

Picky Eating: Food Detective



Look at what the child already eats to find patterns and choose a "just right" next food.

1 List Current Foods

Write down the foods the child currently eats consistently.
Be specific about brands, textures, and how they are prepared.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

2 Analyze Current Foods

Choose the 5 most common/preferred foods (or the 5 foods your child eats the most) and use the checklist below to look at the characteristics. This will help you see common features and choose a next food to try.

Food (brand if relevant)	Resistance (how hard is it to bite/chew?) 	Sensory Input (how much sensory input does it provide?) 	Size (what size pieces does the child prefer?) 	Shape (what shape is easiest for the child?) 	Texture Scatter (does it stay together or crumble/scatter?) 	Consistency (one texture or multiple textures?) 	Placement (where does the child tend to chew it?) 	Transfer (does it require movement from side to side during chewing?) 
1. _____	☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High	☐ Strong ☐ Medium ☐ Mild	☐ Small ☐ Medium ☐ Large	☐ Long/narrow ☐ Rectangular ☐ Round ☐ Wide ☐ Other: _____	☐ Stays together ☐ Some pieces ☐ Crumbles	☐ Single ☐ Two ☐ Multiple	☐ Side ☐ Middle/side ☐ Center/front ☐ Not sure	☐ Little/none ☐ Some ☐ Significant ☐ Not sure
2. _____	☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High	☐ Strong ☐ Medium ☐ Mild	☐ Small ☐ Medium ☐ Large	☐ Long/narrow ☐ Rectangular ☐ Round ☐ Wide ☐ Other: _____	☐ Stays together ☐ Some pieces ☐ Crumbles	☐ Single ☐ Two ☐ Multiple	☐ Side ☐ Middle/side ☐ Center/front ☐ Not sure	☐ Little/none ☐ Some ☐ Significant ☐ Not sure
3. _____	☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High	☐ Strong ☐ Medium ☐ Mild	☐ Small ☐ Medium ☐ Large	☐ Long/narrow ☐ Rectangular ☐ Round ☐ Wide ☐ Other: _____	☐ Stays together ☐ Some pieces ☐ Crumbles	☐ Single ☐ Two ☐ Multiple	☐ Side ☐ Middle/side ☐ Center/front ☐ Not sure	☐ Little/none ☐ Some ☐ Significant ☐ Not sure
4. _____	☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High	☐ Strong ☐ Medium ☐ Mild	☐ Small ☐ Medium ☐ Large	☐ Long/narrow ☐ Rectangular ☐ Round ☐ Wide ☐ Other: _____	☐ Stays together ☐ Some pieces ☐ Crumbles	☐ Single ☐ Two ☐ Multiple	☐ Side ☐ Middle/side ☐ Center/front ☐ Not sure	☐ Little/none ☐ Some ☐ Significant ☐ Not sure
5. _____	☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High	☐ Strong ☐ Medium ☐ Mild	☐ Small ☐ Medium ☐ Large	☐ Long/narrow ☐ Rectangular ☐ Round ☐ Wide ☐ Other: _____	☐ Stays together ☐ Some pieces ☐ Crumbles	☐ Single ☐ Two ☐ Multiple	☐ Side ☐ Middle/side ☐ Center/front ☐ Not sure	☐ Little/none ☐ Some ☐ Significant ☐ Not sure

3 What Patterns Do You Notice?

Look at the foods the child eats most. Rate how common each feature is for those foods.
(0 = not a common feature, 10 = very common feature)

Not Common
(0)

Very Common
(10)

Resistance (soft to hard)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sensory input (mild to strong)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Size (small to large pieces)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Shape (long, round, wide, etc.)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Texture scatter (stays together to crumbles)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Consistency (single to multiple textures)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Placement (side to center/front)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Transfer (little to significant side-to-side)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

What do you notice about the foods the child eats most?

Trying a New Food

A Step-by-Step Progression

Use this same 10-step progression every time you try a new food.



Praise heavily + give a reward after EACH successful step!

The goal is NOT to complete all 10 steps quickly. Stay at a step as long as needed. Success at ANY step is progress!

1

Tolerate the food nearby.



The child can be near the food (e.g., on the table or plate).

2

Touch it.



The child touches the food with a finger or hand.

3

Squish it or play with it.



The child can squish, break, or play with the food.

4

Touch it to the cheek.



The child touches the food to their cheek.

5

Touch it to the lips.



The child touches the food to their lips.

6

Touch it to the teeth.



The child touches the food to their teeth.

7

Touch it to the tongue.



The child touches the food to their tongue.

8

Bite it and spit it out.



The child bites the food and spits it out.

9

Hold it in the mouth and spit it out.



The child holds the food in their mouth and then spits it out.

10

Eventually, chew and swallow it.



The child chews the food and swallows it.



Track Our Progress

Write the HIGHEST step successfully completed each day. Leave blank if you didn't practice that day.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 1 Dates: _____							
Week 2 Dates: _____							
Week 3 Dates: _____							
Week 4 Dates: _____							



Food we are trying:

Brand/Preparation (if relevant): _____

Start date: _____

Notes:

What worked? What was difficult?
Any changes in the child's response?
