

Waltham Forest Early Years Guidance

Everyday Communication and Language Practice

Making the most of mealtime



Everyday routines such as mealtimes and snack are a great opportunity for developing communication and language skills. Because they happen every day, children know what to expect and enjoy hearing the same language repeated. It's also a chance to develop children's confidence and independence as they have the chance to use their language skills to make choices, request and share experiences with their peers.

It's important for early years practitioners to make the most of mealtimes by creating opportunities for children to communicate. Here are some things to think about in your setting:

- ✓ Are children given the chance to prepare the food and/or serve themselves?
- ✓ Are children offered choices "would you like the blue or the red cup?" with visual cues to support this?
- ✓ Are children given opportunities to use their language skills to ask for help, request things they need, ask for more etc.?
- ✓ Are practitioners sitting with the children?
- ✓ Do practitioners model language which describes what the children are doing? "Ayla's eating all of her carrots!"
- ✓ Are practitioners using interesting words to extend children's vocabulary? "This orange is juicy and squishy!"
- ✓ Are practitioners encouraging conversation by sharing their own experiences "yummy, I had banana for my breakfast today"?