



Cooking – A Recipe for Learning Success!

by Julie A. Daymut, M.A., CCC-SLP

Cooking is a great activity to do with your children—you spend time together, make something delicious, and have fun! As well, cooking can help children learn and practice many skills. Following recipes requires children to *plan* (have the ingredients), *prepare* (get the ingredients and cooking tools ready), *process* (read and understand the directions), and *perform* (follow the directions using the ingredients and cooking tools). From start to finish, children must follow each step of the recipe. They learn to complete a task and then enjoy the result of their hard work—the food!

When helping your children learn to cook, pick simple recipes with just a few steps and a few ingredients at first. Then progress to more complex recipes with more steps and more ingredients. If your children cannot read yet, read the recipe to them and have them repeat the ingredients and steps back to you. And...be creative with cooking! Besides food, you can make fun things like homemade clay or soap. Creating your own “special recipe” is another fun idea. As you are cooking, teach your children about both kitchen and food safety. And be sure to *supervise your children during all cooking activities*.

What Skills Can Children Learn from Cooking?

Cooking is a hands-on activity that can help children learn many different skills. The list below outlines some skills children can learn as they follow instructions for various recipes.

- **Language skills** – When cooking, children must understand certain *vocabulary*. They need to know vocabulary for cooking tools like *oven*, *mixer*, and *whisk*. Flavors—*salty*, *sweet*, *bitter*, *etc.*—and textures—*sticky*, *goeey*, *melted*, *etc.* are also important to know. As well, children can learn *figurative language* related to cooking terms such as “a baker’s dozen,” “a piece of cake,” and “in a nutshell.”
- **Math skills** – Math is a very important cooking skill. Children need to know numbers and counting in order to *measure* and *add* ingredients. They must be familiar with measurements like *teaspoon*, *liter*, and “a pinch.”



- **Critical-thinking skills** – Recipes provide opportunities for children to practice skills like *following directions, sequencing, and recalling details*.
- **Fine-motor skills** – When cooking, children manipulate (move with their hands) different ingredients and cooking tools. *Getting supplies out of the pantry, mixing ingredients, and placing toppings* are examples of fine-motor skills to practice in the kitchen.
- **Healthy-living skills** – Cooking healthy foods is important for your children’s growth and development. As you cook together, you can teach your children about the *Food Groups, good nutrition, and the importance of physical activity combined with a healthy diet*.



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