

SAMPLE SKILLS FOR MEALTIMES

Students with feeding challenges often require assistance to meet nutritional needs in order to grow and maintain good health. As well, students may need to increase their independence when eating or drinking. The following is a sample of eating or drinking skills that a student may be working on.



Your local therapy team (Occupational Therapist and/or Speech/Language Pathologist) should be consulted regarding the assessment, development, and monitoring of appropriate strategies specific to the student's needs.

Also note that Positioning is generally not considered a learning skill. It is up to the meal facilitator to ensure that the student is in a stable position that provides optimum trunk support, head control, and shoulder stability.

Lips:

- The student will demonstrate increased lip closure to:
 - Keep foods and liquids in the mouth when eating
 - Reduce the incidence of drooling
- The student will use his/her upper lip to clear the spoon of food
- The student will use his/her upper lip to assist in regulation of liquid flow from a cup

Tongue:

- The student will increase active tongue lateralization to:
 - Control/movement of the bolus of food within the mouth
 - Clear food from the cheek areas
 - Assist in chewing
 - Assist in a swallow
- The student will decrease the incidence of 'tongue thrusting' to:
 - Keep the bolus of food within the mouth
- The student will tolerate _____ oral motor exercise (e.g., Nuk brushing from front to back on tongue) for ____ (e.g. 1 minute) in order to develop more active control of the anterior/posterior (front to back) tongue movements to:
 - Support efficient sucking (for drinking)
 - Assist in chewing
 - Assist in a swallow

Jaw:

- The student will stabilize his/her jaw during drinking by biting gently on the rim of the cup for ___ consecutive swallows
- The student will open his/her mouth when presented with a spoon, cup or finger food.
- The student will bite off a piece of finger food and keep it in his/her mouth
- The student will lower the jaw to communicate that s/he wants “more” of a food/beverage

Chewing:

- The student will safely chew a greater variety of foods and food textures (e.g. dried fruit, meats, etc.)
- The student will demonstrate a 'munching (up/down) pattern' when finger foods are placed on the molars
- The student will demonstrate a 'rotary chew (circular motion) pattern' when eating solid foods (e.g. meat, potatoes etc.)
- The student will increase the length of time, from ___ to ____, that s/he chews their food in order for the food to dissolve for a safer swallow

Drooling/Saliva Control:

- The student will demonstrate increased lip and jaw closure and increased frequency of swallowing to decrease the incidence of drooling
- The student will wipe his/her mouth and chin when cued
- The student will independently (without prompting) wipe his/her mouth when drooling

Oral/Sensory:

- The student will increase the number of textures s/he will manage during a mealtime, from _____ to _____
- The student will increase the number of tastes s/he will tolerate during a mealtime, from ___ to _____
- The student will increasingly participate in oral care routines by tolerating tooth-brushing, for _____ seconds/minutes

Spoon Feeding:

- The student will load the spoon with _____ (indicate amount of assistance/prompting) & bring it to his/her mouth with minimal spillage
- The student will use his/her upper lip to clear food from the spoon



Hand to Mouth:

- The student will load the spoon with _____ (indicate amount of assistance/prompting) and bring it to his/her mouth with minimal spillage
- The student will bring finger foods to his/her mouth with _____ (indicate amount of assistance/prompting)
- The student will assist in cup drinking by:
 - Picking up the cup
 - Bringing the cup to his/her mouth
 - Drink from the cup
 - Return the cup to the tableWith minimum spillage
- The student will assist, with _____ (indicate amount of assistance/prompting), in wiping his/her face after a meal.

Cup Drinking:

- The student will reduce the amount of liquid lost from his/her mouth when drinking fluids from a cup by _____ percent
- The student will use his/her upper lip to assist in the regulation of liquid flow from the cup
- The student will assist in cup drinking by:
 - Picking up the cup
 - Bringing the cup to his/her mouth
 - Drink from the cup
 - Return the cup to the tableWith minimum spillage
- The student will use a regular cup instead of a cut out cup



Straw Drinking:

- The student will successfully drink from a straw by creating a seal around the straw
- The student will successfully manage ____sucks/swallows when drinking from a straw

Nutritional Intake:

- The student will drink _____ amount of liquid on a daily basis
- The student will eat _____ amount of food (e.g., 1 cup of pureed texture) to meet nutritional intake, within a reasonable time period (e.g. 20-30 minutes)