



# 5 Tips to Increase Independence with Self-Feeding

## YOUTUBE FREEBIE

Self-feeding a way for a child to gain independence, as well as a great way to develop a variety of skills.

Try these tips to improve independence with self-feeding at any age!

### 1 PRACTICE UTENSILS DURING PLAY

Include cups, spoons, forks, and butter knives into the play routine to practice using utensils - this helps develop those fine motor and bilateral integration skills!

- Use cups and scoops with sensory bins
- Use a fork and knife to cut play dough
- Use a spoon to scoop small items

### 2 MESSY PLAY

Self-feeding can be difficult if the child can't tolerate certain textures. Messy play is a great way to practice touching different textures - food and non-food items!

- Shaving cream or whipped cream
- Apple sauce or yogurt
- Dry items like rice or beans

### 3 CROSSING MIDLINE & BILATERAL INTEGRATION

These underlying skills are necessary for success with self-feeding, so be sure to include them during play!

- Cross crawls and windmills
- Metronome clapping games (start with the metronome set at 60, clap on every beat)
- Games like [Pop Up Pirate](#)

### 4 PRACTICE MIDRANGE CONTROL

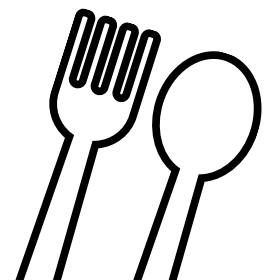
Midrange control is necessary for the child to scoop food and successfully bring it to their mouth. Practice this with different games during play!

- [Suspend](#) and [Jenga](#)
- Block stacking games
- Cup stacking games

### 5 SIMULATE EATING DURING PLAY

You can do this by pretending to feed toys, or even bring preferred toys to the table during a meal and have them join in! Games that encourage eating / self-feeding:

- [Crazy Cereal](#)
- [Crocodile Teeth](#)
- [Ned's Head](#)
- [Yeti in my Spaghetti](#)



# BONUS Ideas!

## 1 HEAVY WORK

Include heavy work into the before-meal routine. Things like - jumping and crashing, animal walks, crawling through tunnels, frog jumps, etc.

Sensory activities that wake up the brain and body while simultaneously providing proprioceptive input can be a game changer when it comes to meal time!

## 2 ORAL MOTOR GAMES

Be sure to include oral motor games into the play routine. This helps increase awareness of the oral structures and can often help desensitize if the child has tactile defensiveness.

- Bubble mountain
- Blowing cotton balls to a target

## 3 MEAL SET UP & CLEAN UP

Always include your child in the meal set up and clean up. This helps provide a sense of control and independence, while also helps build life skills around meal time.

- Set the table
- Help stir the food
- Wash the table
- Help put dishes in the dishwasher

# Want more help?!

## [CHECK OUT OUR SENSORY DIET DIGITAL COURSE](#)

This full length digital course teaches you all about sensory diets and how to create a personalized sensory diet for your child (and even for you!).

- What is a sensory diet?
- What are the 8 sensory systems?
- How does sensory processing affect daily life tasks (such as self-feeding)?
- How to identify sensory preferences / sensory needs.
- Sensory activity toolbox.
- And more!

Visit: [harkla.co/products/sensory-diet-course](https://harkla.co/products/sensory-diet-course)