

## Cup Choices

Just how do you determine what cup is best for a child that has a visual impairment?

**\*\* Note: If a child already has a feeding therapist or team, it is important to encourage the family to discuss cup use with the team before introducing anything new.**

No one cup is right for every child and individualizing the right cup means finding a match with the child's **texture preferences, skill level, and visual needs**. Developmentally, the child is physically ready for a cup when he or she has head control, is sitting in a highchair, and can take small single sips of liquid. Transitioning from a bottle to a cup will be easier for the child if he or she has had **experience exploring and touching cups through play**. Choosing a cup should include the following considerations:

- What is the child's level of **mouth or oral control**? Does the **rate of flow of the liquid** matter? Does he or she prefer a **soft or hard spout**? Does he or she **fatigue** when drinking? Does the child have any **oral sensitivity**?
- What are the child's current abilities for drinking liquids? Can he or she **extract the liquid easily** from the cup through **sipping or sucking**?
- Does the child need possible visual adaptations, such as the need for **bright colors** or **contrast** with the tray or table?
- What are the child's **texture preferences**? Can you add tactile adaptations, such as velcro or a hair scrunchie around the outside of the cup?
- What cups do the family have already on hand? What is the **expense** and **availability** of the cup system?
- It is also important to look at **the actual properties of the cup**... for instance: is the cup valved or unvalved, large or small, easy to spill or spill-proof? Does the cup have a straw with small or large diameter, a fast or slow flow rate, different handles, etc.?

The following is a beginning list of several cup choices that are readily marketed today:

- 1. Soft spouted cups are the easiest for transitioning as they are closest to a bottle nipple. They are readily available and good for early cup experiences.**

Cup Brand	Cup Name	Location	Comments
Nubby	Super Sprout Easy Grip	Walmart/ Target	Spill Proof Medium flow rate Very chewy soft spout Ability to do consecutive suck

- 2. Hard spouted cups provide firm boundaries for the mouth, and often best for experienced drinkers. Some valves are easier to use and clean than others.**

First Years	Take and toss	Everywhere	Easy to spill Passive flow - pours out Hard plastic spout - 3 holes Less expensive
Playtex	Stage 4 "Sipsters" Spouted cup	Walmart Target Amazon	Spill proof Permanent one-way valve Age 2 years + Ability to sustain sucking pattern Keeps liquid cool

- 3. The newer 360 cups can be used at any point of contact around the top. Children without vision will have success regardless of how they pick up the cup.**

Munchkin	Miracle 360 Cup	Walmart Target Amazon	Spill-proof/variety of sizes and weights No spout - no extra valves Mature sucking pattern-1 year + Comes in bright colors
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- 4. Straw cups come in weighted and non-weighted varieties with several pieces. Some are dependent on gravity and need to be held upright only. Straw diameter and child's sucking ability need to be matched.**

Playtex	Stage 1 "Sipsters" Straw Cup	Walmart Target Amazon	Spill-proof / non-weighted Squeezable 4-12 months - early drinkers or low tone
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Cup Brand	Cup Name	Location	Comments
Zo-li	Straw cup	Amazon	Non-spill Weighted valve stays in liquid Easy grip handles
Munchkin	Click Lock	Walmart Target Amazon	Non-spill / weighted Permanent one-way valve 6 months + Soft straw and easy suck
Ark's Therapeutic	Sip-Tip	Amazon	Spill / non-weighted 10 replaceable one-way straws Fluid stays up in straw for success Transitional - nice way to teach straw drinking

**5. Open cups the child can control and begin with small single sips to increasing volume. As the child grows, the cup size may increase.**

Solo	Melamine 2oz	Amazon	Very small for little hands Virtually unbreakable Easy to control for volume Comes in bright colors
Flexi	Nosey/ Cut Out Cup	Amazon	Light weight / easy to spill Easy to control for volume Parent can see volume in cup

**6. Sports bottles are easy to carry and developmentally appropriate for older children. Liquid can easily be poured into mouth or on a surface and have volume control.**

Thermos	Foogo	Walmart Target	Non-spill / heavier Insulated aluminum Round hard spout with valve Grows with child
Nalgene	Grip n' Gulp	Walmart Target Amazon	Comes in bright colors Round hard spout with valve Requires a strong suck