



3.5+ years

## FINE MOTOR



## Preparing The Eating Area

### MATERIALS

A cloth, if one is used on the eating surface. Dishes, bowls or plates, depending on preference. Eating utensils, depending on preference; these should be contained in a container or tray. Drinking vessels. Napkins.

### PRESENTATION

Invite the child to the shelf or storage area in which all materials needed are stored. Explain that you are going to show the child how to prepare the eating area for a meal. Invite the child to wash their hands before you begin. When the child returns with clean hands, point to the folded cloth (if you are going to use one) and name it : “This is the cloth we will need.” If more than one cloth is in the storage area, you might offer to the child the option of choosing a cloth : “Would you like us to use the blue cloth or the green cloth today?” Demonstrate to the child how the folded cloth is held, and invite the child to carry the cloth to the eating space. Explain that you will now show the child how to unfold the cloth. Lay the cloth on the tabletop or on the floor, depending on where the meal is eaten, and slowly open the cloth out until it is flat. Smooth the cloth with both hands occasionally.

Demonstrating how carefully you are going to walk around the cloth, if it is positioned on the floor, invite the child back to the storage shelf. Lift a plate, bowl or dish with both hands (thumbs curled over each side) and ask the child to lift a plate (bowl or dish) in a similar manner. Slowly, walk back to the cloth and carefully position it on the cloth. If this is a family meal, you can also name the family member who will be using this dish: “This dish is for Susan.” The child can be invited to decide who will be using the dish that they have carried and will place on the cloth. Repeat this process until all of the plates/bowls/dishes have been put in place. The napkins can then be distributed.

Return to the storage area. From the container of utensils, you can help the child count out the required number of utensils. If more than one kind is used for the meal, count one category at a time: “Let’s see how many spoons we will need....One for you, one for me..etc.. That makes six.” The spoons can be carried to the eating area and the child is shown how to place one at each space. A young child will enjoy the opportunity to walk back and forth as this process unfolds, taking each group of utensils at a time. In the case of large numbers (more than six) a basket might be used to transport the utensils. If the child needs to carry a dinner knife, demonstrate how the knife is held by the handle, pointing downwards at the side of the

child's body, while it is being carried. It is appropriate to explain the safety reasons for doing so.

The drinking vessels (glasses, cups etc) should be carried one at a time, using both hands on each vessel. When you have completed the set-up for the mealtime, make a point of thanking the child for their help. This activity can become a two or three person activity depending on the age and developmental stage of the child. For example, an older child could assist a younger child when the next mealtime occurs. If no older child is available, the adult can collaborate with the child on this activity until the child becomes confident carrying out this task independently and/or asks to do it without help.

**Variation:**

A complementary process can be used to demonstrate how to clear the eating area after a meal.

## **DIRECT AIM**

To prepare the eating area before a meal.

## **INDIRECT AIM**

To foster a spirit of community and collaboration. To promote the refinement of gross and fine motor skills. To encourage motor planning and develop or strengthen balance and coordination.

## **CONTROL OF ERROR**

Visual: if someone is left without a dish, drinking vessel or eating utensil.

## **POINT OF INTEREST**

Participating in a daily ritual of family or community life.

## **AGE**

Three and a half years, upwards.