

Behavioural Approaches to Feeding

Common challenging meal-time behaviours:

- Refusal to eat certain foods
- Refusal to self-feed
- Insistence on using only one kind of utensil
- Eating too fast or too slow



Why challenging behaviours occur:

To GET:

- Attention
- Access to toy/activity
- A pleasant sensory experience

OR

To AVOID:

- An unwanted person/place/thing
- Demands
- An unpleasant sensory experience

Using **rewards** to manage challenging mealtime behaviors:

- Provide **POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT** for behaviours that you want to see 😊
 - For example, when the child feeds himself, or tries a new food.
 - Reinforcements should be:

Immediate	To help the child make a connection between the reward and behaviour.
Consistent	The same reward system is used by everyone (mom, dad, grandma, etc.) so your child does not get mixed messages from different people.
Varied	Use different types of rewards so your child does not get bored.
Reserved	The rewards must only be obtained for doing a positive mealtime behaviour. The rewards must be things the child only has access to during mealtime.
Effective	If the reward is not working, discontinue and explore other rewards
Paired with Praise	To eventually fade material rewards, to more natural verbal reinforcement.

*Be mindful not to confuse reinforcement with **distraction!***

Provide **REWARDS**

Are delivered **after** the desired behaviour.

I.e., a sticker after your child takes a bite of new food.

Avoid **DISTRACTIONS**

Are delivered **while** the child is performing the desired behaviour.

I.e., television or iPad on while child eats a new food.

😊 Positive Reinforcement Ideas 😊

- ✓ Stickers
- ✓ High-fives
- ✓ Favourite TV show
- ✓ Favourite toy
- ✓ Activity/board game
- ✓ Trip to the park/playground