

TINY ACORNS PARENT HANDBOOK 2024-2025

Tiny Acorns Preschool

We would like to welcome all the new families and welcome back all the returning families to Tiny Acorns Preschool! We are privileged to care for your children and grateful for the trust you have placed in us. We work diligently to put procedures in place to ensure the health and safety of our families, children and staff.

Please read over our parent handbook to familiarize yourselves with our policies. We invite you to review them and contact us with any questions or concerns you may have. We value our relationship with you and your child and will do whatever we can to support you and your family.

Bryna Bilanow and Sarah Shears

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STARTING SCHOOL

Items for School:

Please bring in:

- Two changes of clothes seasonally appropriate, clearly labeled in a Ziplock bag. These will stay at the school, and will need to be changed along with the weather, and replaced if used.
- A package of diapers or pull-ups, clearly labeled. If your child is wearing pull-ups, we recommend brands that have re-fastenable sides such as Huggies, because it allows the teachers to help change the child without taking off any clothing. Many of the children who are potty-trained will be wearing coverage during naps. If your child does not use pull-ups during nap please let us know. If your child is wearing diapers or pull-ups we will let you know when a refill is needed.
- A bottle filled with water that your child can use independently. This will be brought to school and go home with your child every day. Please make sure to have the bottle labeled clearly. **For safety reasons, please make sure that the bottle is not too heavy because children sometimes play with their bottles by swinging them around.**
- A bag or box with lunch for your child to eat. Please provide your child with a nutritious lunch that he or she can eat independently. **We are a nut-free facility.** For those children who love PB&J sandwiches, we recommend substituting sun butter instead. Please label the sunbutter sandwich so that we know it does not have nuts.
- One pair of indoor shoes for your child to wear while they are playing inside. We recommend crocs because they are easy to take on and off, however any shoe that is easy for a child to put on independently is welcome.
- Two crib sized sheets for your child's mat and two lightweight blankets. We will send one set home at the end of each week for washing. Please label everything.

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- If your child naps with a stuffed animal please feel free to bring it in. The stuffie can stay with their mat and go home over the weekends for washing, or it can go back and forth, but please let us know in advance.
- A backpack or canvas bag for your child to store their lunch and water every day.
- **Please Label all of these items! Even stuffed animals need to be labeled because we sometimes have duplicates. It will really help us out to have the names, so when in doubt, put a label on it. Your teachers will be forever grateful!**

Clothing box

At your intake meeting we will give you a clear box for your child's spare clothing and other small items. Please make sure this item is labeled with their name, but also feel free to decorate it with photos of your family, stickers, drawings, etc. On the first day of school your child will bring this to school.

Goodbyes:

Every child is different and every family is different, so if you have a goodbye ritual that works for you, please don't change it on our account. However, goodbyes are often harder on parents than the children, and long goodbyes often make it more difficult for the child to adjust to the routine of the day. Warm, sweet and short goodbyes are often best. It is better to have the child come to school with whichever grownup is the easiest for the child to separate from. If you believe that it will be easier for your child to separate from a babysitter or grandparent, it may be best to have that person do drop-off in the beginning of the year.

ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

Morning Arrival:

- Regular drop off is from 8:30-9am. Please go to the backyard drop-off area.
- You must **sign your child in on Brightwheel** every morning and do a

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health check for your child. If you forgot or don't have a phone for check in please let us know and we can check your child in.

- If you are leaving a stroller or scooter you may park it in our backyard. If you are leaving a stroller please fold it so we have more room to play. We try to move strollers under the balcony during rainy weather, however we can't promise that your stroller will stay dry if the weather is wet. Please bring a stroller cover in the event there is rain in the forecast.

End of Day:

- Pickup will also be in the backyard area. If someone other than a parent is doing pickup, please make certain that the person is listed on Brightwheel for pickup and has uploaded an ID or picture on the app, so that we can quickly put the face to name. You can also email a picture of the ID to the Director at oaks@tinyacornspreschool.com
- If your child is picked up at 3pm, please arrive promptly and gather your child and their belongings in a timely manner so that we are able to give our full attention to our aftercare students.
- If there is habitual or severe lateness, additional fees will be added. All students must be **signed out**, every day.
- Aftercare children are also picked up from the backyard. After 5:00, depending on the time of year and weather, either the gate is left open for parents to enter, or the children and teachers are in the backyard for play. If you plan on picking your child up prior to 5:00, please message their teachers over Brightwheel. Aftercare pickup should happen by 5:30. Please be punctual. If you are running late please message the teachers to let them know.

COMMUNICATION

Who to contact about what and when:

- For any **non-urgent** communication, the best way to contact the school is by

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email at oaks@tinyacornspreschool.com. If you have a planned absence or late arrival, It is always helpful to let us know in advance.

- In the event that a caregiver needs to contact the teacher more quickly, the best method is by messaging the teacher on Brightwheel. This is recommended if your child is missing school unexpectedly, is arriving late unexpectedly, or needs to be picked up earlier or later than anticipated.
- Please make sure to install the Brightwheel app on your phone to receive messages from the teachers or to message us. You will also need the app to check-in and check-out your child. Please memorize your Brightwheel code to help with that. You can change this code to make it easier to remember. The teachers also use Brightwheel to put up photos and information about what the class has been doing. Please check it on a daily basis to see what we have been up to!
- Sometimes we will contact you via text or phone relating to an emergency or immediate issue with your child (for example a sudden fever). We respectfully ask that you only use our private cell phone numbers to communicate with us for emergency, urgent, or immediate issues.
- If you have a question about how your child is doing in school or if you have a question about any policies, please reach out to us by email at oaks@tinyacornspreschool.com
- Email is one of our preferred ways to give information to our parents. Please make sure we have an up to date email you check regularly.

In addition, input from caregivers concerning their child's needs is helpful for the teachers. Unusual events such as family illness, business trips made by a parent, or any changes in routine can create shifts in a child's behavior. If we are aware of these changes we can be more sensitive to your child's needs, and really appreciate having this information.

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Attendance and lateness:

- Please let us know if your child will be significantly late or absent. You can let us know by email or Brightwheel.

Meals and Snacks:

- We provide snacks in the morning, after nap, and during aftercare. We will message the weekly menu to our families so that you can see what is scheduled for the children to eat. We will not serve any foods that our students are allergic to, and try to provide choices that will be appealing to children, however it is impossible to satisfy all tastes at all times. If you notice something on the menu that your child has an aversion to you may want to pack extra food to eat. We always offer our snacks first, but if a child refuses to eat them we may offer the child something from their lunch.
- If your child has any food allergies, please make us aware so that we can accommodate them.
- **We are a nut-free facility.** Please use a substitute for peanut butter such as sun or soy butter. Please label foods that may look like they contain nut butter so that your teachers are aware of the substitution.
- All families must provide lunch for their children every day. Please make sure that you are providing your child with options that are healthy and enjoyable (which is sometimes easier said than done!) We will let you know if your child is not eating a certain food or if he/she seems to need more food. It is important to properly cut all foods that could be considered choking hazards and avoid foods like popcorn. For a list of foods that are choking hazards please look at the last page and consult this website:
- https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/English_ReducingRiskofChokinginYoungChildren.pdf

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- We have a refrigerator here. Please let us know if you need your child's lunch to be refrigerated by sticking a note on it or telling us at drop-off.
- Please send in food that your child can eat independently and will enjoy. If you need to send in the same meal every day, rest assured there will be no judgment on the parts of teachers, many of whom have fought their own battles with picky eaters! Please do not send in food that will be really messy, as we are often cleaning up after a number of children, and lunch is right before naptime. We want to focus our energy on getting the children ready rather than cleaning up an especially sticky lunch item!

Birthday parties:

- You are welcome to send in cupcakes or another treat for your child's class. Please make arrangements at least a day in advance with the head teacher. **Please do not send in any treats that have nuts.**
- If your child has dietary allergies that prevent him/her from partaking in the birthday treats, please send in some other type of treat that he/she can eat and bring them to school. We will freeze them and defrost them on birthday occasions so that your child can safely enjoy a treat.

Clothing:

- Please make sure your child is dressed in comfortable clothing that is appropriate for the weather that day.
- While we try our best, children sometimes spill food, paint, mud, etc, on their clothes. Our goal is for our children to have fun and learn about the world around them. That sometimes means digging in dirt, working on science and art projects, or doing other potentially messy things. Please don't send your child to school in clothing that you would like to keep pristine.

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- Weather permitting, we take the children out to play everyday. Please make sure they have warm jackets and sweaters, weather appropriate shoes, hats and gloves.
- There must be at least one weather appropriate change of clothing at the school. This includes socks, underwear, pants etc.

Masks:

- As of this time masks are optional for both students and teachers. We may have children wear a mask if we see that they are showing signs of illness such as coughing or congestion. Families who wish to have their children mask up should let the director and teachers know. They are happy to respect that wish. Please keep in mind that children must remove their masks when eating and napping. If you do wish your child to wear a mask, please also make certain to provide extra masks for your child in their bags or backpack in case their mask becomes soiled.

Rest Time:

- Every day there is a nap time after lunch.
- We set aside about 1.5 hours of our day for resting, as most children of this age need that amount.
- We understand that not all children are willing to nap, however, all children in our program must be able to lay quietly on their mat for at least 45 minutes in order to decompress and recharge. After 45 minutes they can spend the remainder of the rest time engaging in a quiet activity.

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Toys from Home:

- Stuffed animals are allowed at nap time and if your child needs some comfort during the day.
- Please don't bring in toys other than your child's stuffie because children often have difficulty sharing their personal things.

Parent/Caregiver/Emergency contact Availability:

- A Parent/Caregiver/Emergency contact must be able to respond promptly in the event the child becomes ill or in an emergency.
- Every family must provide at least 2 emergency contacts in addition to the parents that live close by.
- Parent and Emergency Contact information can be uploaded on Brightwheel
- Any changes made to contacts, visitors, phone numbers must be added to the Brightwheel contact list.

Visitors:

- If your child has a regular visitor, such as a speech therapist, please let us know in writing and we will arrange an appropriate time for their visits.

Field Trips:

- We occasionally go on field trips within the neighborhood or further away. We

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will make certain to inform guardians ahead of time about the nature and timing of any field trips.

Nature Walks:

- We may take the children on nature walks around the block and over to the parade grounds.

Our Teachers outside of School:

We know our teachers are great, and we love them too! But we ask that you do not try to hire them for private babysitting work. We want all of our students to have an equitable relationship to their teachers at school. Our teachers are not allowed to provide outside care for students enrolled in Tiny Acorns and our parents are not allowed to hire them for care outside of the school. If you see our teachers outside of school please feel free to say hello, as they deeply care for all of the children and will certainly be happy to see them!

GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION AND POLICIES Calendar, Covid, and Closures:

Tiny Acorns will follow a modified version of the public school calendar. Please consult our school calendar to see when we have school closures.

If there is a case of Covid19 among a member of one of classrooms, all unvaccinated students in that class will have to quarantine for 5 days and may test to return to school on the fifth day. All vaccinated members of the class may return to school, but must wear a mask for the following 5 days and should test for Covid on the fifth day after the initial exposure.

Sometimes the school must close because of a snow day, or some sort of rare unforeseen emergency. When the mayor designates a snow day due to severe

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weather, we will close. We will inform parents ahead of time via email and Brightwheel if our preschool will have to close. There are no make up days or refunds for these closings.

Enrollment:

Once your child is enrolled in our school, your family will need to provide the following:

- . Current medical form (all children must be up to date on vaccinations)

- . Emergency contact form (with pick up information and a walking trips release form)

- . Photo release or refusal

- . Intake form

- . Health Screen Attestation form

- . Infectious Disease Health Policy form

Prior to beginning school, parents will need to come in OR have a Zoom meeting to speak with the teacher about the intake form so that we can begin to understand your child better and how we can best care for him/her.

During this initial meeting, your child's teachers will set up a transitional schedule. Pickup will be at right after lunch, 12:15-12:30, as your child acclimates to the preschool. Usually the earlier pickup will be for the first 2-3 days, and then the time will be increased to 3 or 5:30, depending on your childcare needs.

If there is a change in information given to us at enrollment, it is the parent's responsibility to inform Tiny Acorns. The school cannot be held responsible for problems stemming from incorrect information.

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Families are also responsible for updating their child's vaccination information after well visits to their pediatrician.

Deposit:

A deposit is required to reserve a spot in our program. This deposit is non-refundable and will be applied to the last tuition payment of the school year. There will be no partial refunds of deposits or exceptions made to this policy.

Fees:

There is an initial enrollment fee of \$150 for materials and items for the individual student.

Early Withdrawal Policy:

There are no tuition refunds for any reason. If you need to withdraw your child from the program before the end of the school year, the deposit and all tuition paid up until that point are forfeited and you are required to make scheduled payments while enrolled.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The goal of this policy is to ensure the health and well-being of each child and to prevent the spread of communicable diseases among the children and staff. Please arrange to have a back-up caregiver if your child is not healthy enough to attend school.

Contagious Illness:

If your child develops a contagious illness, please let us know so that we can advise other parents that their children may have been exposed as required by the Department of Health. In some cases preventative measures may be taken to protect exposed children from onset of the illness. Families agree that a child who is ill (e.g., fever, infection, diarrhea, vomiting, unexplained rash, extensive or exceptionally cloudy mucus from a cold, communicable disease) will be kept home. Children must be fever free for **at least 48 hours without fever-reducing medicine** before returning to school. In some instances, a child who has a fever

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will need to be seen by a doctor before returning to school, and present a note from the doctor stating that they can return.

Tiny Acorns has the right to decide when a child is ill and will not be allowed at school or when an ill child must be discharged from school in order to prevent the spread of infection to other children. While we try to be sensitive to a family's need for childcare, it is important to remember that we are a community, and as a community we need to be responsible for each other's welfare. While the common cold is usually mild, it can disrupt routines by infecting other students and teachers. If the director and teachers are concerned that your child remains infectious, he or she will have to stay home.

Parents and caregivers further agree that, should a child become ill while at school, immediate arrangements will be made to pick up the child.

The following illnesses must be reported to the school:

Skin infections such as impetigo; parasitic infections such as lice or scabies; viral diseases such as measles, strep, rubella, chicken pox, cocksackie virus, or roseola; pinkeye, whooping cough, croup, or other communicable diseases. We ask you to notify us if there is any chance of contagion.

Fevers

Children must be free of fever for at least 48 hours without fever-reducing medicine before returning to school. We require the extra time because children's temperatures can go up and down, and we want to make certain that the fever will not return while the child is at school. A child who has a fever may be required to be seen by a doctor before returning to school, and/or provide a negative Covid test. Teachers will take temperatures if a child's condition warrants it. According to the OCFS and DOH a fever is any temperature above 100°F taken auxiliary (armpit or forehead).

Diarrhea:

One symptom of Covid-19 is diarrhea. A child with loose or watery stools will be sent home. Children who have diarrhea may only return after they have had at

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least one normal bowel movement.

Eye Infections

Children with inflamed eyes, when associated with discharge must be kept home in case the child has pink eye. A child may return to preschool only if the symptoms disappear, if they have been taking antibiotic eyedrops for 24 hours, or with a note from a physician stating the eye condition is not contagious.

Antibiotics:

If your child has been prescribed with antibiotics for an illness they must complete a full 24 hours on the medication before returning to school.

Chronic Non-Contagious Ailments:

If your child has a chronic non-contagious ailment, such as an allergy, or asthma please notify the director and your child's teacher. Allergy symptoms can be confused with cold symptoms. Your input will help us to determine if your child can be at school safely.

If a child's allergy requires an epi-pen, we must receive a letter stating so from the pediatrician and a letter of authorization from the family giving permission to administer it in an emergency. A child may not attend without this letter and 1 epi-pen for the classroom.

Other Conditions:

Other symptoms that may prevent a child from attending school, include vomiting, unusual pain or aching, unusual listlessness or weakness, skin eruptions or rashes, and headaches. If your child is experiencing any of these symptoms, he or she must stay home for the day and may return with a doctor's note and/or negative Covid test.

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Children with activity restrictions must receive a note from their pediatrician. If your child appears injured or has an activity restriction, the school reserves the right to receive clearance from a child's doctor.

Medications:

Medicine and over the counter drugs will not be administered at school by the staff. The only exceptions are epi-pens. If your child requires medication during the day, you must make prior arrangements to administer them yourself by speaking with the teachers.

Immunizations:

Every child enrolled is required to have all immunizations as mandated by New York State Health Laws. This includes receiving a flu shot each year. **Children will not be able to attend school without immunization records.**

Health Forms:

A standard health form completed by your child's doctor must be submitted each year before your child begins school. Health forms must be updated every 12 months, or after the child's birthday.

BEHAVIOR AND GROWTH

Discipline Policy:

We believe that love and acceptance are the most important parts of discipline. We recognize that children need to feel that they are accepted and cared for in order to grow emotionally and developmentally. A child who receives guidance rather than shame when he or she makes mistakes is much more likely to grow into a considerate, independent and responsible human being.

We work to model behavior in a way that we would like children to behave. We provide consistency and manage behavior lovingly to provide this sense of safety and acceptance, while also being clear that there are expectations of treating each other with respect and kindness.

We use many tactics to help the children learn about appropriate behavior at

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school and self-regulation in general, including redirection and positive reinforcement. If you'd like to speak more at length about this please reach out to us about our specific policies on behavior management.

Potty Training:

We are happy to support any efforts made in potty training at home, and we will offer the potty to children who seem ready at regular intervals. Please let us know if you have been working on potty training at home and would like us to support that effort at school.

If a child in the process of potty training, has repeated accidents at school or otherwise does not seem ready, we will ask that you provide pull-ups at school.

If you are able to potty train your child prior to school we would appreciate that independence as it prevents extra exposure to our teachers during this time, however we accept that every child is different and some may need more time to adjust to using the potty.

SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Our top priority at all times is the safety of the children we care for.

If an event occurs where the entire Tiny Acorns community (i.e. staff, children, parents/ caregivers, government agencies) needs to be contacted, teachers will text and message on Brightwheel informing of any relevant information such as location for emergency pick up, the current location of children, and/or about a specific, critical incident.

Evacuation & Drills:

Participating in emergency preparedness drills empowers young children to feel more in control of situations that are otherwise frightening and disorienting. We conduct fire and other emergency drills at regular intervals as mandated by the DOH.

We will evacuate the school when staying in the school presents a danger to children and adults. These situations include but are not limited to fire, bomb threats, major structural damage, rupture of a sewage line that disrupts the

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building, and severe internal flooding. In the events of power failure or loss of potable water supply, we will inform parents and caregivers if early pick up is necessary by messaging over Brightwheel.

During an evacuation or drill everyone must leave the building immediately. In the case of a true emergency we walk to our designated emergency location and parents and caregivers will be notified. **Our primary designated emergency location is Prospect Gymnastics.**

Evacuation Routes:

We have a primary entrance/exit and a secondary exit, as per DOH requirements. Windows are only used as an emergency access route if both points of egress are blocked by fire or other hazard. Our classroom has a diagram posted that illustrates the two exits.

Sheltering-In:

There may be times when emergency responders indicate that an appropriate response to a disaster requires children and staff to remain within the building. This type of response is often referred to as “sheltering-in.” Events that may require sheltering-in include but are not limited to tornadoes and tornado warnings, hurricanes and windstorms, area wide flooding, snow storms and blizzards, intense heat waves, terrorist attacks, and outside shootings. We follow all standard sheltering in procedures.

Emergencies:

In the event of an emergency, if you are unable to pick up your child as scheduled, we will keep your child at school until you, or someone on your emergency form arrives.

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Parent Handbook Addendum: Sample Emergency Procedures due to Pandemic

Tiny Acorns will implement the Pandemic Section of the Parent Handbook under the guidance and direction of the program administration, local licensing agency, federal, state and local governmental agencies. To ensure the safety of children, families and staff, the center will monitor the situation and take into account the guidance and suggestions from the authorities. Decisions made by the center will consider the safety of children, families and staff. Program changes may include:

Unplanned Center Closures:

On occasion, we may need to close due to circumstances beyond our control and without much warning. During these situations, we will strive to be as flexible as possible and provide remote learning. We will also work to reduce tuition if our preschool is closed for more than 4 consecutive weeks.

Remote Learning Opportunities During Closure:

- Teachers will maintain ongoing communication with families and children.
- Online platforms, such as Zoom and apps like Brightwheel, will be utilized for activities, sing-along, and story time; individually and in group settings.
- Phone calls, emails and newsletters will be sent regularly from teachers and administrators.

Changes Due to Covid19: We follow all required protocol mandated by our local licensing agency, and our Health Care Consultant. Some examples of practices that may be implemented are:

- Temporary reduction of program hours: hours will be determined based upon staff availability and parent need. Reduced hours may also be considered to provide staff with enough time for extra cleaning and program planning.
- Enhanced health screenings and temperature checks upon arrival.
- Stricter child exclusions for signs of illness.
- Limitation of family members in the building. You will always have access to your child, but in an effort to reduce the number of people coming into the building we have amended our drop off/pick up policy, see below.
- Elimination of non-essential visitors into our building. Therapists, SEITs, and paraprofessionals are considered essential and may enter during their scheduled time with the children in their care.

Pick Up and Drop Off: To create a safe and manageable way for children to arrive and leave our program, we will be implementing the following protocol:

- Children will enter the building from their designated entrance and be screened before entering the building.

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- Children being picked up at 3pm will be escorted to their caregivers at their designated exit.
- Caregivers picking up children during aftercare hours should message teachers if they plan to arrive before 5:00.
 - Teachers will communicate with families via phone, email or our Brightwheel app.

Amplifying our Daily Cleaning Efforts: While this is part of our normal routine, there will be additional efforts made to disinfect the classrooms, gross motor spaces and high traffic areas, paying special attention to doorknobs, phones, tables, chairs, etc. We will be disinfecting with a higher concentrated bleach/ water as recommended by the CDC. In addition to classroom cleaning, all staff members will be assigned various areas of the building for frequent disinfecting.

Amplifying our Air Purifying Efforts: We will be using HEPA air purifying cleaners in each of our classrooms.

Continuing to use Covid19 Testing: We may ask families to have their children tested for Covid19 . When we ask for a child to be tested, we may require the PCR test for confirmation of the child's negative status, or an at-home test, depending on the situation. Some of the circumstances that may necessitate the test are:

- When a child is displaying signs of illness that could be Covid19 related.
- After a long break from school, such as the winter vacation, when there may have been travel and contact with relatives, we may have all families do a test prior to returning to school.
- If a child has had exposure to someone who is known to have tested positive for Covid19

If a family is uncomfortable with their child being tested, the parents may choose to quarantine their child for 5 days rather than doing the Covid19 PCR test. Please reach out to the Director if you need help determining if your child needs to be tested and where to have the test done.

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Choking hazards for children under the age of 4:

Prepare Foods So They Are Easy to Chew

You can make eating safer for young children by following the tips below:

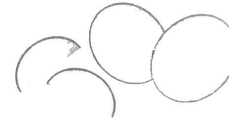
- Cook or steam hard food, like carrots, until it is soft enough to pierce with a fork.
- Remove seeds, pits, and tough skins/peels from fruits and vegetables.
- Finely chop foods into thin slices, strips, or small pieces (no larger than ½ inch), or grate, mash, or puree foods. This is especially important when serving raw fruits and vegetables, as those items may be harder to chew.
- Remove all bones from fish, chicken, and meat before cooking or serving.
- Grind up tough meats and poultry.

Cut Round Foods Into Smaller Pieces

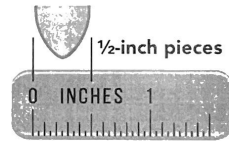
Small round foods such as grapes, cherries, cherry tomatoes, and melon balls are common causes of choking.



Slice these items in half lengthwise.



Then slice into smaller pieces (no larger than ½ inch) when serving them to young children.



Avoid Choking Hazards

To help prevent choking, do not serve small (marble-sized), sticky, or hard foods that are difficult to chew and easy to swallow whole, including:

- Cheese cubes or blocks. Grate or thinly slice cheese before serving.
- Chewing gum*
- Dried fruit
- Gummy fruit snacks*
- Hard candy, including caramels, cough drops, jelly beans, lollipops, etc.*
- Hard pretzels and pretzel chips
- Ice cubes*
- Marshmallows*
- Nuts and seeds, including breads, crackers, and cereals that contain nuts and seeds
- Popcorn
- Spoonfuls of peanut butter or other nut butters. Spread nut butters thinly on other foods (e.g., toast, crackers, etc.). Serve only creamy, not chunky, nut butters.
- Whole round or tube-shaped foods such as grapes, cherry tomatoes, cherries, raw carrots, sausages, and hot dogs

*Not creditable in the Child Nutrition Programs, including the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, and Summer Food Service Program.