

My first spoon

Age: 4-12 months

Resources: Spoon, bowl or plate, non-slip mat, a large bib

Tips:

Teaching your child to use a spoon can be time-consuming, messy and tricky but is an important life skill. When beginning to wean your baby, give them a small, safe spoon to explore. Let your child hold the spoon and give simple language prompts to show your child what is going to happen next.

Using high contrast for children with a reduced vision is vital. For example, use plain bowls and plates with a spoon in a contrasting colour. These colours will maximise your child's visual access and make locating the spoon or bowl easier.

Firstly, ensure that your working area is cleared and free from clutter, then place the bowl and spoon on a well-contrasted, non-slip mat on the highchair tray.

Activity:

- Both you and your child need to have a **spoon ready** to start the meal. Tell your child when the spoon is approaching their mouth. For example, tap the bowl two times and scrape the edge of the bowl as you load the spoon. Use verbal prompts to support this, but do not over complicate language; keep it fun and simple.
- Your child may want to **explore with their hands**. Let your child get used to being confident with new textures and try to refrain from wiping hands as soon as they get dirty. Allow the mess by preparing the area before you start. Plastic floor covers that can be wiped easily helps remove any pressure to rush in the early stages. Stay calm and encourage your child's exploration.

- **Tactile exploration** is vitally important for your child. This early stage of playing with the foods you offer is a vital part of later learning and development.
- For **very young children**, you can scoop some food onto a spoon and put it to their mouth; they may need hand over hand support with this at first.
- Make sure that the cutlery you use is always **put back in the same place**; this will be helpful for your child to find the spoon again if they let go. Ensuring cutlery is well contrasted against the table or plate will support your child in locating it.
- **Remember**, practice makes perfect and acquiring new skills takes time. When introducing a new skill, start small! To start, encourage your child to feed themselves a couple of mouthfuls. Allow them to use and play with their new cutlery throughout the meal and then increase this over time. This ensures they are still practising the skill whilst enjoying their food and are not **overly hungry**!

Notes:

Please supervise your child at all times while completing any of the activities outlined on this sheet. Stop any activity if your child becomes upset, unwell or you are unsure if you are completing it correctly.

The activities on this card align with stage 1b of the [Developmental Journal Babies Visual Impairment \(DJVI\)](#)

If you would like any further advice or support, please contact the advice line on **0800 7811444** or via email children@guidedogs.org.uk

