



# MEALTIME GUIDE FOR CAREGIVERS OF CHILDREN WITH DEAFBLINDNESS

## Introduction

Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) are essential skills that enable children with deafblindness to participate fully and independently in daily routines. Mealtime supports nutrition, social interaction, and self-confidence. This guide offers sensory rich, step-by-step strategies to help you build your child's skills and independence at meals.

## Objectives

To build your child's independence and confidence at mealtimes.

To encourage self-feeding skills and safe swallowing.

To reinforce food concepts (sweet, salty, sour, etc.) through multi-sensory exploration.

## Materials Needed

### Utensils & Tableware

Plate (distinct color or texture)

Spoon (adapted grip if needed)

Fork

Bowl or plate for different foods



Drinking cup or glass

## Hygiene Items

Washbasin or bowl for handwashing

Soap and water

Towel

Bib or mealtime cloth

## Food Items

A variety of textures and flavors (e.g mashed banana, soft fruits, porridge)

Liquids (water, juice) in a small cup

## Mealtime Routine:

A consistent, sensory rich routine helps children with deafblindness learn mealtime skills and build confidence. Start with a clear cue that mealtime is beginning, guide your child through exploring utensils and foods, support their self-feeding, and finish with praise and a closing signal.

### **Prepare & Signal**

Ensure both the caregiver and the child are seated comfortably at a tidy, clear table.

Wash and dry hands together.

Use the bib or a spoon as a consistent “start” signal.

### **Explore Utensils & Foods**

Offer each item (spoon, plate, cup) for the child to touch and name, using speech plus tactile signing.

Allow sniffing, touching, and small tastes of each food.



Prompt: “Can you smell how sweet this is?”

### **Guided Self Feeding**

Scoop a modest portion onto the spoon.

Gently guide the child’s hand to their mouth; then let them feed themselves as much as possible.

Provide adapted grips if needed.

### **Sensory Feedback & Praise**

Place the child’s hand on your cheek or throat to feel chewing and swallowing movements.

Offer specific praise for each success (e.g “Great scoop!” “Well done chewing!”).

### **Reinforce Taste Concepts**

Introduce simple tasting words as the child samples each bite:

“Sweet,” “salty,” “sour,” “bitter.”

### **Finish & Clean Up**

Guide the child to clear away utensils and wash hands again.

Use a consistent closing phrase, such as “We have finished our meal,” to signal the end.

## **Key Learning Points & Tips**

**Comfort & Focus:** Minimize distractions on the table and in the environment.

**Consistent Cues:** Use the same object (spoon, bib) to signal mealtime start and end.

**Sensory Engagement:** Let your child smell, touch, and taste food before eating.



**Empower Choice:** Place small amounts of food on their lips and allow them to choose acceptance.

**Joint Attention:** Use shared attention techniques—place their palm on your cheek during chewing.

**Practice Beyond Meals:** Allow utensil practice in play times to build familiarity without hunger pressure.

**Positive Reinforcement:** Praise every small success— “good, good, good!”

## Conclusion

Implementing these multisensory, consistent, and child-led strategies will help your child with deafblindness develop mealtime skills, build independence, and improve self-esteem.

Remember: **small steps and patience pave the way for big achievements.**