

- ◆ Apples, any variety
- ◆ Oranges, any variety



### Instructions:

1. Ask the children to wash their hands with warm soapy water.
2. Wash the fresh fruit in a clean strainer and set aside.
3. Using a serrated plastic knife, slice the apples into thick wedges as shown in the picture above and set aside. Peel the orange and arrange each fruit wedge onto a plate as shown above. Slice and core 1 half of a pear and place it in the center of the fruit wedges.
4. Slice 2 small cubes of cheese and cut out small triangles from each cube. Tuck the turkey’s cheddar feet under the pear.
5. Next, use peanut butter or softened cream cheese to attach the chocolate chips to the turkey as eyes, cashew as a beak, and a cranberry snood.

*Adapted from Disney’s Family Fun Magazine©; Holiday & Seasonal Recipe*

## Activity Kits Free From the University of California

The University of California has prepared activity kits to help you teach nutrition and physical activity concepts to your young children while integrating math, language arts, and science.

**These lessons come “ready-made”** with all the materials you will need to teach a fun and interactive lesson with your preschoolers through third graders. The curriculum was developed by the University of California.

**We will bring the materials to your site, free of charge,** and we can provide your staff with trainings and additional resources to increase their confidence in these topics. We can also plan classroom, food-themed parties, special events, and other fun sessions.

If you are interested in signing up to receive these materials, please contact us.



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