



A Parent's Mini Guide to Understanding Your Child's Sensory Food Preferences

**Unlock The Secret
to your Child's
Food Choices**



What is sensory processing?

Sensory processing refers to how the brain interprets and responds to information from the senses.



Taste



Smell



Sight



Touch



Sound

Common Triggers

Sensory Trigger	Examples	Common Reactions
Texture	Yoghurt Rice Raw Veg	Too slimy/wet Too gritty Too crunchy
Taste	Spicy Bitter	Too intense Strong flavour
Smell	Fish Curry Vinegar	Gags Refuse/no sauce Move away
Appearance	Mixed food (stew) or Dark foods	Prefers plain or beige foods
Temperature	Ice cream Hot Soup	Avoids extreme temperatures



Strategies for encouraging variety

Gradual Exposure

Start with TINY portions of food. Let your child see, smell or touch food first.

Pair with a safe food

When introducing a new food, pair it with a food your child accepts (a safe food). E.g. plain, beige food with a small amount of new food on a separate plate.

Sensory play (younger children)

Let them explore textures without pressure and try not to worry about the mess! Put food in bags to squeeze or walk on if they don't like dirty hands.

Tips for tweens and teens

Start a conversation – ask them if there is a food they would like to try and involve them in the meal plan for the week or the shopping. Give them control by providing various meal components they can choose. E.g. DIY Pizza Night – serve a pizza base with tomato or BBQ sauces, different cheeses and various toppings, they can add what they like.

Avoid Pressure

Language is important and talking negatively about food can have a big impact on how your child views it. Try to not offer food as a reward or deny dessert if they don't finish their meal. No more “just try a bit more” or “one more bite” – you provide the food but they decide how much they eat. This will improve their confidence to try different foods as they feel more in control.

What next?

📌 Your child's sensory food preferences may take a long time to navigate, but with patience and the right tips, progress is possible.

📌 Every child is different and progress takes time – celebrate the little wins and try to not compare your child to their siblings or peers.



Save and Print my Progress Checker below to keep track of your child's progress. It contains a few notes and ideas to get you started.














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
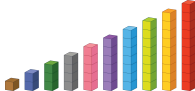


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Progress Tracker

Strategy	Food	Action / Reaction	Done
	E.g. Peas	   	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	E.g. Plain pasta with peas	   	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>E.g. Put cornflakes into a freezer bag and let your child squash them or step on them</p> <p>Give your child a banana to squish</p> <p>Jelly in a zip lock bag to mush without the mess</p>	<p>Crispy</p> <p>Soft</p> <p>Crunchy</p> <p>Smooth</p> <p>Wet/Goosey</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Progress Tracker

Strategy	Food	Action / Reaction	Done
	<p>E.g. Talk - "What would be your perfect meal?"</p> <p>Plan - leave spaces in your meal plan for your teen/tween to fill in.</p> <p>Shop - they can add 1 new food each week</p> <p>Result - did they try it, interact with it or taste it?</p>	      	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<p>E.g. Take a step back when your child eats and observe how they interact with the different foods. This will help you identify which foods they feel "safe" around.</p> <p>Do they have to have foods separate and not touching? Do they eat in a particular order, soft first, crunchy last? Do they prefer certain colours? Do they wait for food to cool down? Do they prefer eating with their fingers?</p>	        	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>