



CHILD-CENTERED CONVERSATIONS

12 tips for talking with kids at meals

It's possible – even easy – to have pleasant mealtimes with preschool children. Many factors are important in creating positive mealtime situations; kids-size tables, chairs, dishes, and utensils; a calm, cozy atmosphere (quiet music, maybe a candle or two); appealing foods served family-style, and engaging conversations. For successful talks at the table, try the **Team Nutrition Conversation Starter** cards – and these tips from the experienced and effective teachers at Head Start Centers in Billings, Montana. **ENJOY!!**

- 10 Know – and use – each child's name.
- 10 Keep discussions positive and focused on their interests.
- 10 Show real interest in what each child has to say.
- 10 Listen carefully to what the children are talking about – and go from there.
- 10 Start with the names of the foods – making sure that every child knows the name of the items.
- 10 Discuss the foods – using words for colors, temperatures, smells, textures, and flavors.
- 10 Help children converse with each other – like asking each other to pass a serving dish of food.
- 10 Discuss the meal helper jobs – and what they are doing to be helpful today.
- 10 Discuss hunger levels: *You played really hard outside today. Is your tummy hungry now?*
- 10 Focus on today: *What book did we read today? What were you playing with before lunch?*
- 10 Allow children to tell stories – a real story, a make-believe story, or a story that they heard from someone else.
- 10 Use predictions about what will happen in the near future: *What do you think our story will be about today?*
- 10 Use the theme/concepts of the day (like a number or letter or holiday that you are discussing at circle time).

