

ELLYN SATTER'S DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITY IN FEEDING

Children develop eating competence step-by-step throughout the growing-up years when they are fed according to a stage-appropriate division of responsibility. At every stage, parents take leadership with feeding and let the child be self-directed with eating.

The division of responsibility for infants:

- The parent is responsible for *what*.
- The child is responsible for *how much* (and everything else).

Parents choose breast- or formula-feeding, help the infant be calm and organized, then feed smoothly, paying attention to information coming from the baby about timing, tempo, frequency, and amounts.

The division of responsibility for older babies making the transition to family food

- The parent is still responsible for *what*, and is *becoming* responsible for *when* and *where* the child is fed.
- The child is *still* and *always* responsible for *how much* and *whether to* eat the foods offered by the parent.

Based on *what* the child can *do*, not on how *old* s/he is, parents guide the child's transition from nipple feeding through semi-solids, then thick-and-lumpy food, to finger food at family meals.

The division of responsibility for toddlers through adolescents

- The parent is responsible for *what*, *when*, *where*.
- The child is responsible for *how much* and *whether*.

Fundamental to parents' jobs is trusting children to decide *how much* and *whether* to eat. If parents do their jobs with *feeding*, children do their jobs with *eating*:

Parents' feeding jobs:

- Choose and prepare the food
- Provide regular meals and snacks
- Make eating times pleasant
- Show children what they have to learn about food and mealtime behavior
- Be considerate of children's food inexperience without catering to likes and dislikes
- Not let children have food or beverages (except for water) between meal and snack times
- Let children grow up to get bodies that are right for them

Children's eating jobs:

- Children will eat
- They will eat the amount they need
- They will learn to eat the food their parents eat
- They will grow predictably
- They will learn to behave well at mealtime

