

Cooking

Rationale:

Cooking teaches your child so much more than how to prepare a dish. She learns early numeracy skills from measuring or counting, and literacy skills from reading a recipe. It is special time with you, which is good for your relationship. It is creative, hands-on and a bit messy, so it is fun. Sitting down with your family and sharing a meal that you have prepared is also a great way to develop social skills like sharing and talking and listening.

Age range information

3-6 years

What you need

You will need to decide what to cook with your child. You might know a simple dish that you could make with her. Perhaps it is something she likes to eat, like a favourite meal or dessert. Otherwise, look on the internet for child-friendly recipes, or at your library or bookshop for cookbooks for children. It is good to give your child a choice of what to cook, but make sure the recipe is simple enough, or you will end up doing it all yourself while she watches.

Once you have decided what to cook, check that you have all the ingredients and equipment before you start. Supervise your child carefully around sharp objects like knives, heat sources like the oven and stove, and hot water.

How to do it

1. Make sure you have a nice clear space to work in and allow lots of time. Cooking with children can be unpredictable. Things get spilt or knocked over, and your child will probably want to taste all the ingredients. She is also likely to mix and measure very slowly.
2. Talk about the dish before you start. Show your child the ingredients and the recipe if you are using one.
3. Let your child do as much as possible. Show her what to do then let her have a turn. You can finish it off yourself if you need to.
4. Children can pour and stir from a young age. Older children will be able to measure and weigh and do some easy cutting under careful supervision. For example, you might let your child cut up some soft fruit like melon for a fruit salad.
5. Let your child share her dish with friends or family. Praise her cooking and her hard work! Talk about what you made. Encourage your child to come up with interesting words to describe flavours and textures, like 'salty', 'crumbly' or 'crunchy'.

Adapting for children of different ages

A simple green salad is a good first dish for your younger child. Help her wash the leaves and herbs, then let her tear them up with her fingers. Help her to measure and add the ingredients for the dressing and give her a set of spoons to mix the salad in the bowl.

Written recipes are a good way for your older child to learn. Read the recipe with your child before you start. Talk about concepts like fractions, weights and temperature. Cooking is also a window into other countries and cultures. Talk about where a foreign dish originated, and the people who live there.



Recommended Reads by the National Library Board

Recommended Reads

- [Annie the Apple Pie Fairy](#)
- [An Astronaut Cookbook: Simple Recipes for Kids](#)
- [Burro's Tortillas](#)

Engage your child with simple activities at home! Check out some of these things you can do together:

- [Make Your Own Sandwich](#)