



National Nutrition Month activities for primary grades

National Nutrition Month is here! Select from among these language-learning activity ideas to make the most of March's focus on the science that deals with foods and their effects on health.

One goal these activities achieve is the merging of content learning with the acquisition of all communication skills. At the urging of content educators and literacy researchers, the practice of strengthening students' knowledge base during literacy instruction is widening. Using this approach, you will strengthen both children's literacy learning and their knowledge of this important topic.

Introduce the topic by writing and saying the word *nutrition*. Discuss its meaning to assess what children know about nutrition, using this level of knowledge to choose appropriate activities to expand their understanding. Save this information as a baseline for comparison to later contrast what students' knew before and after the study.

The suggested activities can be completed independently, in pairs, cooperative groups, or as a whole class. Results can be written, oral, or both. For all written work, have students pair up and proofread!

Food Group Activities

Food groupings vary, but you can use these from the USDA as a general guideline. Post the name of each food group on a separate chart or section of the bulletin board. Discuss the kinds of foods found in each group and how they relate to nutrition, or healthy eating.

1. breads, cereal, rice, pasta
 2. fats, oils, sweets
 3. fruits
 4. meat, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, nuts
 5. milk, yogurt, cheese
 6. vegetables
- 🍷 Students find pictures of food in old magazines, catalogs, and on packaging, and then cut them out. From this collection, students select pictures to sort by food group. Help students label each picture. Ask students to bring in product packages and labels to add to each food group display, labeling them as they do so.
 - 🍷 For students who need more letter/sound practice, discuss beginning and ending sounds of the food words and the letters that spell these sounds.
 - 🍷 Students select pictures from the food groups display to combine them to construct nutritious meals. Then they write and illustrate sentences describing the foods of their healthy-meal choices.
 - 🍷 One student names a food or writes its name in front of the class. The other students then identify its food group. Students select a food group and draw and describe in writing their favorite and/or least favorite food within that group. Ask students to provide reasons for their selections.
 - 🍷 Select one food group, such as vegetables, and explore it in more depth. Bring examples to school for a "tasting". Sort the vegetables in different ways, for example, by those whose edible parts grow above or below the ground. Read *Tops and Bottoms* by Janet Stevens, a Caldecott Honor Book).
 - 🍷 Focus students' attention on reading and writing food group (fruits, vegetables, etc.) words by using them for bingo, word finds, scrambled letter games, and Mystery Word!

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Marianne Doan says Mystery Word is her students' favorite word game. To start the game, Marianne names the Mystery Word's category, for example, the vegetable food group. Then she writes letter blanks on the chalkboard that represent the letters in the Mystery Word. Student teams take turns guessing a letter. Correct guesses are written in the letter blank. Any team can try to name the Mystery Word at any time, but if they guess wrong that team is out. The team that correctly identifies the Mystery Word gets a point, and the next round begins with another vegetable.

Class Cooks

Get ready for Mother's Day! Students make a class cookbook for Mom of nutritional recipes for foods they like to eat. Some students can make illustrations to create covers. These cookbooks can go home for Mom on Friday, May 8th.

Grocery List Game

Nearly every family routinely makes a grocery list. Discuss why people make grocery lists. Make a blackline master Grocery List lined in a size on which students feel comfortable writing. Duplicate and place the blank lists in the Literacy Center along with magazines, catalogs, and supermarket circulars to cut out for making lists.

- Students make their grocery lists using food pictures or food names. They can use their *My Spell Check* cards as a spelling reference.

Word-Skill Fun with the Word *Nutrition* and Food Words

Letters and their sounds, syllables, rhyming words, homophones, and food names are the catalyst for word fun activities.

The Word *Nutrition*

- Write and say the word *nutrition* and guide students to note that the word *nutrition* begins and ends with the letter *n*. Start two ongoing word collections, words that begin with *n* and words that end in *n*, and have students contribute as they think of words over time.
- Clap the syllables in the word *nutrition* (3). Then have students identify more three-syllable words. How many can students find and write?
- Guide students to identify the vowel sound in the first syllable of the word *nutrition*. Then students identify more words with the same vowel sound. Work with students to sort the words by their spelling patterns (i.e., *ue* as in *blue*, *ew* as in *new*, *ou* as in *you*, *o* as in *do*, *ui* as in *fruit*). Conclude that the vowel sound can be spelled in more than one way.

Food Words

- Students select a food word, then find and write words that rhyme with their food word. Challenge students to write rhyming couplets to support their nutrition study.

Long and skinny—fresh green beans,
Will I eat some? By all means!

- Help students identify food names that have homophone partners. Make an ongoing collection (e.g., *beet/beat*, *chili/Chile/chilly*, *meat/meet*, *steak/stake*, *sundae/Sunday*).
- Students find and write words that have the same beginning, ending, or vowel sound as a food word (e.g., *plum*, *ham*, *pork*). Give students a word, then time the word-search sessions to identify the students who find the most words in the specified category.
- Name a color. Have students identify foods that are that color (e.g., *yellow—bananas, corn, squash, lemons, golden apples, pineapple, yellow peppers, yellow potatoes, yellow tomatoes, papayas, yellow wax beans, butter, egg yolks*).

Primary Books About Food

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Bring literature into your exploration of food with food book favorites, a few of which are listed here.

- 📖 *Pickin' Peas* by Margaret Read Macdonald. In this retelling of a Southern folktale, a little girl and a rabbit struggle for power in the pea patch.
- 📖 *Pumpkin Soup* by Helen Cooper. This is the tale of three friends: a cat, a squirrel with a banjo, and a small singing duck, who live together in a cabin deep in the woods and make pumpkin soup.
- 📖 *The Popcorn Book* by Tomie dePaola. Two brothers, Tony and Tiny, tell about the history and uses of popcorn.
- 📖 *The Tortilla Factory* by Gary Paulsen. Spare, repetitive words and fuzzy-beautiful illustrations tell the story of how corn is planted, grown, harvested and made into tortillas through the seasons.
- 📖 *Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z* by Lois Ehlert. Colorful ABC's present a variety of foods, both common and uncommon; includes a glossary with descriptions and interesting facts.
- 📖 *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. This story clearly illustrates how food is needed to build young bodies and sets the stage for a discussion of how food fuels the growth of all living things.

Nutritionist: A Career

Students can become aware of jobs and careers early in their education. Guide students to explore the role a nutritionist provides to a community.

- 📖 What does a nutritionist do?
- 📖 Where do nutritionists work in our community?
- 📖 Find out the requirements for being a licensed nutritionist in your state.
- 📖 Invite a nutritionist to visit the class to help students discover more about nutrition and what a nutritionist does.



Students can write and proofread what they learn about being a nutritionist.