

Food Mountain Instructions

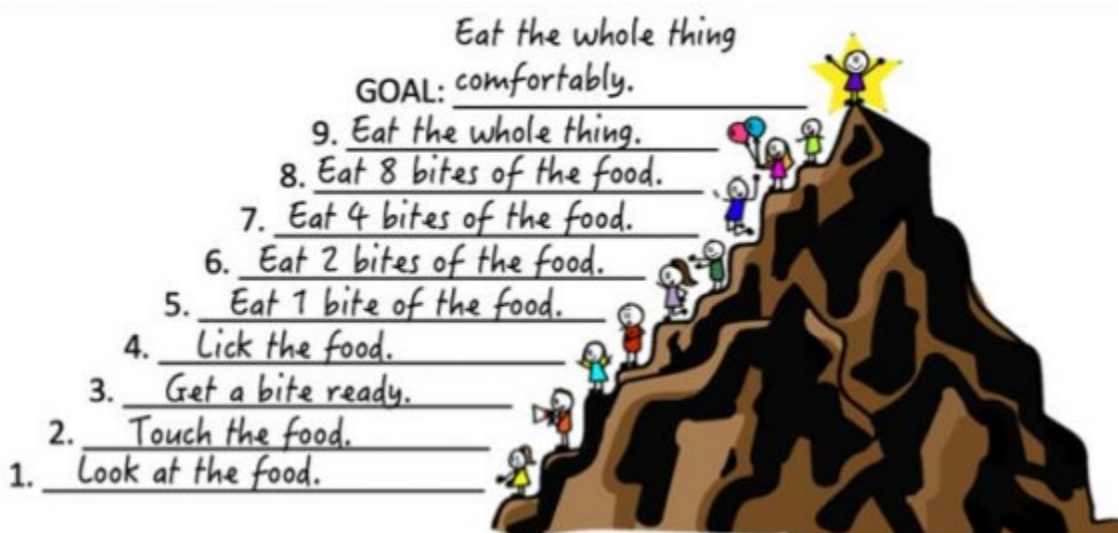
Materials you will need:

- Mountain worksheet
- A food that your child has chosen to try
- Stickers
- Dry erase marker

Preparing the Mountain Worksheet

For each step on the mountain, you and your child will come up with a baby step to approach a new food. You could say something like: “We are going to have a Food Adventure. See this mountain? The highest point of this mountain is eating this new food comfortably – like it is an easy thing for you to do. Let’s list the steps that it will take to get there for you.”

You and your child work together to list the steps that will be used to guide each food adventure. However, it is important that your child feel that they have designed these steps. If your child gets stuck, you could say something like: “What about the first step of the mountain? Let’s think of something that would not be too hard to start with.” An example of a mountain sheet is attached below. If your child is ready for a more challenging mountain, one example could look like this: 1) Get a bite ready. 2) Eat 1 bite of the food. 4) Jump 2 steps: Eat 4 bites of the food. 6) Jump 2 steps: Eat 8 bites of the food. 8) Jump 2 steps: Eat the whole thing. 10) Eat the whole thing comfortably



Earning Stickers

After designing your mountain, the next step is coming up with a reward system. Together, you and your child should come up with a system for awarding the stickers. While there is no right or wrong way to award stickers, here are some principles to think about:

Agree on the rules in advance: Use the mountain worksheet and decide together: What steps on the mountain are worth one sticker? Two stickers?

Reward baby steps. It is important to reward effort, even if your child is not tasting the food. If your child has trouble approaching a table with a new food on it, then perhaps the first step of the mountain is getting 2 steps away from the table (if that is closer than your child has ever gotten before). Giving a sticker for this new brave step would be appropriate. You and your child can decide together if some steps on the mountain are “warm-up” steps that don’t merit a sticker.

Be fair. Kids like fairness. If you agree that if they do something, they will get a sticker, they are going to be upset if they don’t get the reward that was agreed upon. However, the opposite is also true: if you agreed that they need to work hard and reach a certain step on the mountain in order to get a sticker, and then they don’t reach that step on the mountain, but they get a sticker anyway, it can make kids wonder if it is worth trying.

As your child gets better at approaching a food, the stickers should get harder to earn. This makes the game more fun.

Climbing the Mountain

1. Your child will choose a food from the list of foods they are working on and play the food adventure game with that food until they get to the top of the mountain. Then, you start over again with a new food!
2. Place a very small piece of the food, about the size of a nickel, on the plate. Cover the piece of food with another plate or cup so that the child cannot see it yet (if they have advanced to several bites or more, the amount of the food on the plate will get larger as well). As your child gets better with this food (e.g., having multiple bites) the portion of food that you serve will also get larger.
3. Food exposures should not occur during mealtimes. Stick with the same food until you reach the top of the mountain. You may want to stick with that food one more time just to be sure it is comfortable for your child. However, if your child has been stuck on the same step with the same food for three tries, you both can decide to switch to a new food.