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My Ten Steps (or less) to Teach Your 6-Month-Old to Drink from a Straw

A Parent Guide from Melanie Potock, MA, CCC-SLP

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My Easy 10-Step Straw Drinking Lesson

Many babies will learn with less steps than this, but it's always best to break every learning opportunity into smaller steps for the benefit of every child.

You'll need:

A smooth purée your baby enjoys and a short, firm-sided straw.

Step 1

Open a jar of your baby's favorite smooth purée. Homemade or store-bought both work well, but ideally it should be super-smooth and not too thick, like baby applesauce.

Step 2

Dip the straw into the purée so about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch fills the tip. Leave a little purée on the outside of the straw and place your finger over the top hole to hold it inside.

Step 3

With your finger still covering the top, lay about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the straw flat on your baby's tongue, just like offering a spoonful of food.

Step 4

Wait for your baby's lips to close.

Release your finger and slowly slide the straw straight out.

The purée on the outside is now on your baby's tongue, ready to swallow.

Step 5

Repeat until your baby can handle a tiny bit more purée inside the straw.

Always leave a dab of purée on the outside to encourage lip closure.

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Step 6

When your baby manages steps 1–5 comfortably (this may happen in minutes or over a few days for children with special needs), prime the straw **2–3 inches from the bottom** with purée. Continue leaving a little purée on the outside. (Prime the straw = you suck on it)

Step 7 — Teaching the Suck

Offer the straw as usual.

Wait for lips to close... then **wait one more second**.

As soon as your baby begins to suck, lift your finger so the purée flows.

Allow slow sucking and repeated swallowing until the straw empties.

Step 8

Increase the amount inside the straw to **4–5 inches** and let your baby practice pulling it all through independently.

Step 9

Place the straw in a small cup filled nearly to the top with purée, leaving about **1 inch of straw visible**.

Add a dab of purée to the tip.

Hold the container at a gentle angle so your baby learns to suck and prime the straw independently.

Step 10 — Thinning the Texture

Once your baby drinks purée through the straw with ease, gradually thin the purée to nectar consistency and eventually to thin liquid consistency using breastmilk or formula.

Final Tip: Adjust the Straw Length

Once straw drinking is mastered, **cut the straw shorter** so it extends just past the lips and barely reaches past the tip of the tongue at rest behind the gumline.

If the straw is too long, the tongue tip cannot lift properly to develop the important mature swallow pattern. This advanced pattern of swallowing develops between 6 and 12 months of age, and is crucial for both speech and feeding development.

Learn More

This handout is adapted from Melanie's books: <https://mymunchbug.com/books/>

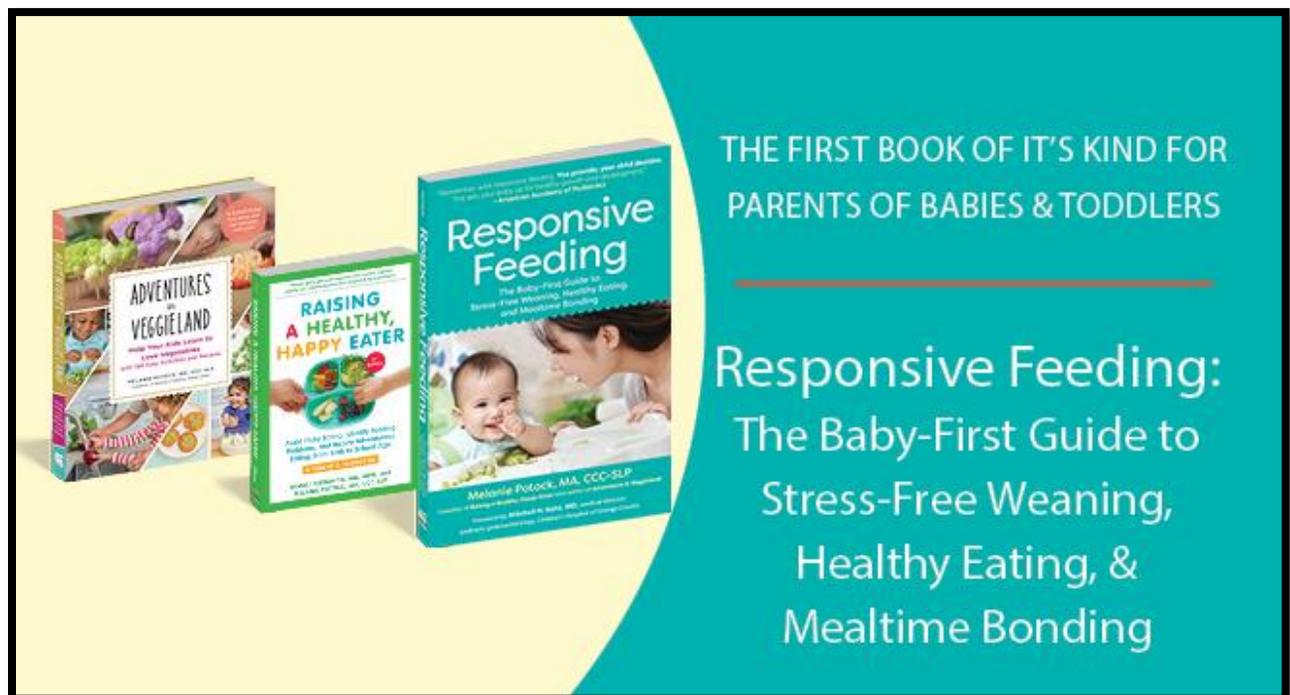
- Raising a Healthy Happy Eater
by Dr. Nimali Fernando & Melanie Potock
- Responsive Feeding: The Baby-First Guide to Stress-Free Weaning, Healthy Eating, and Mealtime Bonding
by Melanie Potock

For more tools and support:

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