



# Mealtime

"Cool" tips for turning mealtime into a pleasant experience:

**Make mealtime a family time...**

**Habit Forming:**

Make your goal to share 3 to 5 meals a week as a family. It doesn't have to be dinner - any meal works!

**Everybody Helps:**

It may seem easier and faster to do it yourself, but the time you invest in teaching your children to pitch in will be worth every minute. Let your children handle all the safe parts of cooking a meal, serving it, and cleaning up.

**Manners 101:**

Start early! Think how pleasant mealtime will be when your children learn to wash their hands, come to the table when called, ask to be excused, say "thank you" and "please" and clear their place when finished - MOST of the time (nobody's perfect!).

**Soul Food:**

Enjoyable conversation is to the soul what food is to the body. Try these conversation starters or think up some of your own:

- "What was the best thing that happened today?"
- "How's your school project going?"

**"YUCK!":**

If your children refuse to eat a meal, they won't starve before the next one. Make the goal of mealtime to have a pleasant family ritual: "It's OK not to eat, but we expect you to join us at the table." (P.S. The key is to stick to the next regular meal schedule - don't make them another meal an hour later.)


**"I'm Not Hungry!":**

This often translates into "I'm having too good a time to stop what I'm doing." Try giving transition time: "We'll be eating in 10 minutes. I'll call you when it's time to wash your hands."

**"OOPS!":**

Expect accidents. Focus on what needs to be done: "Jill, you'll need a sponge to wipe up the juice." Keep paper towels and sponges where children can reach them. With younger children, you may need to do the cleaning up.

**For more information call the Family Help Line: 800.932.4673**

 <p><b>PARENT TRUST</b> FOR WASHINGTON CHILDREN</p>	<p>You may reprint these tip sheets, free and without permission, provided that you include the following copyright statement: © King County Library System, Parent Trust, and Washington State PTA.</p>
--	--