

## - Food / Nutrition

### Should you finish your meals?

Some say binning food is a waste and bad for the planet.

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For many decades, children have been told by parents – and adults at school – that they should not leave any food on their plate at mealtimes. Your parents and guardians were probably told this when they were growing up. That's why some people still think that having a rule to finish all the food on your plate is right because children need nutritious meals to help them grow and give them the energy they need. In 2020, the NHS said that fewer than one in five children eats the five portions of fruit and vegetables each day that they need to be healthy. Others say that young people should not be forced to eat too much, or foods they don't like, because it may be harmful to their long-term food habits. What do you think? Should you always finish the food on your plate?



**Yes – you need a healthy diet**

Nobody should throw food away when there are 800 million people in the world who do not have enough to eat. It is a waste of parents' money, and unfair when they have prepared a meal. It is bad for the planet too – producing and transporting food uses lots of energy and resources. Besides, children need to eat well – research shows that young people with a healthy diet have more energy and better mental wellbeing. Studies show that children often dislike vegetables because they have a bitter taste, but they can learn to like them. If people do not try new things, they won't develop new tastes and their diet will not be healthy. If children were allowed to eat what they want, many would just eat crisps and sweets.

**No – you should decide what you eat**

Forcing young people to eat when they are not hungry, and controlling the types of food they eat, could affect how they feel about food in the long-term. They may grow up to associate eating with stress. Saying things like “You won't get pudding unless you empty your plate” could lead to unhealthy habits, like overeating. Parents are trying to keep their children healthy, but children need to listen to their bodies and recognise for themselves when they are hungry or full. Liking some foods but not others is very normal in childhood – most people grow out of it, so what's the rush? Besides, healthy eating isn't only about what's on your plate at mealtimes – it's about having a balanced diet across the whole day.