

SNACK

The snack area is an integral part of the nursery environment. Fruit, water and milk or milk alternatives are always available, whilst snack and meals are offered at setting specific times.

Children should have access to opportunities and experiences that support them to prepare and taste a variety of foods, learning where food comes from and how it's produced. The space should be enabling, supporting and promoting children's independence.

Snack routines are about more than simply meeting children's fundamental needs, they support children to learn necessary life skills, such as: cutting, spreading, pouring, and basic mealtime etiquette.

Through facilitating relaxed, unrushed snack experiences, practitioners help children develop positive attitudes towards different experiences associated with food: socialising with peers, exercising choice and preferences, and experimenting with new flavours and textures.

CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

Snack experiences such as using cutlery, carrying crockery, and pouring drinks help children develop their fine-motor skills, hand-eye coordination, dexterity and balance.

Children can develop independence, make their own choices and enjoy trying various foods in different social contexts.



By tasting, exploring and learning about different foods, children gain understanding of how eating and drinking affect their growing bodies, promoting healthy lifestyle habits.

Through participating in setting-up, eating, clearing away, washing-up, composting and recycling, children learn about being respectful and responsible citizens.

The snack area supports positive daily hygiene practices and safety routines, including handwashing and toothbrushing, helping children recognise the importance of maintaining good personal hygiene.



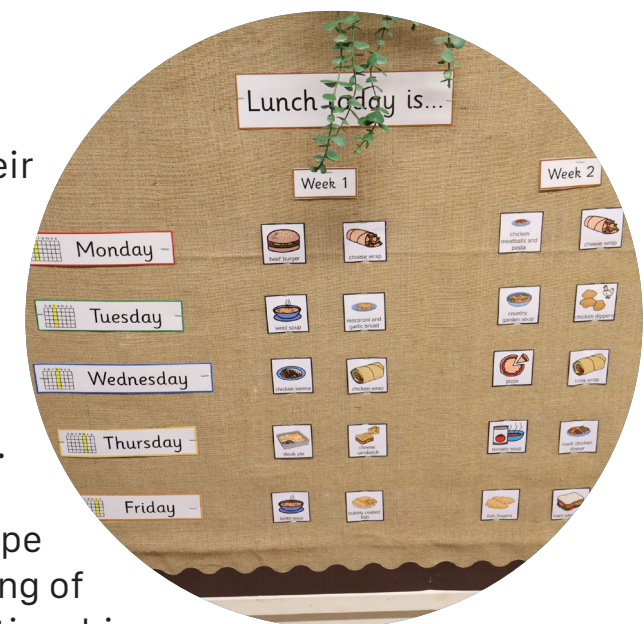
Literacy

Children extend their vocabulary as they learn the names of foods, use and hear phrases that describe textures and flavours, and express their preferences.

Through engaging in discussions around food experiences, children can share thoughts and ideas and learn the basics of conversation, including when it's appropriate to talk or listen.

Signs, books and texts, such as menus and recipe books support children to develop understanding of sounds, letters and words, discovering the relationship between them.

Children can develop mark-making skills as they learn to write menus, make shopping lists for snack, create recipes and share their experiences and feelings around food.



Maths & Numeracy

Involving children in setting-up snack supports exploration of mathematical concepts: one-to-one correspondence, volume, comparison and size.

Through preparing snack, children build awareness of how to share a collection of items by creating smaller groups. Splitting whole objects into smaller parts supports understanding of fractions.

Signs and charts around the snack area help children find information, follow routines and sequences, plan, and make choices.



Other

Using technology such as toasters, microwaves and kitchen utensils help children develop understanding of technology in their everyday lives.

Involving children in planning, ordering, paying for and receiving food enhances understanding of ways that money is used to pay for items and services.

Through opportunities to taste food from various countries, children can explore the origins of food, discovering how these relate to different cultures and festivals.



Children's understanding of the 'seed-to-plate' process can be supported by offering various food-related experiences, including participating in the planting, growing and harvesting of food.



ROLE OF THE ADULT

Practitioners should ensure that food experiences happen within a positive, relaxed and unhurried atmosphere, free from pressure. This encourages the development of positive attitudes and relationships towards food, affording opportunities to engage in interactions with peers and practitioners.



By sitting with children during snack, practitioners can role-model skills and expected behaviours, such as sitting at the table whilst eating and using cutlery properly.

Adults should possess strong understanding and confidence regarding processes designed to support children's safety. This includes appropriate

preparation of food to prevent choking risks, and awareness of allergens, dietary requirements and cultural preferences. It's important to consult nutritional guidance and food standards to promote healthy food choices.

It's essential that staff follow their setting's policies and guidelines to ensure the environment remains safe, clean and hygienic. This includes adherence to cleaning schedules, appropriate storage of foods and cleaning materials, and accurate record keeping.



Practitioners should support children to develop skills that will enable them to exercise independence and choice around food. However, it's important that staff observe children, remaining attuned to their needs, offering support where necessary.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

Ideally, the area should have an easy-clean floor and be located beside sinks and sockets, allowing for appliances to be plugged-in.

Consider the impact that nearby areas may have on children, do these help to promote a calm and relaxing atmosphere?

The space should be enabling, supporting children to access food, resources and equipment. Items and resources should be well organised and clearly labelled.

Surfaces should be available for both preparation and presentation of snack. Children should have adequate space to move in and around the table.

RESOURCE IDEAS

Appropriately sized tables and chairs

High-quality cups, plates, bowls, cutlery

Sharp colour-coded child-sized knives

Tongs and serving plates

Small jugs for water and milk

Menus

Washable tablecloths

Handwashing poster and sequencing strips

Real flowers or centre pieces



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REFLECTION POINTS

- In what ways can settings involve families and members of the community in children's snack and mealtime experiences? If the setting has a local farm shop, is it possible to pay a visit? Can the setting's food and nutrition policy be developed in consultation with families?
- Are children encouraged and supported to plant and grow their own food? Are they afforded the opportunity to experience the full 'seed-to-plate' process? What are the unique learning experiences associated with this?
- Do practitioners value the quality of children's mealtime experiences? Are mealtimes facilitated in a way that provides an unhurried, relaxed and positive atmosphere around food, or are they organised to accommodate staff rotas, lunches and tasks?
- Does the setting offer a diverse range of foods that provide experiences from and support understanding of different cultures?



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