



Fussy eating guide and meal planner

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**How to guide with food
list and meal planner**

About fussy eating:

Fussy eating is relatively common in toddlers and preschoolers. It tends to peak around the age of three. For the vast majority of children, it resolves over time. Fussy eating looks different for different children and families.

Typically, you may see:

- Your child starts to reject previously eaten foods - "he used to eat everything"
- Your child is very picky about what foods they will or won't eat and may feel very strongly about this and can't be persuaded otherwise
- Your child develops a preference for food from certain food groups such as carbohydrates, protein or fruit
- Your child may eat only a limited range of foods particularly in some food groups. For example, limited or no vegetables or proteins
- Your child develops a preference for eating beige foods
- Mealtimes are stressful
- Eating out is tricky (unless there are chips or pasta on the menu!)

Fussy eating is influenced both by your child's genetics and also by environmental factors (things that you can guide and shape). On a positive note, in the vast majority of cases there is no significant impact on a child's growth or nutrition despite them not having a varied diet, however when it comes to mealtimes it can often be extremely stressful for both parents and child.

Here some top tips for fussy eaters:

1. Eat together as a family. Seeing trusted family members eating the foods that they are reluctant to eat can influence their intake and willingness to try new foods.
2. Avoiding 'pressuring' your child to eat and try and keep language neutral and descriptive
3. Manage your own expectations around portion sizes and be aware of the influence that snacking or grazing may have on appetite. It may be in some cases that your little one is being fussy because they are just not that hungry!
4. Trust your child and let them determine how much they want to eat. "You provide, they decide" is a component of the 'Division of responsibility in feeding' model by Ellyn Satter. Following this approach can significantly reduce any stress at mealtimes
5. Expose your child to new foods. The more your little one sees a food the more likely they are to eat it. Parents stop offering foods after just a few times of a child rejecting it but we know that the child may need to see the food multiple times before they may want to try it!
6. When selecting foods that you want your little one to try, choose foods that you serve regularly and that the rest of the family eat. This helps to maximise the chances of acceptance as they are seeing the food regularly and watching others eat it.
7. Always offer once food per meal that you know your little one will eat. This can reduce mealtime stress and avoid finding yourself in a position where you feel that you need to offer alternatives.

The love it like it learning it® approach?

I have been using the love it like it learning it® approach to managing fussy eating for a number of years, but without a fancy fun name. Then a couple of years ago I came across a fabulous feeding account called @veggiesandvirtue on Instagram. Ashley was recommending very similar strategies using the hashtag #Loveitlikeitlearningit. I love the name and now use it with Ashley's permission.

The principal behind the love it like it learning it® approach is to expose your child to a range of foods whilst ensuring they are always also being offered a food that they are likely to eat. This approach sits really well within the division of responsibility in feeding approach by Ellen Satter which identifies clear roles for both the parent and child in feeding can remove a lot of stress and pressure at mealtimes for both parent and child.

Some of the benefits of using the love it like it learning it® approach are:

- Following your child's lead with their intake always having the reassurance there is something at the meal they can eat if they choose to
- Reducing stress at mealtimes
- Reducing pressure on your child at mealtimes
- Always exposing your child to new foods
- Increased food acceptance (for some families this is quite immediate, for others it happens later down the line)
- Can be used with family mealtimes
- No need to feel that you need to offer alternative meals
- You get to choose the meals you make and don't have to make your child's favourite meals on repeat
- Make one meal for the whole family

Definitions:

Love it® foods: are foods that when offered you can be pretty sure that your little one will eat them

Like it® foods: are foods that when offered your child may or may not eat them, but they are familiar and have been eaten before

Learning it® foods: may be brand new foods that your child hasn't seen or tasted before or foods that are regularly offered and regularly refused.

How to use the love it like it learning it® approach?

1. Food list

Begin by populating the love it like it learning it® food lists. This will help you to identify and select foods for your child's meals and snacks. Start with the love it® lists, then the like it® list.

When selecting foods for the learning it® list, I would always suggest choosing from foods that you and other members of your family eat fairly regularly.

This is because...

- a) they will likely be in the fridge or cupboard
- b) if your child doesn't eat them someone else will
- c) they will already be somewhat familiar to your child if you eat meals together

You can also look and see if there are any food groups which are lacking a bit e.g., vegetables and make more of an effort to select foods from those groups.

Ashley from [@veggiesandvirtue](#) has a free [downloadable guide](#) which includes a categorised list of 150 foods to help you to get started.

A final tip is to think about the foods that your child does eat and select new learning it® foods which are similar – similar in colour, size, shape, taste. For example, if broccoli is eaten then try kale, if peas are accepted go for sweetcorn, if they eat fish fingers try chicken fingers...

Aim to start with around 10 learning it foods.

2. Meal planner:

Cooking for children who are fussy with their foods can be challenging. It is easy to keep making the same default meals over and over but we know that this can narrow down the number of accepted foods and put your child at risk of food jaggging. Food jaggging is when your child begins to reject liked foods (due to reduced exposure or over exposure)

The meal planner can support you to

- remember to cycle love it® and like it® foods to avoid your childs' diet becoming even more restricted by reduced or over exposure to foods
- plan how to offer new foods to support exposure
- plan meals for the whole family based around your child's preferences but whilst ensuring that the whole family are getting a balanced and varied diet

You can choose how much or how little you use the meal planners. If breakfasts and snacks aren't a problem then you can just use it for lunch and dinner. Make it work for you. It doesn't need to be a chore.

3. At the mealtime:

This approach works best when families eat together and the food is served family style from the centre of the table. If that is not manageable for your family at all mealtimes then it can still be used if your child sometimes eats along or with siblings.

You can offer a range and multiple of foods from each group as long as you ensure there is at least one love it® food and at least one learning it® food. The recipe section of this ebook will guide you through how to prepare/present foods for the whole family using this approach.

It can be easy to default to offering a large portion of a love it® food and a tiny piece of a new food, however in doing this your child is likely to fill up on their favourite foods whilst ignoring the tiny amount of the new food

And by the time they do register it they are likely to be too full to try it. The ideal set up is to offer a small portion (around half a cup) of their love it® and like it® foods alongside around a tablespoon of their learning it® foods.



They can have more of any food if they request it and dessert doesn't need to be contingent on what they eat in the meal. Dessert can be included as part of the main meal or kept and given after.

It is not recommended to put pressure on your little one to try or eat the foods but equally try not to be permissive in telling them they don't have to eat the foods. You can read more here about [language at mealtimes](#).

This phrase is helpful to encourage exposure of foods on the plate without pressure to eat.

"The rule of this house is that everyone has a bit of every food on their plate. You can choose what you taste or eat"

Encourage your child to participate in serving themselves all the foods and also serving others if they would like to.

4. Recipes:

In order to help put theory into practice Chintal @drchintalskitchen has put together some sample recipes based on what foods you told us that your fussy eaters typically preferred and rejected. Over the next few pages, you will see how you can include your fussy eater in the family meal, how you can make only one meal for everyone and also expose your little one to new foods!

We would love to know how you get on!

Tag us in your successes @feedeatspeak @drchintalskitchen

Stacey and Chintal x

Reducing waste and time spent preparing and cooking food

One of the drawbacks of continuing to expose your little ones to new foods can be wasted time and wasted food. I.e., you offer they refuse and the food goes in the bin. It is actually one of the main reasons parents tend to stop offering foods as they are sick of the waste. Here are some tips for minimising waste whilst continuing to offer a variety of foods

1. Eating together as a family: Children can be offered a bit of all that is on offer and parents will be eating the same meal. Nothing goes to waste
2. Leftovers: If you can't always eat together then make a little extra of your meal from the previous day to serve as leftovers to serve to your little one the next day
3. Frozen foods: This can be particularly helpful for serving a variety of vegetables to your children. Purchasing frozen foods means that you can defrost/cook just a small portion (think three broccoli florets rather than a whole broccoli). If they don't get eaten you can pop them in a salad or serve them as a side for yourself later that day
4. Batch cook: You can batch cook meals or even pieces of food such as fish or chicken. Cut whole portions into smaller portions (to account for the fact that they may not be eaten initially). Freeze in individual tablespoon size serving ready to whip them out as learning it foods as needed.

| Food Types | Love it (preferred) | Like it (eats it sometimes) | Learning it (non preferred) |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| FRUITS | | | |
| VEGETABLES | | | |
| CARBOHYDRATES (potatoes, rice bread, pastas) | | | |
| PROTEINS (beans, pulses, fish, egg, meat) | | | |
| DAIRY & ALTERNATIVES | | | |
| OILS & SPREADS | | | |

| Food Types | First practice | Moving on | Next steps |
|------------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

| Breakfast | Love it (preferred) | Like it (eats it sometimes) | Learning it (non preferred) |
|------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| MONDAY | | | |
| TUESDAY | | | |
| WEDNESDAY | | | |
| THURSDAY | | | |
| FRIDAY | | | |
| SATURDAY | | | |
| SUNDAY | | | |

| Lunch | Love it (preferred) | Like it (eats it sometimes) | Learning it (non preferred) |
|------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| MONDAY | | | |
| TUESDAY | | | |
| WEDNESDAY | | | |
| THURSDAY | | | |
| FRIDAY | | | |
| SATURDAY | | | |
| SUNDAY | | | |

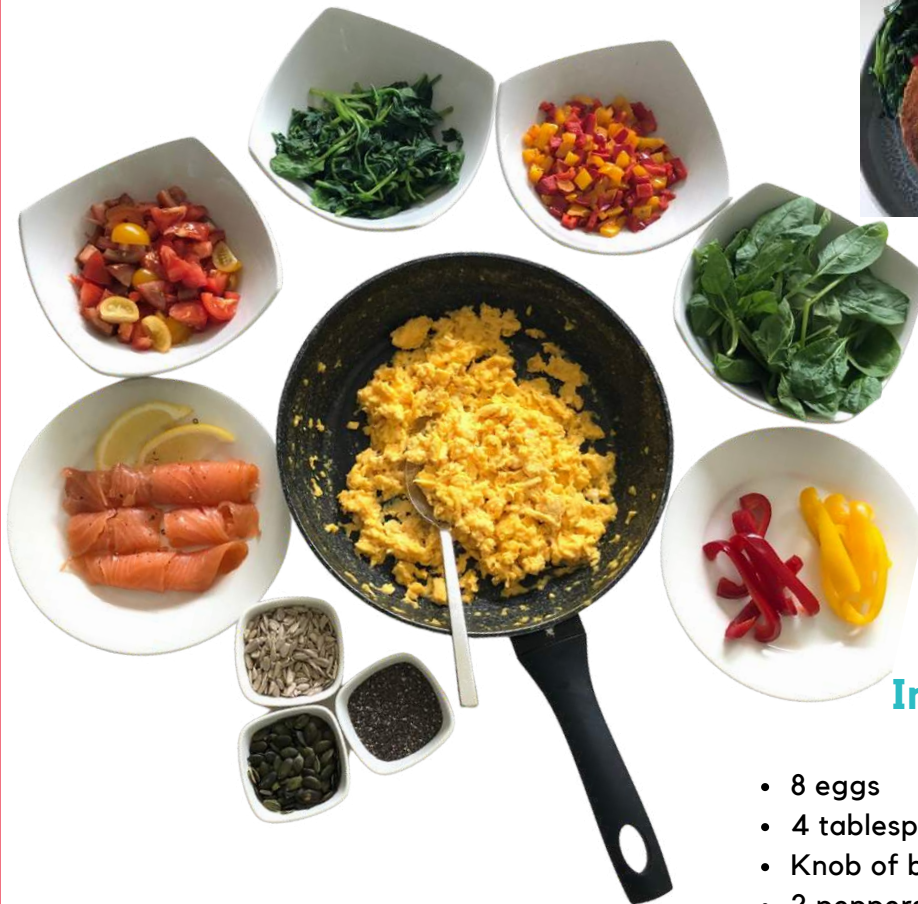
| Dinner | Love it (preferred) | Like it (eats it sometimes) | Learning it (non preferred) |
|------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| MONDAY | | | |
| TUESDAY | | | |
| WEDNESDAY | | | |
| THURSDAY | | | |
| FRIDAY | | | |
| SATURDAY | | | |
| SUNDAY | | | |

| Snacks | Love it (preferred) | Like it (eats it sometimes) | Learning it (non preferred) |
|------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| MONDAY | | | |
| TUESDAY | | | |
| WEDNESDAY | | | |
| THURSDAY | | | |
| FRIDAY | | | |
| SATURDAY | | | |
| SUNDAY | | | |

Pick & Mix Scrambled Eggs

This is a great way of introducing variety and vegetables at breakfast time but could easily work as a lunch or light dinner option.

You can vary the vegetables used according to your preference and even allow your children to help choose items for the pick & mix!



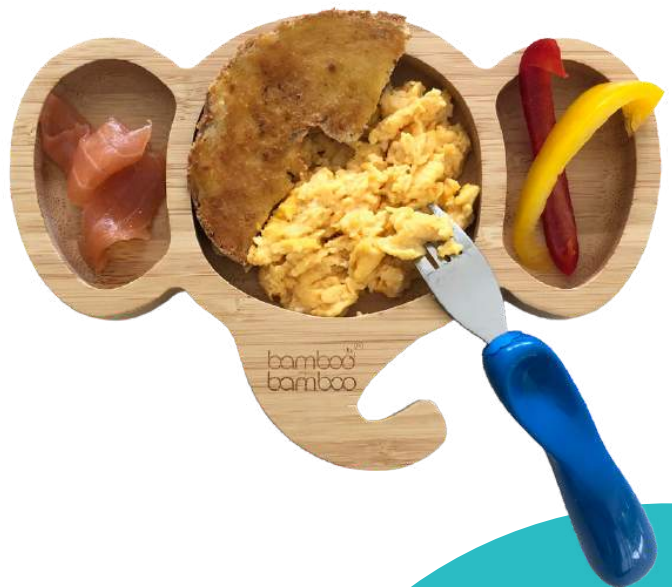
Ingredients: Serves 4

- 8 eggs
- 4 tablespoons milk
- Knob of butter
- 2 peppers
- 150gms smoked salmon
- 200gms cherry tomatoes
- 250gms baby spinach leaves
- Seeds of choice – I have used pumpkin seeds, linseed and chia seeds
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Sliced bread of choice or toasted bagels to serve

Pick & Mix Scrambled Eggs

Method:

- Chop the peppers and pan fry in a little olive oil to soften, set aside in a bowl, you might like to leave some peppers uncooked for variety
- Wilt the spinach in a pan with a little olive oil too and set aside in a bowl, you may want to leave some spinach leaves uncooked for variety
- Quarter the tomatoes and set aside in a bowl
- To make the scrambled eggs, crack the eggs into a bowl, add the milk and whisk them up well
- Melt a knob of butter in frying pan on a medium heat and add the eggs, now wait about 15 seconds for some of the mix to cook and then mix well. Don't let the eggs stick to the pan, keep slowly mixing to cook evenly
- Take the eggs off the heat whilst they are mostly cooked but there are slight runny bits, this will continue to cook for the next minute or so whilst you call the kids to table!
- Serving suggestions below



Lemon & Herb Chicken Tray Bake with Roasted Vegetables

Chicken and potatoes are usually well loved by children, so here is a way of adding some more variety to the meal without making a separate meal. It is also a great prep ahead meal that can be left in the fridge the night before to pop into the oven whenever you are ready.

If your little one is still learning to enjoy herbs maybe try leaving one of the portions without herb seasoning, as the herbs are on top of the chicken it is also very easy to simply remove the skin to make it 'herb free' but hopefully retain the flavour. The vegetables can be varied according to what is in season. I find roasting cabbage totally transforms it and makes it much more acceptable to children.



Ingredients: Serves 4

- 4 chicken thighs/legs (1 per portion child/adult)
- 2-4 teaspoons dried mixed herbs
- 1 lemon
- 1kg baby new potatoes
- 1/2 purple cabbage
- 1 broccoli – approx. 350gms
- 250gms carrots
- 250gms cherry tomatoes
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Small knob butter
- Optional - additional fresh rosemary and garlic

Lemon & Herb Chicken Tray Bake with Roasted Vegetables

Method:

- First wash and prepare all your vegetables - slice the cabbage into 1cm strips chop the carrots into 3cm chunks.
- Lay all the vegetables, separated as shown, in a large baking tray and drizzle with olive oil, rub the oil into the vegetables well to coat with your hands
- Slice the lemon into thin slices
- To prepare the chicken, rub the thighs/legs with a little butter, sprinkle on the mixed herbs and top with a sliced lemon
- Place the chicken and potatoes and cherry tomatoes in another baking tray ready to bake
- When you are ready to cook, cook both baking trays at 180C for about 40-45 minutes until the juices run clear. The exact time will depend on the size of your chicken legs. You will need to baste the chicken and give the vegetables a mix half way
- Optional – add some fresh rosemary and unpeeled whole garlic cloves to the tray of chicken and potatoes
- Serving suggestions below



Turkey Burgers, Sweet Potato Wedges, Salad and Coleslaw

Whilst exposing children to lots of colour and variety, this recipe hopefully means there will be something for everyone to enjoy at the family meal.

I like to use turkey thigh mince as it is higher in iron. Turkey mince can be swapped for lamb if preferred and the amount of spices adjusted according to taste.



Ingredients: Serves 4

- 500gms turkey mince
- 1 red onion
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 4 cloves garlic
- 50gms coriander
- Cheese – sliced to serve
- 4 brioche buns
- 1kg sweet potatoes
- 200gms carrots
- 200gms cabbage
- 6 spring onions
- Handful chives
- 50gms Greek yogurt
- 50gms Mayonnaise
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

Turkey Burgers, Sweet Potato Wedges, Salad and Coleslaw

Method:

- Finely chop the onion and coriander and mince the garlic and place it all in a large bowl
- Add the mince, cumin, salt to taste and mix well
- Form 4 burgers from the mince and set aside on a sheet of baking paper until ready to cook
- To make the sweet potato wedges, scrub the sweet potatoes well and slice into wedges. Toss in a bowl with 4 tablespoons olive oil to fully coat. Place on a baking tray lined with baking paper and set aside until ready to bake
- To make the coleslaw grate the cabbage & carrot in a large bowl, finely slice and add the spring onions. Finally, add the Greek yogurt, mayonnaise, salt and pepper to taste. Store in the fridge until ready to serve
- When ready, cook the burgers and wedges in the oven at 180C for about 35 minutes until cooked through
- Serve burgers in a toasted brioche bun with salad leaves, coleslaw and cheese slices. Serving suggestions below



Pasta, Sun Dried Tomato Pesto & Roasted Vegetables

Pasta is a firm favourite in our house and I think with most children! Here we add a delicious homemade quick and easy sun dried tomato pesto and roasted vegetables to make a hearty meal for the whole family.

You could switch up the vegetables to any 'learning it' vegetables of your choice and or add cooked flaked salmon to make a variation of this meal. I often make extra for my work lunch box the next day.



Ingredients: Serves 4

- 200gms pasta – whole wheat if possible
- 2-3 courgettes
- 3 peppers
- 5cm chunk parmesan
- Handful cashew nuts
- 150gms sundried tomatoes in oil
- 2 cloves garlic
- 6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- Olive oil for roasting
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Grated cheese or parmesan to serve
- Salad – mixed leaves & cucumber

Pasta, Sun Dried Tomato Pesto & Roasted Vegetables

Method:

- Preheat the oven to 180C
- First wash and slice the courgettes and peppers, place in a baking tray, drizzle with olive oil, season with salt and pepper and roast in the oven at 180C for about 30 minutes until soft and just turning brown
- To make the pesto, blend the parmesan, cashew nuts, sun dried tomatoes, garlic, extra virgin olive oil, salt & pepper to taste to make a smooth paste
- Boil the pasta as per packet instructions & stir in your homemade pesto and roasted vegetables
- Serve with a side salad and a sprinkle of grated cheese/parmesan
- Serving suggestions below



Sesame Salmon Teriyaki Noodles & Vegetables

Here is a way of incorporating oily fish like salmon into your family meals. Combined with 'love it' noodles and some 'like it' vegetables you can have a nutritious meal on the table in no time.

As a variation, you could serve the salmon with vegetables and egg fried rice. For babies <1 year old avoid honey and soy sauce, instead pan fry their salmon or marinade with the sesame oil and ginger.



Ingredients: Serves 4

- 4 salmon fillets
- 1 broccoli – approx. 350gms florets
- 500gms green beans
- Sesame seeds for serving
- 200gms noodles of choice

Teriyaki marinade:

- 4 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon minced ginger
- 2 teaspoon honey
- Zest of 1 lemon
- Juice of ½ a lemon
- 4 tablespoons water

Sesame Salmon Teriyaki Noodles & Vegetables

Method:

- Preheat the oven to 180C
- To make the teriyaki marinade, mix all the marinade ingredients together in a bowl
- Place the salmon fillets in a shallow baking dish and pour over the marinade, sprinkle with sesame seeds and leave to marinate in the fridge or bake right away
- Bake in a preheated oven at 180C for about 15-20 minutes
- Whilst the salmon cook, steam the green beans and broccoli to serve or pan fry with a little sesame oil, garlic and a tablespoon of water
- Make the noodles as per packet instructions and serve them plain or pan fry cooked noodles with a little sesame oil and spring onions
- Serving suggestion below





Stacey Zimmels set up Feed Eat Speak to help families and children to get the help they need when they need it most. She is a qualified Speech and Language Therapist and has been practising since 2001 when she graduated from De Montfort University in Leicester, UK with a Bsc Hons. Since qualifying she has gained further qualifications in Paediatric Dysphagia (eating and drinking difficulties) and now specialises in this area. Stacey now works independently after almost 20 years in NHS positions.

Stacey is also a mum to two little ones and takes great pleasure in learning from them and watching them develop their feeding, eating and speaking skills. In the last five years she has breastfed to toddlerhood, weaned two babies onto solids and experienced the joys and mess of baby led weaning. She has dealt with one baby who refused the bottle and is currently traversing the world of toddler fussy eating first hand.



Dr Chintal Patel is a NHS General Practitioner caring for patients in London. She is a postgraduate trainer for Imperial College and has a special interest in women and children's health, lifestyle medicine and nutrition and writes content for various publications around these topics. Outside of work, Chintal is keen cook and writes a cookery blog www.drchintalskitchen.com. She loves celebrating food from all around the world and in particular, with her Indian Heritage, making Indian food and recipes accessible to all.

As a working mum, she recognises the constraints that come with preparing meals every day that are balanced and healthy yet appeal to the whole family, particularly children. Her aim is to show that when it comes to cooking family meals, saving time or money does not need to compromise on flavour or taste. She shares, healthy, balanced, quick and easy meals without compromising on taste.