Stick to dinnertime routines.

- Divide responsibilities between parents — one watches the kids while the other prepares the meal. Serve dinner at a consistent time.
- Wait to eat until everyone is at the table.
- Be done with dinner in time for kids to eat, play, then head off to bed.

Set rules for mealtime as a family.

- Respect each other’s space. (no touching, pushing, hitting)
- Stay in your seat during mealtime.
- Ask to pass if you can’t reach.
- Speak in indoor voices.

Be realistic about mealtimes.

- The average meal lasts 18–20 minutes.
- Let kids know that they don’t need to be perfect to do a good job. (e.g. a child can set the table differently than Mom)
Plan ahead to prevent problems.
- Give kids an afternoon snack so they aren’t “starving” before dinner.
- Have veggies for kids as finger foods to keep them busy.
- Plan an afternoon activity to focus their attention.

Teach kids to have respectful mealtime conversations.
- Share stories about the day’s events or family stories to reconnect as a family.
- Take turns speaking.
- Talk about how it feels when someone respects you.
- Have a signal for who gets to talk. (raise a hand/wave napkin)
- Make sure all children have time to speak.

Manage your emotions to keep dinnertime calm.
- Make it a TV-free zone during mealtime.
- Ask for help. (kids can set the table)
- Schedule a night off so the primary meal-maker doesn’t get worn out.

Include kids in mealtime planning.
- Teach kids about different food groups.
- Let kids select one weekly meal.
- Have the kids pick up specific items for their meal at the grocery store.
- Have the kids design placemats for the table.
- Involve them with the meal preparation by giving them specific tasks. (setting the table)