



## Book Review

### Tiny Tastes: A Touchpad/Smartphone Application

Created by Emily Garber, RD, CDE

Reviewed by Patricia J. Becker, MS, RDN, CSP, CNSC

Little Turtle • Available at the App Store for iPad or iPhone or Google Play for Android Apps

### About the Creator(s)

Emily is a registered dietitian who specializes in pediatrics. She is a certified diabetes educator who has cared for patients in a variety of settings including Seattle Children's Hospital and Duke University Medical Center. She designed "Tiny Tastes" to encourage children to try new foods and to help support parents and nutrition professionals in making feeding children a positive experience.

Kate Garber created the graphics for the application. Her illustrations are both simple and engaging.



### Introduction

Although eating and feeding are natural biological drives, eating is also a learned behavior. For children there is a normal progression in learning to eat and developmental stages that affect it. For all children there is a preference for the familiar and reluctance to accept things that are different. There is a wide range of normal in eating behavior throughout all the stages, from mild reluctance to total food refusal. For nutrition professionals, helping ensure that children receive optimal nutrition is the goal. Overcoming obstacles is often part of the treatment needed to achieve the goal. Tools such as the Tiny Tastes application can be used to this end.

### Intended Audience

Children ages 2 to 6 years with adult support/supervision/interaction.



DOI: 10.1177/1941406415575936.

For reprints and permissions queries, please visit SAGE's Web site at <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>.

Copyright © 2015 The Author(s)

## Description and Use

### The App

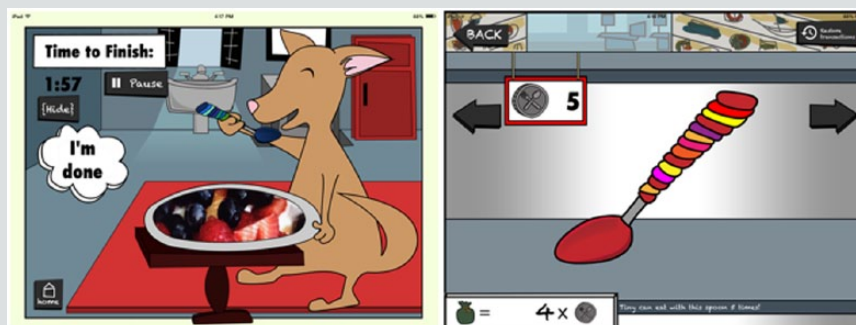
The first time you use the application there is a tutorial that walks you through its use and introduces the user to all the available features.

Future features will include a web portal TinyTastesPRO that will allow caregivers and health care providers to have a visual record of what the child has eaten with Tiny through recorded in-app photos.

The web portal will enable caregivers and healthcare providers to view what a child has eaten along with Tiny in the app. It automatically imports the in-app photo of a child's intake to a secure web portal to effortlessly capture progress between feeding therapy visits. This visual diet record enables users to notice trends and follow a child's intake as they expand their food acceptance over time.



The story time section is simple and engaging and a good place to start to familiarize the care giver and child with the app. Once you know the story, the caregiver can take a photo of the child's meal and Tiny and the child can eat together bite by bite. There is a timer associated with the meal or snack to assist with limiting mealtime to a defined period. Once the child is finished, coins are awarded.



Children can obtain reward coins for finishing a meal or drink, which can be used to purchase items at the store. There is also a feature that requires a \$0.99 purchase for gift boxes of items for Tiny. This feature has a gate that requires answering a math problem for access, so that the child cannot purchase items without assistance. So be aware that there might be a charge for using the app. Downloading the app is free of charge however, and there are many things that can be "purchased" without cost.

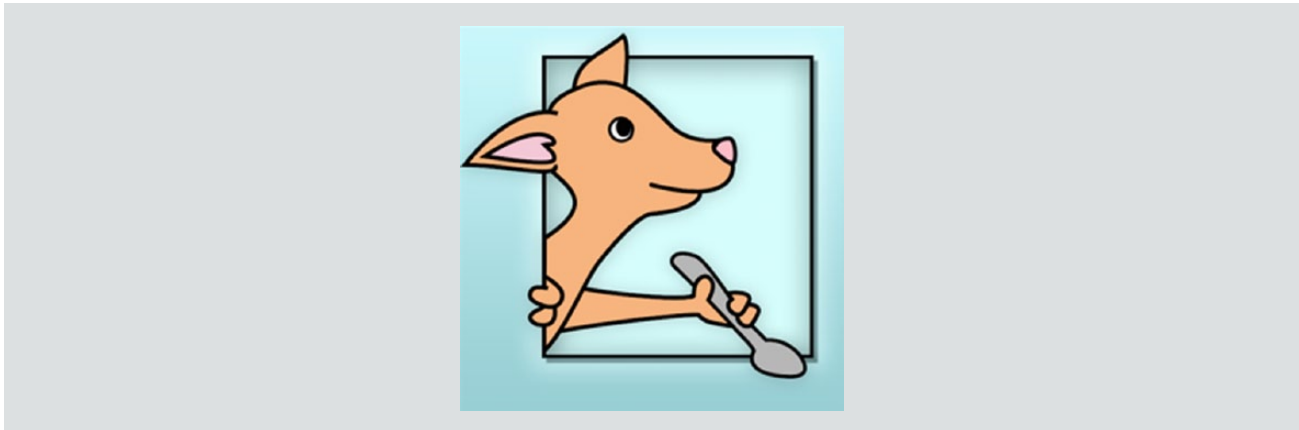
On the smartphone version the user receives meal notifications, which may be a helpful reminder to utilize the application. This can be disabled in the settings.

### The Web Site

<http://www.tinytastesworld.com> has a story to introduce children to Tiny's tale, a health care profession section, a kid's zone section, and a section for parents and caregivers, as well as a portal to Tiny's blog, Tiny Tastes Blog: <http://www.tinytastesworld.blogspot.com>.

PDFs for professionals on how best to use the application with a variety of conditions are available on the Web site. Under the professionals sections there is also a screen where nutrition professionals can register their services in the Tiny Tastes network.

There are also tips for parents on using the application, such as: “Even though Tiny’s involvement can be a lot of fun, we have kept the eating with Tiny process visually less engaging so that you can continue with normal mealtimes without needing to focus on the app . . .” that help the caregivers use the application to the greatest advantage.



**In My Opinion**

A common concern among parents of young children is the reluctance to try new food. The picky eater can be a challenge for both parents and those of us who provide health care to children. For some children and families, feeding difficulties go beyond pickiness to full blown feeding aversion that requires enteral nutrition support by feeding tube. Pediatric dietitians and feeding therapists alike use tools and techniques to help children overcome the behaviors that surround this problem. The Tiny Tastes app is just such a tool.

Other disciplines would find this tool useful as well. A colleague who is a speech language pathologist and feeding therapist agreed: “This is a clever app. I love it!” It has a lot of information about “how” to use it with you kids and records information that a feeding therapist would like to collect from families during the course of therapy, such as food tracking journals. The informational PDFs are great and show how to set small goals to make incremental progress. I agree with the suggested age range of 2 to 6 years, although for some children it might still be effective up to age 8.

I recommend this application for nutrition professionals in the outpatient and private practice settings for helping children and caregivers overcome mealtime challenges for picky eaters and beyond.

When you open Tiny Tastes, you can start with “story time” to let your child enter Tiny’s world and accompany her on all kinds of adventures.

Just take a photo of the delicious food you’ve set out, and it will appear on Tiny’s plate.

After exploring new places and making new friends, Tiny is ready for a meal or snack and invites your child to join her.

Now your little one and Tiny are eating the same food at the same time!

**WHY IT WORKS:**  
Studies have shown that children more readily try new foods when they are eating along with others who model those same healthy eating patterns. Using our patent pending approach, we bring this interactivity to your table through the use of a lovable mealtime companion who enjoys the same food or drink that you’ve set out for your little one, in whatever amount of time you choose to set as a goal.

Good behavior deserves a reward, so any tiny taste earns your child a coin, while completing the food or drink goal that you’ve set earns even more.

As the coins add up, your little one can buy all sorts of fun things at the Tiny Tastes Store!