

Eating at School

Having snacks and lunch at school may mean learning new skills. Sitting at a table with your friends, eating at a specific time and having to finish within a specific time. Being able to open containers and packages on their own is also an important skill.

1. Practice sitting at a table to eat. If friends are too distracting, sit with fewer numbers of friends. At home, eat away from a tv or another screen.
2. Try different containers at the store to see what the child is able open independently.
3. Take food out of packages and put into easy to open containers.
4. Have your child help choose what goes in their lunch.
5. Have picnics to practice in a fun environment
6. Preopen packages and close with a clothespin
7. One container with compartments instead of many smaller containers

Some fun things to do to help build the finger skills for opening packages and containers:

1. Tearing paper - The movement of pinching, moving one hand forward as the other moves back, and working against the resistance of paper are all excellent precursors to tearing open those packages and cartons!
2. Breaking sticks - Go for a little walk in the backyard and find some sticks! Have the child hold a stick upright and break off the tip, stabilizing with one hand and applying force with the other. A great precursor to peeling a banana!
3. Stretching balloons or elastic bands - Give kids a non-inflated balloon or elastic band and let them stretch it. Not only is this a fantastic fidget toy (great for keeping little hands busy at a restaurant), but it also requires the same motion as pulling open those bags of chips or pretzels!
4. Peeling tape - Stick several small pieces of tape to the table and have kids try to pinch, grasp, and pull them off!
5. Plastic lid matching game - Place several different plastic lunch containers on the table. Remove the lids of the containers and mix them up, placing them on the table near the containers. See if the child can find the matching lids and twist or snap them back on the correct containers.
6. Lego or Duplo blocks - Both awesome for developing grasp strength needed for pulling, twisting, and pinching those lunch and snack containers!
7. Velcro - Pulling against heavy duty Velcro is another great hand strengthener. Try adapting books using Velcro or playing with Velcro fruit toys.