

Teach Beside Me



Food and Nutrition Unit for Kids

I created this unit to teach my kids about health and nutrition- it is mainly for elementary aged kids, but can be adapted for older kids, too. Nutrition is such an essential skill to know. If we begin teaching kids about healthy food choices when they are young they will be able to practice these skills their whole lives. I really want my own kids to know and understand these principles. Mostly this is just a collection of activities and learning ideas that can be used in any way that works for your family or classroom.

My nutrition background: I graduated with a bachelor's degree in Home Economics Education. I taught food and nutrition classes at a high school and middle school level for a few years before having my own kids. I also write a cooking blog: <http://cookingwithkaryn.blogspot.com>

Some topics covered in this unit:

- Portion sizes
- Reading food labels
- Making healthier food choices
- Eating more variety
- Learning the food groups
- Nutrients in various food groups
- Foods around the world
- Books related to food and nutrition
- Fun hands-on learning about nutrition
- Cooking healthy foods & meal planning, and recipes
- And... lots of links to online nutrition lessons and resources!

Kid's Books Related to Food and Nutrition:

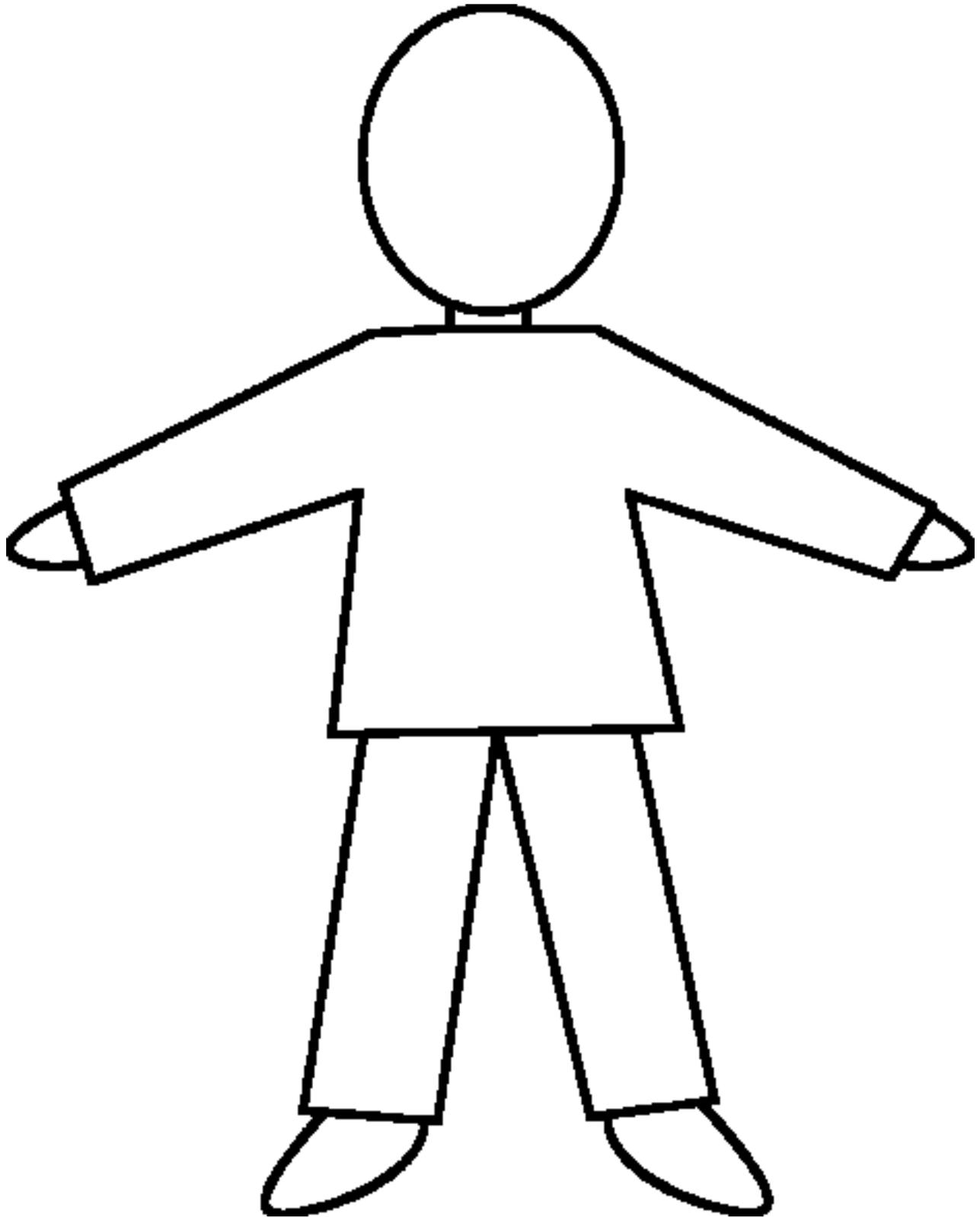
- ❖ Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z- Lois Ehlert
- ❖ I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato -Lauren Child
- ❖ Eating Fractions -Bruce McMillan
- ❖ Gobble Up Math -Sue Mogard and Ginny McDonnell
- ❖ Gobble Up Science -Carol A. Johmann and Elizabeth Rieth
- ❖ Bread and Jam for Frances -Russel Hoban
- ❖ Little Pea- Amy Krouse Rosenthal
- ❖ Gregory the Terrible Eater - Mitchell Sharmat
- ❖ Oliver's Vegetables -Vivian French
- ❖ Berenstain Bears and Too Much Junk- Stan and Jan Berenstain
- ❖ The Very Hungry Caterpillar- Eric Carle
- ❖ Green Eggs and Ham- Dr. Seuss
- ❖ Blueberries For Sal - Robert McCloskey
- ❖ Good Enough to Eat: A Kid's Guide to Food and Nutrition -Lizzy Rockwell
- ❖ Stone Soup - Marica Brown
- ❖ The Ugly Vegetables-Grace Lin
- ❖ Good Morning, Little Fox -Marilyn Janovitz
- ❖ Rabbit Food -Susanna Gretz
- ❖ Knock Knock Kids: My Food Passport
- ❖ Growing Vegetable Soup -Lois Ehlert
- ❖ The Monster Health Book -Edward Miller
- ❖ Oh The Things You Can Do That Are Good For You -Tish Rabe
- ❖ The Busy Body Book -Lizzy Rickwell
- ❖ Jack's Garden -Henry Cole

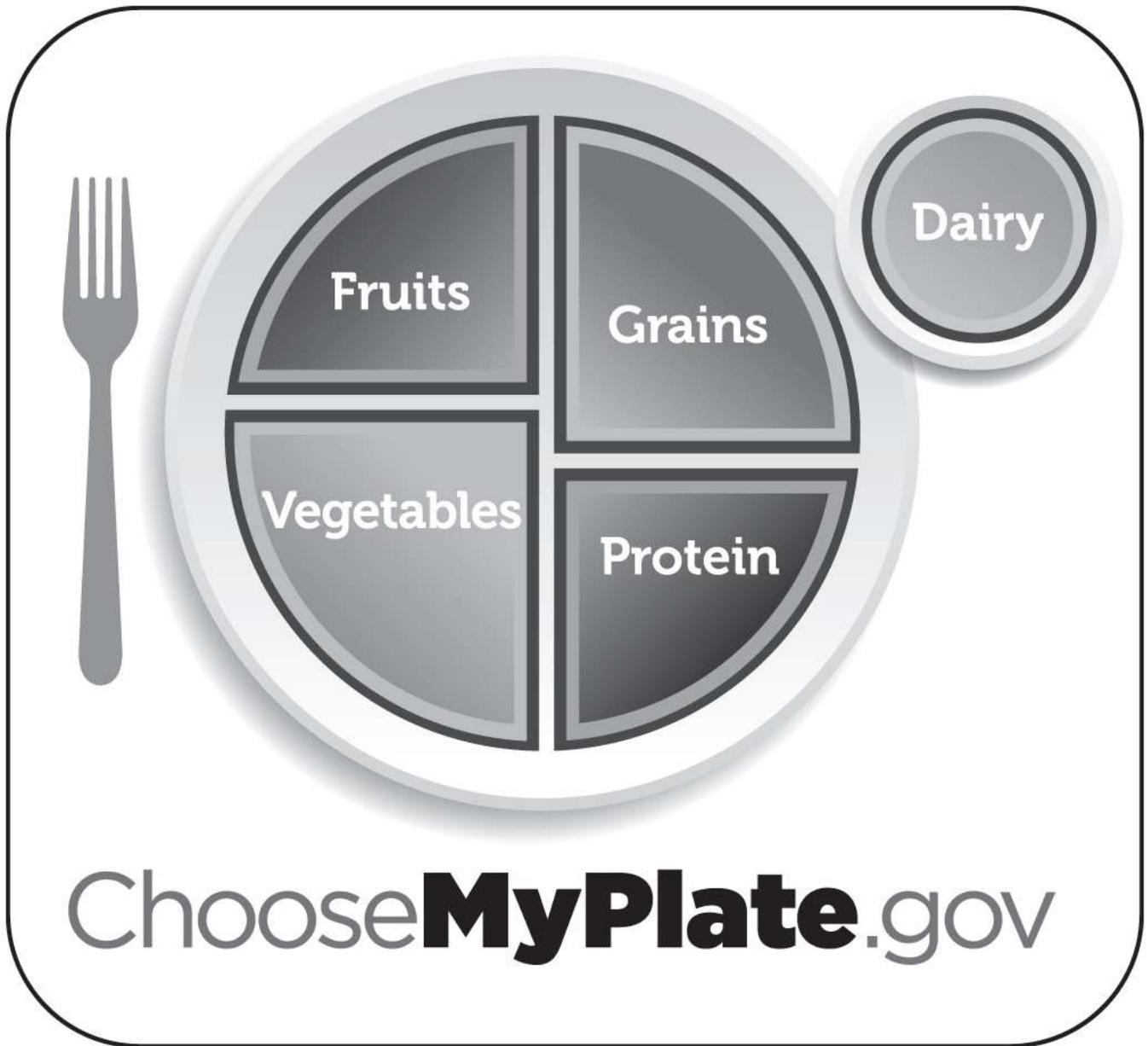
Also many traditional fairy tales and fables have reference to food:

- Little Red Hen
- Goldilocks and the Three Bears
- Hansel & Gretel
- Johnny Appleseed
- Little Red Riding Hood
- The Little Gingerbread Man
- Old Mother Hubbard
- Snow White
- Jack and the Beanstalk
- The Goose with the Golden Eggs
- The Ant and the Grasshopper
- Winnie the Pooh (honey is yummy!)

Fruit and Vegetable Fill Up

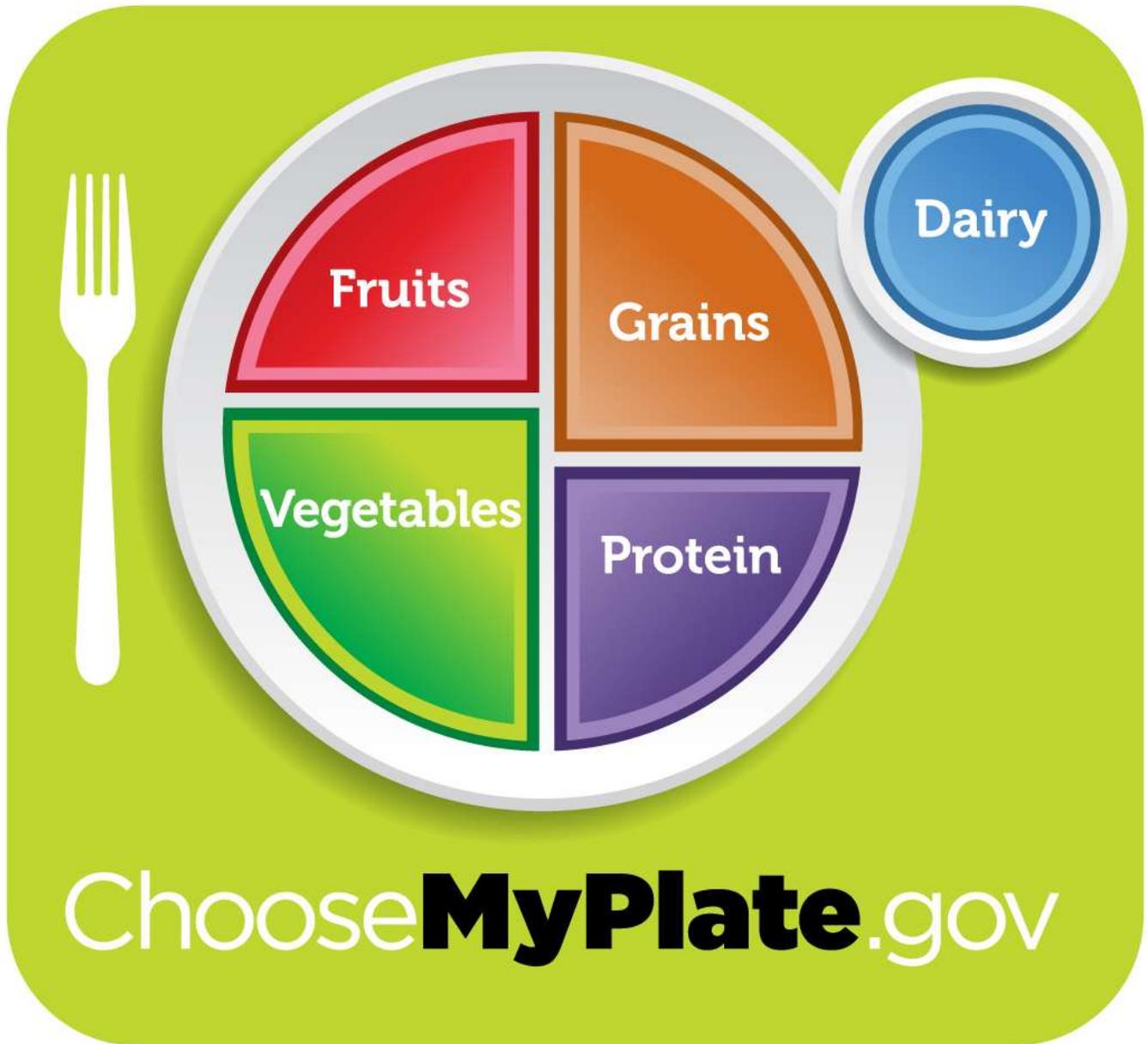
Each time you eat some produce, put a sticker on the body to fill it up. Use the stickers from the produce when they have them.





This page can be used for many types of learning activities. There is also a colored one on the next page. See ChooseMyPlate.Gov for more color options.

- Cut food pictures out of magazines or print from clip art and sort them on the page. You could also use play food.
- Use it as a diet log for the day or week - put tally marks or stickers on as they eat foods from different food groups.
- Analyze your meals- sort your meal into different sections to see how they match up with the portions on the plate.
- Create a placemat from the image- laminate and keep at your table to help remember portions.



Learning to Read a Food Label

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 2 crackers (14 g) Servings Per Container About 21	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 60 Calories from Fat 15	
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 1.5g	2%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 70mg	3%
Total Carbohydrate 10g	3%
Dietary Fiber Less than 1g	3%
Sugars 0g	
Protein 2g	
Vitamin A 0%	• Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 0%	• Iron 2%
<small>* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:</small>	
	<small>Calories: 2,000 2,500</small>
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Sat Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2400mg 2400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g

The Nutrition Facts food label is on the side of all of the packaged foods that you buy. It gives you information about which nutrients are in the food and how much you should eat. Your body needs the right combination of nutrients to work properly and grow. Fresh food that doesn't come prepackaged sometimes has nutrition facts, too.

Most nutrients are measured in grams, also written as g. Some nutrients are measured in milligrams, or mg. Milligrams are very tiny — there are 1,000 milligrams in 1 gram. Other information on the label is given in percentages. Food contains fat, protein, carbohydrates, and fiber, vitamins, such as A and C, and minerals, such as calcium and iron. Nutrition specialists know how much of each one kids and adults should get every day to have a healthy diet. The percent daily value on a food label tells you how this food can help someone meet these daily nutrition goals. On food labels, they base the percentages on a 2,000-calorie adult diet.

Looking at the label above for two crackers, you can see that they provide less than 1 gram of fiber, only 3% of your daily needs. So that means you would have to eat other foods to get 100% of the fiber needed each day. Also, you can see that the crackers provide nothing toward the daily goals for vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, or iron. Is this a snack with a lot of nutrients?

Compare Foods by Reading Nutrition Labels

This activity can be done at the grocery store or in your home.

Cereal: Do you have cereal in your house? Pull out all of the cereal boxes and compare sugar and fiber. The best choices of cereal are those with more fiber and less sugar. You should choose cereals with less than 10 grams of sugar and 3 grams or more of fiber.

Crackers: Does your family eat crackers or chips? Compare the food labels on crackers and chips in your house. See which ones have the least amount of fat and sodium. Which have the most fiber? Which ones are the best choices?

Bread: Compare different kinds of bread to see which have the most amount of fiber and the least amount of sugar. Do you have a favorite homemade recipe? Find its nutritional content: <http://www.myfitnesspal.com/recipe/calculator>

Sugar in Unlikely Places: Read ingredients of foods that you would not expect to have sugar, such as: ketchup, bread, sauces, salad dressings, snack foods, etc.

See how many grams of sugar there are in them. Sometimes it is surprising how much added sugar there is in the foods we eat.

Processed Meats: Read the nutrition labels on various packaged meats including bologna, hot dogs, lunch meat, sausage, etc. Compare the fat and sodium contents in them. Decide which would be a healthier choice.

Fruit: Compare fruit snacks, fruit leather and fresh fruit to see the amount of sugar, fiber, vitamins, and nutritional content in them.

Milk comparison: Compare skim milk, 1%, 2%, whole milk and cream. Read the labels and see which nutrients are the same, and which would be a healthier choice. Why?

Portion Sizes~ How Much Should We Eat?

Here are some comparisons to help you figure out your serving sizes:



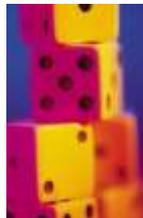
A teaspoon of margarine or butter is the size of one dice.



Three ounces of meat is the size of a deck of cards.



One cup of pasta or rice is the size of a baseball.



An ounce and a half of cheese is the size of four stacked dice.



One-half cup of fresh fruit is also the size of a baseball.

How Much Are You Eating? You may be surprised that you eat a lot more than what is recommended for a portion. Pull out a few foods you eat regularly. "Serve" yourself what you would normally eat. Read the portion size and take out just the amount recommended. Compare.

Eating a Rainbow!



Kids should eat at least 5 fruits & vegetables each day. Have your child chart what they eat. As they eat different colored fruits and vegetables mark them on the rainbow by writing the food, using tally marks, or stickers. You could also (just for fun) try eating a meal all in one color- have a red meal, and orange meal, etc.

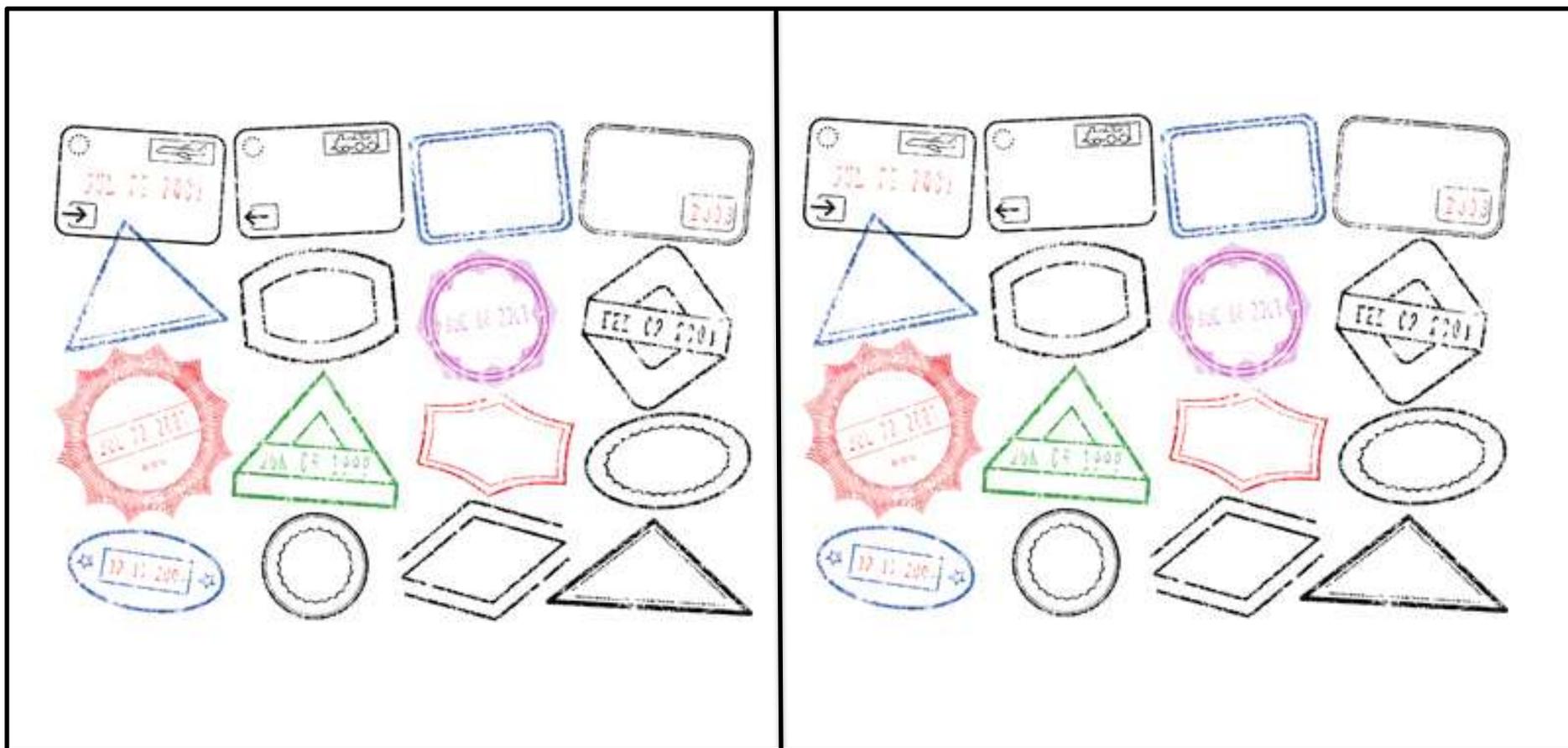
World Food Map



- Learn about food around the world by researching what the main staple foods are in different countries. (For example: In Japan they eat mainly rice with fish and vegetables.) What is the main staple food in your family? Some staple foods include: rice, potatoes, pasta, yams, bread, tortillas, corn, and oats. Make a food world map. Use a blank map and fill in (writing/or gluing on -like the picture above) the staple foods eaten around the world.
- See [National Geographic](#) on staple foods around the world.
- Here are some images of [What school lunches look like in 20 countries.](#)
- Here is a video of [Sid the Science Kid](#) on food around the world.
- Try making some new ethnic snacks or meals from another country or eating at different ethnic restaurants.
- Teach kids way to fight world hunger- find a charity to contribute to. Here is a lesson plan about fighting world hunger from [Feeding Minds.](#)

Food Passport

Print a few of these pages and make an eating passport. There is a cover on the next page, too. Make foods from different countries and write the country name in one of the boxes as you eat it. Be adventurous! You could combine this with geography studies as well. Here are a few sites with recipes & foods from around the world: [Fun Ethnic Recipes](#) to make with kids, [Snacks from around the world](#), [International Recipes](#), [Ethnic Foods](#), [Fast and Easy Ethnic Recipes](#)



My Food Passport

Eating Around the World

By: _____

Date: _____



Match Up the Food Groups

Fruits

Grains

Proteins

Dairy

Vegetables

Fats & Sweets



What Nutrients Are in the Foods We Eat?

Grains- Carbohydrates, Fiber, B Vitamins, Iron

- Carbohydrates are the body's main energy source.
- Fiber helps food to digest well.
- B vitamins help the body to use the energy it receives
- Iron carries oxygen in blood and muscles

Vegetables- Vitamins A and C, Folate, Iron, Magnesium, Fiber

- Vitamin A helps the skin, and vision (eyes)
- Vitamin C helps the body heal and fights infection
- Folate is needed for healthy blood, and cell division (especially in pregnancy)
- Magnesium is in bones and helps muscles and nerves to function

Fruits- Vitamins A and C, Potassium, Folate, Fiber

- Potassium maintains the heartbeat, regulates body fluids and helps in muscle and nerve functions

Dairy- Calcium, Vitamin D, Riboflavin, Potassium, Protein

- Calcium is needed for healthy bones and teeth
- Vitamin D works with calcium to build and maintain strong bones
- Riboflavin is a B vitamin that helps the body use energy

Extras- Simple Carbs., Sugar, Fats, and Water

- Simple Carbohydrates provide energy but few other nutrients
- Fat is a source of energy and helps in the absorption of certain vitamins. There are certain fats that are healthier choices: olive oil, canola oil, coconut oil, avocados, fish oil, olives, and nuts

Water is the most important nutrient our body needs! Drink lots of it!

How Much Sugar is in it??



One gram of sugar is about $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. If you pour a bowl of cereal that has 10 grams of sugar in 1 c. of cereal how many teaspoons of sugar would it have?

Choose a few snacks and foods that you like to eat. Read the food label to see how many grams of sugar are in them. Measure out the teaspoons next to the food to see how much sugar they have.

Food #1: _____

How many grams of sugar? _____

How many teaspoons does that equal? _____

Does it have a lot of sugar? _____

Food #2 _____

How many grams of sugar? _____

How many teaspoons does that equal? _____

Does it have a lot of sugar? _____

Food #3 _____

How many grams of sugar? _____

How many teaspoons does that equal? _____

Does it have a lot of sugar? _____

It is recommended that women have 6 or less teaspoons of sugar each day, and men have 9 or less teaspoons of sugar each day. How many are you eating? The Average American is eating 22 teaspoons of added sugar each day. How can you reduce the amount of sugar you eat?

My Food and Exercise Diary

Keep a record of all of the foods that you eat for 5 days. Be sure to record your portion size, too. Also record any exercise that you do during the day. Set a weekly goal for yourself (i.e. trying new foods, 5 fruits & veggies/day, etc.) After 5 days, evaluate your diet to see where you need to make improvements. To help make it easier, you can also use an online tracker. Here is one I like:

<http://www.myfitnesspal.com/recipe/calculator>

Day 1: Exercise (type and amount of time) _____

Breakfast- _____

Lunch- _____

Snacks- _____

Dinner- _____

Day 2: Exercise (type and amount of time) _____

Breakfast- _____

Lunch- _____

Snacks- _____

Dinner- _____

Day 3: Exercise (type and amount of time) _____

Breakfast- _____

Lunch- _____

Snacks- _____

Dinner- _____

Day 4: Exercise (type and amount of time) _____

Breakfast- _____

Lunch- _____

Snacks- _____

Dinner- _____

Day 5: Exercise (type and amount of time) _____

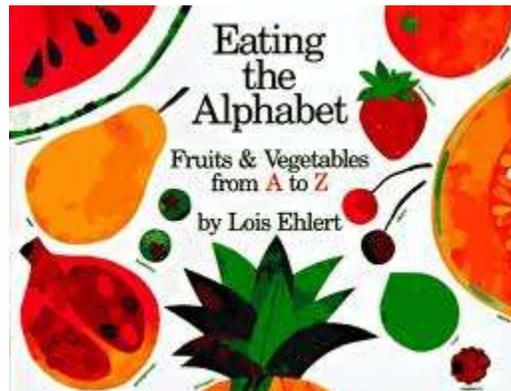
Breakfast- _____

Lunch- _____

Snacks- _____

Dinner- _____

Eating the Alphabet!



Read the book: [Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z](#) by Lois Ehlert. Try it with your family! You can choose one or a few from each letter. Try doing a letter each week. You can use familiar fruits and vegetables, or try new ones if your family is more daring. It's always fun to try something new!!

The Fabulous First Grade blog created a fun A-Z [Fruit & Vegetables Scavenger Hunt](#), using grocery ads. This could help you get some ideas of foods you want to try!

The next page has a chart you can print to track the letters and the foods you are trying.

Eating the Alphabet from A to Z	What I Tried -Did I Like It?
A is for Apple, Apricot, Artichoke Avocado, Asparagus	
B is for Banana, Blueberry, Brussels Sprouts, Bean, Beet, Broccoli	
C is for Carrot, Cucumber, Corn, Celery, Cherry, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Currant	
D is for Date	
E is for Endive, Eggplant	
F is for Fig (or any new fruit!)	
G is for Gooseberry, Grapefruit, Grapes	
H is for Huckleberry	
I is for Indian Corn	
J is for Jalapeno, Jicama	
K is for Kumquat, Kiwi, Kohlrabi	
L is for Lemon, Leek, Lettuce, Lime	
M is for Melon, Mango	
N is for Nectarine	
O is for Okra, Orange, Onion	
P is for Pineapple, Peach, Pear, Papaya, Persimmon, Pomegranate, Plum, potato, Parsnip, Pea, Pepper, Pumpkin	
Q is for Quince	
R is for Rutabaga, Raspberry, Radish, Rhubarb, Radicchio	
S is for Swiss Chard, Spinach, Star Fruit, Strawberry	
T is for Tangerine, Turnip, Tomato	
U is for Ugli Fruit	
V is for any Vegetable	
W is for Watermelon, Watercress	
X is for Xigua (anyone know what this is?)	
Y is for Yam	
Z is for Zucchini	

There are a few obscure ones, so be creative!

Meal Planning

Let your kids be in charge of the meals for the day! Give them a few requirements- making it a well-balanced meal, ingredients on-hand, healthier choices, mom-approved, etc. Let them prepare, cook and clean as much as they can (with help, of course!) You could make this a regular (once-a-week) activity.

Breakfast:

Beverage: _____

Main course: _____

Sides: _____

Fruit/Vegetable: _____

Lunch:

Beverage: _____

Main course: _____

Sides: _____

Fruit/Vegetable: _____

Dinner:

Beverage: _____

Main course: _____

Sides: _____

Fruit/Vegetable: _____

How did it go? What did you learn from this? _____

Some other related activities

- Participate in a local food drive.
- Let kids build their own recipe. Give them ingredients to make a trail mix, pizzas or a yogurt parfait and let them build it themselves.
- Practice fractions with a cantaloupe, a pizza, graham crackers, chocolate bars, or any other easily dividable food.
- [Make homemade bread](#)- grind your own wheat- or try grinding other grains like rice or corn & read The Little Red Hen story.
- Make a felt board and play felt food.
- Let the kids help with the grocery shopping, and writing shopping lists. You could even incorporate a budgeting lesson in to this!
- Play store with toy food and toy money.

A few other resources:

- [Let's Eat](#)- lesson from Scholastic
- File Folder Fun has a [Food Pyramid game](#) that is free. Even though the Food pyramid system is out dated, it is still a cute game that my kids enjoy. They also have a [Fruit or Vegetable](#) game for younger learners.
- [PBS Fizzy's Lunch Lab](#)- lessons and games
- [Dole SuperKids](#) -lessons and activities
- [Fitter Critters](#) -game
- [Littles D's Nutrition Explorations](#)- lesson plans
- [Super Star Nutrition for Kids](#)
- [Nutrition Detectives](#) -movies and lessons
- [Nourish Interactive](#) -lesson plans
- [Super Healthy Kids](#)- recipe blog with GREAT healthy recipes for kids!
- [Things That Make You Say: "Mmmmm!"](#) - my cooking blog,
- [Here is a link](#) to healthy snack ideas for kids on Teach Beside Me.
- [Super Kid's Nutrition](#)- great nutrition resources, lessons, & books!