

# Early Learning Parents' Pages



## June 2017

How to minimize  
mealtime mischief  
**Water safety**

Father's Day, free summer meals  
and Great Outdoors Month



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## Mealtime Mischief

**W**hat does mealtime mean to you? Time to relax and enjoy being with your family or the time of day you dread most?

Babies and toddlers can make mealtimes fun or the most trying part of your day. Rosalynn Duffy suggests ways to deal with *mealtime mischief* in her book *The Top Ten Preschool Parenting Problems*. You may find some of her ideas useful in making your family's mealtimes less stressful and more enjoyable.

Mealtimes are often difficult because the adult and child have different agendas for meals. Adults want to eat and connect with other family members while young children may only want attention from their parents and siblings. Sometimes children are not hungry, do not like the food served or can't sit still during dinner. Look at what happens to cause stress during your family meals and try to address the real problems. You may find that your child is snacking too close to mealtime or after meals, so he doesn't want to eat during meals. You can control the availability of snacks before and after meals and make sure there is something healthy you know your child likes included in the meal. If your child is old enough let her make suggestions of healthy foods to include in



meals each week. Asking your child to help prepare the meal or set the table is a good idea to help her feel a part of the meal.

If your child demands attention during the meal, find ways to give him individual attention before or after the meal. While dinner is cooking, read your child a story or talk about his day with him as you prepare dinner. Take a walk together, read a story, sing songs or play a game after dinner. During the meal, ask each family member to tell something that he or she did today. Let your attention-seeking child talk first.

Some young children get out of their seats and run around during a meal. Teach your child the expectations you have for her behavior at the table and reinforce them consistently. Tell her, "Getting out of your chair during a meal means you are finished eating" and take away her plate. Do not allow snacks after the meal. Your child will not starve between meals and will learn

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## Father's Day

June 18 is Father's Day. It is a time to thank dad for all of the things he does for his family. The role dads have in their children's lives is very important to their healthy development.



Having family time with young children is important and would be the

perfect way to celebrate Father's Day. Since June is [Great Outdoors Month](#), it may be fun for the family to do something special outside with dad. Going

to a park for a picnic, riding bikes, and going swimming or fishing would be fun for everyone.



Children enjoy making something special to give dads for Father's Day. Making a card or special gift is fun for children and is something dads will treasure. Mom or other family members will need to help young children with most gifts or cards, but should allow the child to do as much as he can on his own.



There are ideas for creating gifts for dad on the [Office of Early Learning's Pinterest](#) June

Upcoming Events Board. PBS Parents has many great ideas to

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## Summer BreakSpots – Free Meals for Kids

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services administers the Summer BreakSpot Program, also known as the Summer Food Service Program. Summer BreakSpots are federally funded programs operated locally by nonprofit organizations. Children, 18 or younger, can get nutritionally balanced meals that meet USDA guidelines at no charge. The BreakSpots are often located in schools, community centers, recreation centers and faith-based organizations. Some sites offer recreational activities and may charge a registration fee for these services. Some sites request that an adult or teenager accompany young children during the meal because there may not be extra staff on site to supervise children who are not part of their regular programs.

If there are no Summer BreakSpots in your area and your

community, school or nonprofit agency would like to sponsor one, email the program director at [Rachel.Mohler@FreshFromFlorida.com](mailto:Rachel.Mohler@FreshFromFlorida.com) or call 1-800-504-6609. Click to [find a site](#) in your area or call 1-866-384-6479.

**School's Out!**  
**POWER UP**  
for  
**Summer Fun!**

SUMMER MEALS for KIDS & TEENS  
Being Served in Your Community

To find a nearby site:  
Call 1-866-348-6479  
Go to [www.fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks](http://www.fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks)

Open to all children 18 and younger  
NO Enrollment, NO Cost!

USDA | Food and Nutrition Service | USDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.



June is Great Outdoors Month. It is important for children to spend time playing outdoors. Find ways to spend time together as a family outdoors having fun.

Get Outdoors Florida! has resources to support communities, families and individuals in outdoor experiences to achieve healthier lifestyles and foster an appreciation for Florida's natural resources.



<http://getoutdoorsflorida.com/Resources%20For%20Families>

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## A father's impact on child development

Father's Day is a time to celebrate the impact of fathers on their children's development. In the past, research suggested that mothers were the influential parenting figure because they often spent most of their time with their children. However, times have changed. Now, many parents share child care duties and both parents work. Regardless of the amount of time dads spend at home with their children, research studies show that dads have a vital impact on the development of their children.

The positive impact of a dad or father figure in the life of a child begins before the child is born. If a mom has support from a husband or significant partner during pregnancy, her child is usually healthier at birth and it is more likely that the dad will continue to be involved in the child's life. An affectionate, involved father will respond to the baby's cries and calm the child down by soothing him or interacting playfully. This helps to make the attachment between father and child stronger. Children who have strong attachments to parents are more sociable, have more friends and do better academically than those who do not have secure attachments.



## Father's Day

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use for [celebrating Father's Day](#) such as making gifts and cards, or cooking with dad. Make a "[Goodie Bag](#)" for dad and fill it with his favorite treats. Read [books that celebrate dads](#) throughout the day.



The most important thing to do on Father's Day is for young children to spend time together with their dads if possible. If dad is not at home or lives somewhere too far away to visit, video chats help children feel closer to their dads. Remember, the best part of Father's Day for dads is spending time with their children.



A father who plays with his child and talks, reads and sings with his child supports their language and cognitive skills, helping the child to become better at communicating with others. Recent research shows that involved fathers use more words during play with children

than moms and may have a bigger impact on the children's language development. Studies show that the more time fathers spend playing, reading and sharing stories with their children, the better the child's math and reading scores are at 10 and 11 years old. (*The Daddy Factor*, Zero to Three, Feb. 29, 2016)

Let dads know how much influence they have on the positive development of their children this Father's Day and thank them for all they do to make their children and families stronger.



## Happy Father's Day!

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## Mealtime Mischief

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That mealtime is the time to eat. She will soon get the message that she must stay in her chair and eat during meals.

When your child is old enough to begin using spoons and forks and can hold his own cup or glass, you need to be patient and teach him how to use them. Make sure you have the correct size for his hands and be patient with his learning process. Buy cups with lids that have slits or straws to help reduce spills until he can control his movements. Only put a small amount of liquid in the cups in case the lid comes off while he is drinking. It helps toddlers to have handles on cups so they can grip them more securely. When your child is learning to use a fork or spoon, serve food that is easy to get on a spoon or fork. Jello or soup is difficult for a child to eat with a spoon; macaroni and cheese is much easier to eat from a spoon or fork. Be prepared for frequent spills during baby and toddler years and keep wipes or towels nearby to catch spills quickly. You can teach your toddler or preschooler to help mop up spills with paper towels or a child-sized mop. Teaching your child mealtime expectations and consistently supporting her as she learns them will take time, but will make mealtimes more pleasant for everyone and is well worth the time and effort.



## Water Safety

Summer is here and many families will be having fun on or around water. The [Pool Safety Campaign](#) has tips and resources for families and children to help them learn about water safety.

1. Never leave a child unattended in or near water.
2. Teach children how to swim.
3. Teach children to stay away from drains.
4. Make sure all pools and spas that you allow your children in have the required drain covers.
5. Make sure all pools and spas have the required barriers, covers and alarms.
6. Make sure you or any other adults supervising children know how to perform CPR on children and adults.
7. Take the [Pool Safety Pledge](#).



The [Pool Safety website](#) has a Kids Corner with the pledge to support child pool safety. There is a [Pool Safety song video](#) and a Kids Activity Poster for coloring. The Adventures of Splish and Splash is an interactive app you can download that teaches your child ways to stay safe around a pool.

Make sure your child is safe while having fun in the pool.

## Coming in July...

- Fourth of July
- Florida's Sales Tax Holiday
- Immunizations
- Explore Summer Learning
- Dining Out with Young Children



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