

Before starting cup drinking, make sure your child is properly seated in a high chair or booster seat. Cup drinking can begin once your child is eating thin purees from a spoon. Start with water (breastmilk or formula could also be used). Let your child watch you perform each of these steps (you may need to show them several times):

**1) Spoon:**

- offer sips of water off the side of a spoon
- the small bowl of a spoon allows you to control the amount of water your child is getting
- have your child close their lips on the spoon before sipping, which is needed to drink from a cup

**2) Small Cup:**

- next try a tiny cup partly filled with water; avoid using glass cups to protect teeth
- hold the cup to control the flow
- place the edge of the cup on the bottom lip and slowly tip the cup so that a small amount of liquid flows to their lips
- don't allow your child to tilt their head back; it is important for your child to keep their eyes forward and have a slight chin tuck (this is the safest head position when drinking)



**3) Going Slowly:**

- offer one sip at a time to let your child swallow what is in their mouth
- give time between each sip, waiting for signs of wanting more (i.e., leaning forward, opening mouth, reaching for cup, etc.)

**4) Drinking on Their Own:**

- once your child is easily drinking from a tiny cup held by a parent, they are ready to start holding a child-sized cup with or without handles
- help guide the cup to their mouth to take a small sip
- help them place the cup back on their tray or table; putting the cup down gives them a break between sips and keeps them from drinking too much, too fast
- decrease your assistance until your child is drinking from a cup on their own



**Occupational Therapy Tip Sheet**  
**Drinking from an Open Cup**



References:

- <https://hollandbloorview.ca/sites/default/files/2019-06/FeedingAccordingDevelopmentalLevelHandout.pdf>
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/canada-food-guide/resources/infant-feeding.html>
- <https://www.feedinglittles.com/blog/the-ultimate-guide-to-cup-drinking>