



## Do Not Use a "One-Bite" Rule

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Many people use the one-bite rule. They insist that a child put one bite of food on his plate. Then, the child must take at least one bite of that food before he can leave the table, or have a second helping of a preferred food.

Think about the dynamics of requiring children to eat a specific food. Some adults might think the one bite rule is a good idea. Is it because they worry that a child is not getting enough to eat, or enough nutrition, or do they worry that the child will be hungry later. Most people use the one bite rule from good intentions. In fact, as they force a child to eat that one bite, they may use softeners and warm ups in what they say, "Sweetie, just try a little tiny bite. Do it for me, ok?" Or, "Try one bite and we'll tell your dad what a big girl you were at school." The adult may be more direct and authoritarian. "Take that one bite, or you can't leave the table." Or, "At this school, children have to take one bit of everything on their plates."

But let's think about the longer term outcomes.

- Such a rule builds an unnecessary power struggle between the adult and the child as the child's develops preferences for types and amounts of foods.
- When a conflict arises between an adult's desire to control the child's eating, and the child's internal cues of hunger, fullness and preference, both the adult and the child walk a tightrope, going toward each other. One will fall.
- Forcing Children to eat can result in aversion to that food.

Some will argue that children are choosy eaters and will not eat what is good for them. Certainly children must eat a variety of foods so they are well-nourished. Learning to eat a variety of food, however, requires exposure to and knowledge about food. Sometimes people use the one bite rule to get children to eat a variety of foods, rather than taking time to help children come to know food.

Think about this. Many foods, in fact most foods, are unfamiliar or new to children. Here are some ways to help children get started learning about eating un-familiar foods without forcing them to eat a bite because an adult insists.

### Strategies for Helping Children Learn About Unfamiliar Foods

- Model eating unfamiliar food
- Call the unfamiliar food by name, as the adult or peers model eating the food.
- Help children think about texture, taste, and smell of the unfamiliar food.
- Use vocabulary that is familiar to the children as you describe how the unfamiliar food is similar to something they already know.
- Help children place the food into an already familiar category such as vegetable, meat, crisp, sweet, smooth, “like rice.”
- Offer the unfamiliar food many times so the children can become comfortable with the appearance, smell, and feel of the food, before they taste and swallow the food.
- Explore unfamiliar foods in non-meal settings, such as small group times or circle times. This gives children a non-threatening setting from which to explore the food.

If you are in a setting where you are required to use the “one bite” rule:

- Let children decide how big a bite to take;
- Help children save face by describing their attempts at trying. “You smelled the beans and then you tasted them.” “You tried it;”
- Avoid dismissing children’s opinions. Listen to and accept children’s thoughts about whether they like the food or not after they taste it. All of us truly like some foods and truly dislike others. Respect those likes and dislikes. Do not try to overrule them with your own likes and dislikes; and
- Allow children to spit food into a napkin, if they dislike it. Children sometimes actually vomit when they are asked to eat something very distasteful to them.

## Overcoming Picky Eating

Laurel Branen, PhD, RD, LD and Samantha Ramsay, PhD, RD, LD

Why does picky eating drive us nuts?

We know children need a variety of foods  
We want children to develop good eating habits  
We know they will like it if they try it  
We think children should do as they are told  
WE had to eat what WE were served  
We are tired of serving foods they won't eat

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There are three types of picky eating:



### Food Neophobia

Fear of trying  
NEW foods

Food neophobia frequently is related to fear of any new situation. Some researchers believe that it is inborn. Food neophobia often is seen in children who are shy and have high anxiety. The good news is that children with food neophobia often like foods after they get through the trauma of trying them. The important thing is to be supportive as they try new foods and reassure them that they don't have to like it. Respect the child's opinion about the food, rather than pressuring them to like it.



## Finicky Eaters

Children who are particular about certain aspects of the food

Finicky eaters may want toast cut in triangles today and squares tomorrow. They may become upset if their foods touch. Finicky eaters might like fresh peas, but not frozen peas. Some finicky eaters prefer to eat all of one food before starting another. Finicky eating is a normal behavior and may be about trying to have control over something important in their lives. The good news is that finicky eaters are likely to eat a variety of foods if the presentation matches their expectations. It is up to you to decide how far you are willing to go to meet their demands. Cutting toast in triangles takes no more time than cutting squares. However, cooking a separate meal goes beyond the call of duty.



## Picky Eating

Unwillingness to eat a variety of foods, including familiar foods

The causes of picky eating vary. It may be a way for a child to have some control in his or her life. It may be due to increased sensitivity to textures or flavors. For example, picky eaters may be even more sensitive to bitterness than the average child. There is evidence that picky eating can be prevented by eating a variety of foods during pregnancy and by breast feeding. When solids are introduced, offer a variety of flavors and textures. Children who are fed pureed foods for too long develop aversions to various textures. If it is too late to prevent picky eating in your child, you can overcome it using the strategies listed below. The key is patience.

## ***Strategies for Overcoming Picky Eating!***

- « **Maintain a comfortable atmosphere during eating**
- « **Offer less preferred foods with favorite foods**
- « **Talk about sensory aspects of the food such as the flavor and texture**
- « **Teach food related vocabulary, so they can explain why they don't like a food**
- « **Help children to make categories and link new food with familiar foods**
- « **Be empathic; remember that children have more taste buds**
- « **Have a tasting party (game) to introduce new foods**
- « **Show food prior to mealtime**
- « **Involve children in preparation**
- « **Let children assemble their own combination foods (sandwiches, yogurt sundae)**
- « **Help children see how the new food is similar to a food they already know**
- « **Graph children's opinions of the food**
- « **Offer the food many times (unlimited times)**
- « **Pick up child comments about the food and expand them.**
- « **Remember you are a powerful role model**
- « **Ask "If you try it you don't have to like it." (Even give them the option to spit it out.)**
- « **CONTINUE to offer rejected foods!**

## Superando Alimentación Remilgosa

Laurel Branen, PhD, RD, LD y Samantha Ramsay, PhD, RD, LD

# Por qué nos vuelve locos la alimentación remilgosa?

Sabemos que los niños necesitan una variedad de alimentos  
Queremos que los niños desarrollen buenos hábitos de alimentación  
Sabemos que si lo prueban les va a gustar  
Creemos que los niños deben hacer lo que se les dice  
NOSOTROS teníamos que comer lo que se nos servía  
Estamos cansados de servir alimentos que ellos no van a comer.

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Hay tres tipos de alimentación remilgosa:



### Neofobia Alimenticia

Terror de probar alimentos NUEVOS

La neofobia alimenticia está frecuentemente relacionada al temor de cualquier situación nueva. Algunos investigadores creen que es innato. La neofobia alimenticia a menudo se observa en niños que son tímidos y tiene un alto nivel de ansiedad. La buena noticia es que los niños con neofobia alimenticia a menudo gustan de los alimentos después de que pasan por el trauma de probarlos. Lo importante es que se les apoye a medida que prueban alimentos nuevos y asegurarles que no les tienen que gustar. Respete la opinión de los niños acerca del alimento, en lugar de presionarlos para que les guste.



## Comedores remilgosos

Niños que son particulares acerca de ciertos aspectos de la comida

Los comedores remilgosos pueden querer su tostada cortada en triángulos hoy y cuadrados mañana. Pueden alterarse si sus alimentos se tocan uno con otro. Puede que les gusten las arverjitas frescas pero no congeladas. Algunos niños particulares para comer prefieren comer todo de un alimento antes de empezar el otro. Comer de forma particular es un comportamiento normal y puede ser que se trate de tener control sobre algo importante en sus vidas. La buena noticia es que es probable que los niños particulares para comer coman una variedad de alimentos si la presentación llena sus expectativas. Depende de Ud. decidir que tan lejos está Ud dispuesto a llegar para satisfacer sus demandas. Cortar la tostada en triángulos no toma más tiempo que cortarla en cuadrados. Sin embargo, cocinar una comida por separado va más allá del llamado del deber.



## Alimentación melindrosa

Falta de voluntad de comer una variedad de alimentos incluyendo alimentos familiares

Las causas de la alimentación melindrosa varían. Puede que sea un modo en que el niño tiene algo de control en su vida. Puede ser debido a una mayor sensibilidad a texturas y sabores. Por ejemplo, los comedores melindrosos pueden ser más sensibles al sabor amargo que el promedio de los niños. Existe evidencia de que la alimentación melindrosa puede ser prevenida comiendo una variedad de alimentos durante el embarazo y dando de lactar. Al introducir alimentos sólidos, ofrezca una variedad de texturas y sabores. Los niños alimentados con purés por mucho tiempo desarrollan aversiones a varias texturas. Si ya es demasiado tarde para prevenir alimentación melindrosa en su niño, Ud puede superarla utilizando las estrategias listadas a continuación. La clave es paciencia.

## ***Estrategias para superar Alimentación melindrosa!***

- « **Mantenga una atmósfera cómoda durante las comidas.**
- « **Ofrezca alimentos menos preferidos junto con alimentos favoritos.**
- « **Hable acerca de aspectos sensoriales de los alimentos tales como el sabor y la textura.**
- « **Enseñe vocabulario relacionado a los alimentos, de modo que ellos puedan explicar por qué no les gusta un alimento.**
- « **Ayude a los niños a hacer categorías y a conectar alimentos nuevos con alimentos familiares.**
- « **Sea empático; recuerde que los niños tienen más papilas gustativas.**
- « **Haga una fiesta de degustación (juego) para introducir nuevos alimentos.**
- « **Muestre los alimentos antes de la hora de la comida**
- « **Involucre a los niños en la preparación**
- « **Permita que los niños ensamblen su propia combinación de alimentos (emparedados, sundae de yogurt)**
- « **Ayude a los niños a ver como el nuevo alimento es similar a un alimento que ellos ya conocen**
- « **Haga gráficos con las opiniones de los niños acerca del alimento**
- « **Ofrezca el alimento muchas veces (número ilimitado de veces)**
- « **Recoja y expanda los comentarios de los niños acerca del alimento**
- « **Recuerde que Ud. es un poderoso modelo de comportamiento.**
- « **Dícales “No te tiene que gustar si lo pruebas” (Hasta deles la opción de escupirlo si no les gusta)**
- « **CONTINÚE ofreciendo alimentos que han sido rechazados!**



## Phrases that Help, Phrases that Hinder

Janice Fletcher, EdD and Laurel Branen, PhD, RD, LD

### Phrases that help children to accept new foods:

1. John said he likes the kiwi fruit.
2. What do you think this tastes like? It tastes familiar to me.
3. What do you like best about the kiwi?
4. I see some tiny seeds in here.
5. Kiwi is a fruit, so it is sweet and juicy.
6. I think kiwi tastes sort of like a banana and sort of like a strawberry.

### Phrases that hinder acceptance of new foods:

1. Look at John eat his kiwi. Why can't you be like John?
2. Eat some kiwi for me.
3. Big boys and girls eat kiwi.
4. It's good. You will like the kiwi.
5. You can have some noodles after you eat the kiwi.
6. You can go out and play after you eat one slice of kiwi.

## **Frases que Ayudan, Frases que Dificultan**

Janice Fletcher, EdD and Laurel Branen, PhD, RD, LD

### **Frases que ayudan a los niños a aceptar nuevas comidas**

1. Juán dice que le gusta el kiwi.
2. A qué piensas que se parece el sabor de esto? A mí me parece que sabe a algo familiar.
3. Qué te gusta mas acerca del kiwi?
4. Yo veo algunas semillitas aquí
5. El kiwi es una fruta , así que es dulce y jugoso.
6. Yo pienso que el kiwi sabe un poco como plátano y un poco como fresa.

### **Frases que dificultan la aceptación de nuevos alimentos:**

1. Mira como Juán come su kiwi. Por qué no puedes ser como Juán?
2. Come un poco de kiwi por mí.
3. Los niños y niñas grandes comen kiwi.
4. Es rico. Te va a gustar el kiwi
5. Puedes comer algo de fideos después que comas el kiwi.
6. Puedes salir a jugar después de que comas una tajada de kiwi



## Thinking About the “One-bite” Rule An Opinion Worksheet

Janice Fletcher, EdD and Laurel Branen, PhD, RD, LD

Some people use a rule that children must try at least one bite of all the foods on the table. People might call this a “Thank-the-Cook Bite,” or a “Bug Bite,” or a “No Thank-you Bite,” or even a “Big-Girl Bite.”

Write your thoughts about using the one-bite rule using the questions below. Discuss the thoughts expressed by folks in your group.

1. I like the “One-bite Rule” because:

Nutritional reason

Social reason

Emotional reason

Other

2. I do not like the “One-bite Rule” because:

Nutritional reason

Social reason

Emotional reason

Other

3. I think children should be required to try all foods from the daily menu, even if it is only one bite, because:

4. I think children should be allowed to choose how much or whether they eat the food that is offered because: