

Phrases that **HELP** and **HINDER**

As the caregiver, you play the biggest role in your child's eating behavior. What you say has an impact on developing healthy eating habits. Negative phrases can easily be changed into positive, helpful ones!



Phrases that **HINDER**

INSTEAD OF ...

Eat that for me.

If you do not eat one more bite, I will be mad.

Phrases like these teach your child to eat for your approval and love. This can lead your child to have unhealthy behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs about food and about themselves.

INSTEAD OF ...

You're such a big girl; you finished all your peas.

Jenny, look at your sister. She ate all of her bananas.

You have to take one more bite before you leave the table.

Phrases like these teach your child to ignore fullness. It is better for kids to stop eating when full or satisfied than when all of the food has been eaten.

INSTEAD OF ...

See, that didn't taste so bad, did it?

This implies to your child that he or she was wrong to refuse the food. This can lead to unhealthy attitudes about food or self.

INSTEAD OF ...

No dessert until you eat your vegetables.

Stop crying and I will give you a cookie.

Offering some foods, like dessert, in reward for finishing others, like vegetables, makes some foods seem better than others. Getting a food treat when upset teaches your child to eat to feel better. This can lead to overeating.

Phrases that **HELP**

TRY ...

This is kiwi fruit; it's sweet like a strawberry.

These radishes are very crunchy!

Phrases like these help to point out the sensory qualities of food. They encourage your child to try new foods.

TRY ...

Is your stomach telling you that you're full?

Is your stomach still making its hungry growing noise?

Has your tummy had enough?

Phrases like these help your child to recognize when he or she is full. This can prevent overeating.

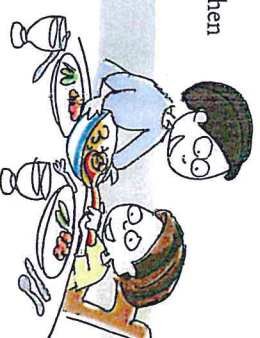
TRY ...

Do you like that?

Which one is your favorite?

Everybody likes different foods, don't they?

Phrases like these make your child feel like he or she is making the choices. It also shifts the focus toward the taste of food rather than who was right.



TRY ...

We can try these vegetables again another time. Next time would you like to try them raw instead of cooked?

I am sorry you are sad. Come here and let me give you a big hug.

Reward your child with attention and kind words. Comfort him or her with hugs and talks. Show love by spending time and having fun together.

Start Your Preschooler on the Path to Healthy Eating

7 Tips for Raising Healthy Eaters

1

Be a Healthy Role Model

Be a good role model by eating regular meals based on nutrient-rich foods, such as low-fat or fat-free dairy products, fruits, vegetables and whole grains.



5

Divide Responsibility

You determine what foods are served and when. Your child should decide which and how much of those healthy foods offered he or she will eat.

2

Enjoy Family Meals

Establish routines around mealtimes and snacks. Be sure to allow children enough time at the table—aim for 20 minutes.



4

Trust Your Preschooler's Stomach

Watch for signals that your child is full and finished eating (playing with food, for example). Offer children nutritious food, and they will naturally regulate the amount they eat.

3

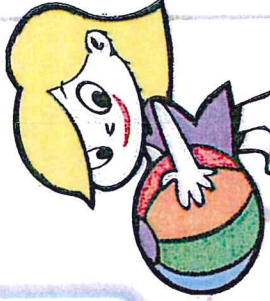
Try New Foods

You may have to offer a food 10–15 times before it's accepted. Try to add just one new food to a meal with three or so healthy foods your child already enjoys.

6

Eat Snacks

Regularly scheduled healthy snacks are like “mini-meals.” Snacks can provide up to a quarter of the nutrients children need each day, as well as enough calories (energy) to sustain them through a busy day of school and/or play.



7

Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Go Hand in Hand

Children should be active at play for at least one to two hours each day. Consider options like a simple outing to the park to play or more organized classes or age-appropriate sports.