

# Talking Food

Did you know that talking at mealtimes can support early language and literacy development? When sharing mealtimes with young children, talk about the food, ask thought-provoking questions, and have conversations and you will be encouraging language development.

## Conversation starters:

- What colors do you see?
- Where do you think the food came from?
- What is your favorite snack?
- Who is sitting by you at snack today?
- What foods do you like to eat at home?
- \*With infants, try labeling (“You’re holding your bottle of milk”)
- \*With older children, encourage thinking (“What ingredients do you think are in this recipe?”)

## More Talking

Talking about the food is fun, but snack and mealtime are also a great time to talk about children’s families, friends, and ideas. Try starting conversations by asking questions: “I saw you and Sarah building with blocks. What were you two working on?” “Yesterday you played in the sandbox. What might you try outside today, Ben?”

## Funny Sounds and Talking Food

Along with using conversation starters, try to encourage the food to “talk” as well as inspire discussion that is sparked by food ideas. Just what is your animal cracker saying?

## Rhyming fruit salad

\* This recipe is not intended for infants and young toddlers

**Various fruit, washed, peeled, and cut into bite-size pieces (1/2 cup per child)**

Make simple fruit salads with bananas, berries, and grapes. Children can add rhyming sounds for each fruit (Grape, ape; berry, hairy, dairy). Young children may need help getting started. The rhyme doesn’t need to be a real word, just a rhyming sound (banana, fanana). By rhyming, children identify sounds and patterns in words. Take turns saying each other’s rhymes. Remember to eat all your rhymes!

**Caution:** When offering food to young children, be aware of allergies and choking hazards such as nuts, popcorn, raw vegetables, and hot dogs; do not give these to infants and young toddlers.

Closely supervise young children when they eat.



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## Counting Crackers

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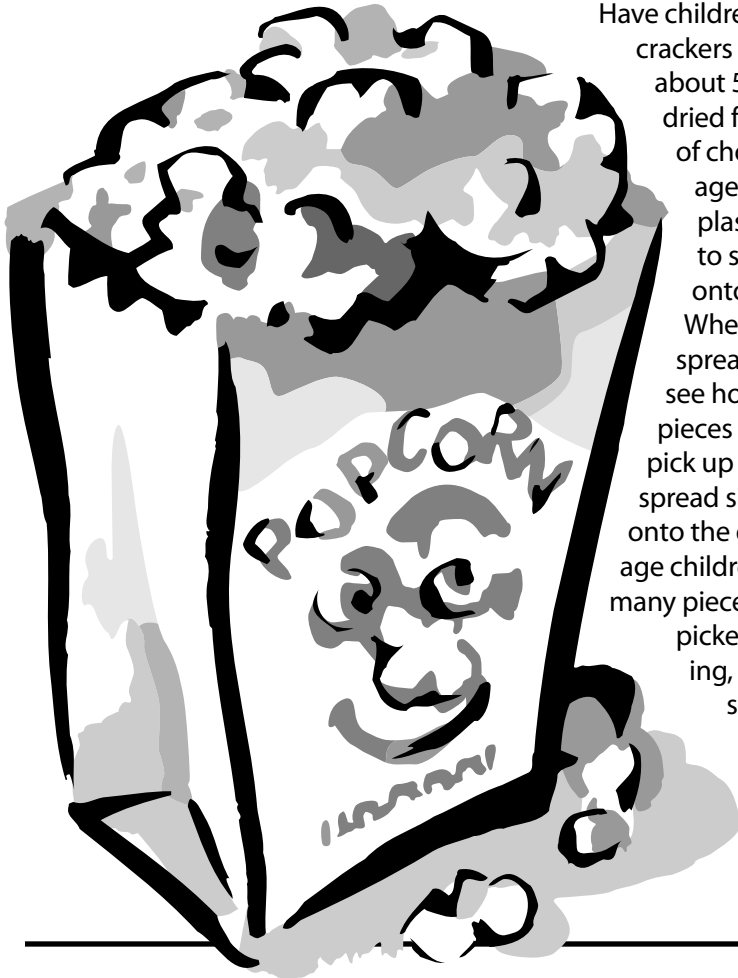
**Whole grain crackers (about 4 crackers per child)**

**Dried fruit such as raisins, cranberries (about 5-10 pieces per child)**

**Spread of choice (fruit jam, peanut butter, cheese) (about 4 T per child)**

**Plastic spoons or knives**

Have children count out four crackers each and also about 5-10 pieces of dried fruit. Offer spread of choice and encourage children to use a plastic spoon or knife to spread the topping onto their crackers. When crackers are spread, have children see how many dried fruit pieces their cracker can pick up by pushing the spread side of the cracker onto the dried fruit. Encourage children to count how many pieces their cracker picked up. After counting, eat and count some more!



## Popping Popcorn - Popping Names

\* This recipe is not intended for infants and young toddlers

**Popcorn (microwave popcorn or pan popping corn; follow directions on popcorn package) about ½ cup per child**

**Optional - popcorn toppings (salt, butter, cinnamon, cheese)**

Make popcorn with children so they can hear the sound of the popcorn (record it if possible). Talk about how the “pop” sounds start (at first no popping, then one or two pops, a few more, and then many pops). Try clapping to the rhythm of the popcorn popping.

After making the popcorn, try “pop-clapping” the children’s names; clapping out the sounds of children’s names. For example, Sarah would have 2 claps; Sar - ah . Then proceed to “pop-clap” the name like the popcorn is popped; slow, then faster and faster. Take breaks in between “clap-popping” names and eat some popcorn!

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