

# A Guided Discovery of *Canada's Food Guide*

## The *Canada's Food Guide* Plate





# *Canada's Food Guide:* **A GUIDED DISCOVERY**



## **OVERVIEW**

In January 2019, Health Canada released an updated *Canada's Food Guide* (CFG) as an online suite of resources in the form of videos, recipes, and tips that provide guidance about eating habits. While there are many elements to the CFG, the *Canada's Food Guide* Plate (CFG Plate) is the most familiar component.

The student workbook guides students in learning about the fundamental concepts of the CFG Plate and facilitates a deeper understanding of concepts within the guide beyond the CFG Plate. It will give students the opportunity to apply the learnings from this exploration to real world scenarios and encourage critical thinking about the messages provided by CFG.

Students will require internet access and a connected device (e.g., computer, tablet, or laptop) to complete this activity. The activity can be done individually, in pairs or small groups, or as a class, depending on the format of your class.

## APPROXIMATE TIME: 60 MINUTES

### Key Learning Objectives

- Explore the components of CFG beyond the CFG Plate
- Apply concepts of CFG when building meals and snacks
- Analyze messages of CFG and how they apply to individual eating habits

### Materials

- Student workbook (fillable PDF or printed copy)
- Computer, tablet, or laptop with internet access
- Access to *Canada's Food Guide* website: [Canada.ca/FoodGuide](https://Canada.ca/FoodGuide)

## USING THIS RESOURCE IN YOUR CLASS

This resource can be used in multiple ways depending on your class' needs and the resources available:

- **Individually:** Each student completes the resource on their own using a computer with internet access.
- **In pairs or small groups:** Divide students into pairs or small groups. Provide each group with a computer with internet access. Students can each fill in an individual workbook or the group can fill out one resource.
- **As a class:** Provide each student with an individual workbook to complete on their own. As a class, navigate the website using one computer.
- **Online learning environment:** Provide each student with the fillable PDF to complete on their own at home. During online class meetings, review answers and discussion topics.

## INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

1. Introduce CFG using a copy of the *Food Guide* Snapshot PDF (available at [Canada.ca/FoodGuide](https://Canada.ca/FoodGuide) or download at [food-guide.canada.ca/artifacts/CFG-snapshot-EN.pdf](https://food-guide.canada.ca/artifacts/CFG-snapshot-EN.pdf)). Unlike the previous *Food Guide*, released in 2007, this double sided paper copy is not the actual food guide. At the bottom of the *Food Guide* Snapshot page, "Discover your food guide at [Canada.ca/FoodGuide](https://Canada.ca/FoodGuide)" guides readers to the website where the complete CFG can be found.
2. Have students find the food guide by searching for "*Canada's Food Guide*" or using the address on the *Food Guide* Snapshot: [Canada.ca/FoodGuide](https://Canada.ca/FoodGuide).
3. Have students complete the workbook using either the fillable PDF or printed workbook. Once the workbook is complete, discuss the answers together.

Suggested answers are provided in italics.

## TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### HOW TO TALK ABOUT FOOD WITH STUDENTS

Teachers know the value of creating a safe and respectful classroom environment. Consider how this principle relates to the messages you share about food and eating. You can help students feel relaxed and supported by talking about all foods in a neutral way rather than as “good” or “bad.” Neutral food conversations mean there is no judgement of the food or the person eating the food.

#### Roles Foods Play in Eating and Life

Food is more than nutrients. But often, foods that do not fit neatly into the categories in CFG are considered nonessential or “junk” foods.

*What would curry be without turmeric or chilis?*

*Salad without salad dressing?*

*Consider how a chewy cookie or crispy chips can add flavour and texture to a meal.*

None of these ingredients or foods belong to a category, yet they all have value. Health Canada does not support labelling foods “healthy” or “unhealthy.”<sup>1</sup> Calling foods “unhealthy” or “junk” can be harmful to a child’s relationship with food and their relationships with caregivers who provide food. Making space for a variety of foods contributes to a positive relationship with food and recognizes that factors such as taste, culture, and food traditions play a role in students’ food choices. This view is communicated in CFG and in Canada’s Dietary Guidelines through advice on enjoying food.<sup>2,3</sup>

#### Factors That Influence Food Choices

The aim of *A Guided Discovery of Canada’s Food Guide* is to support students in exploring Health Canada’s recommendations and apply this in making food decisions that respect the reality of their needs and resources. Food choices can be based on many things, including taste, hunger, food traditions, what’s available, and personal health. The ability of students and caregivers to meet these needs is tied to access and resources such as money, time, space, skills, equipment, and support. These, and many factors influence what foods students eat at school. When concerns about a student’s food choices come up, pause to consider what the underlying cause for the concern might be rather than commenting on the healthfulness of food items. For example, family stressors such as a medical condition may affect a caregiver’s capacity to shop for groceries or prepare meals. Like you, caregivers are trying their best to support children. You can help families by fostering a safe food environment at school and encouraging experiential learning with nutrition in the classroom. If you suspect a family does not have enough food, we recommend speaking to your school guidance counsellor to help facilitate a conversation with the family about potential supports. This conversation is appropriate for adults; students should not be involved.

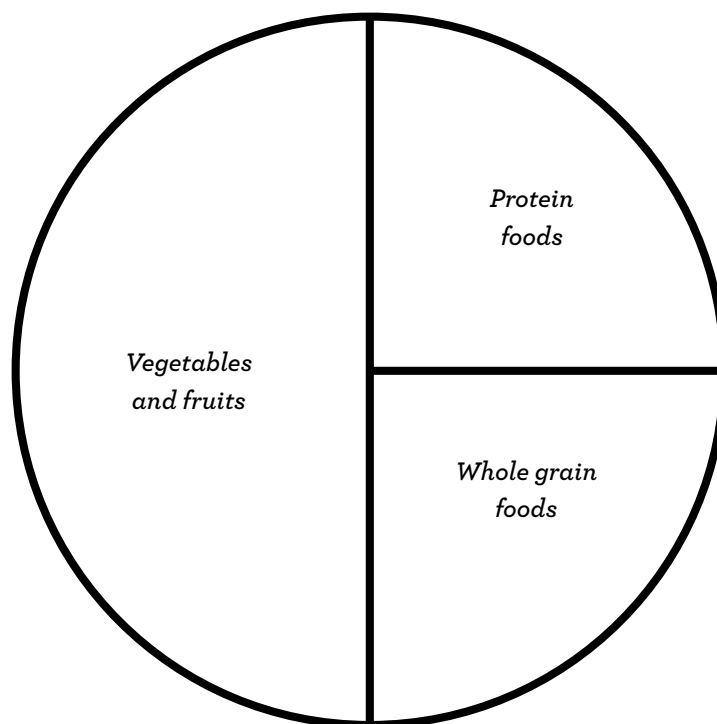
#### Reducing Risk Of Harm

While this resource includes discussion about nutrients and the benefits of eating a variety of foods, we encourage neutral food exposure and conversation about all foods to preserve and foster a positive relationship with food. Being mindful of how health messages are delivered and avoiding techniques such as food tracking and food monitoring are recommended to minimize the risk of disordered eating behaviour that is associated with these practices.<sup>4</sup>

Access *Canada's Food Guide* at [Canada.ca/FoodGuide](https://Canada.ca/FoodGuide)

This page brings you to the CFG Plate. This image showcases a colourful plate of food divided into three categories: vegetables and fruits, whole grain foods, and protein foods.

1. Fill in the following plate with the correct CFG categories.



2. Name three foods from each category that are not pictured but you think could fit.

### Vegetables and fruits:

*Examples include cauliflower, celery, bok choy, lettuce, mushrooms, onions, okra, squash, cucumber, oranges, banana, pears, peaches, mango, saskatoon berries, and watermelon.*

### Whole grain foods:

*Examples include bagel, bannock, barley, bun, cereal, couscous, crackers, muffin, naan, oatmeal, pancakes, pita, roti, and tortillas.*

### Protein foods:

*Examples include cheese, kefir, milk, skim milk powder, hummus, peanut butter, duck, lamb, moose, pork, shrimp, squid, tuna, turkey, and fish.*



On the left side toolbar click on “Eat a variety of healthy foods.”  
Then, select “Eat whole grain foods.”



This page introduces the role of whole grain foods in your body.

**5. Circle the whole grain foods.**

• Oatmeal with sliced banana, cooked in milk

• Stew with potatoes and whole grain bread

• White pasta and meatballs with parmesan cheese on top

• Curry with vegetables and a mix of brown and white rice

• Muffin made with bran with yogurt on the side

• Pancakes (made with whole grain flour) topped with butter and maple syrup

• Beef barley soup

• Tomato soup with whole grain crackers

• White toast and jam

**6. Provide your own meal suggestion that includes a whole grain food.**

- *Examples include egg salad sandwich with whole grain bread, salmon with brown rice and salad, whole grain toast with peanut butter and banana, whole wheat wrap with hummus and veggies, grilled cheese sandwich on whole grain bread, and cheese and whole grain cracker snack box.*

Click on “Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit.”



This page talks about all the nourishing forms of vegetables and fruits, including fresh, frozen, and canned.

**7. What is one statement that CFG makes about frozen and canned vegetables and fruits?**

- *Frozen and canned vegetables and fruits:*
  - *can be healthy choices;*
  - *do not take long to prepare;*
  - *are convenient; and*
  - *are just as nutritious as fresh vegetables and fruits.*
- *Choose frozen vegetables and fruits without added sugar, added seasoning, breading, or rich sauces.*
- *Choose canned vegetables with little to no added sodium, and drain and rinse canned vegetables to lower the sodium content.*
- *Choose canned fruit with little to no added sugar.*
- *Compare canned vegetables and fruits using the food labels; the % daily value helps you see if a food has a little or a lot of a nutrient.*

**8. Give one reason you would choose frozen or canned vegetables or fruits.**

- *To change or improve a meal.*
- *When there is limited ability to store fresh fruits and/or vegetables.*
- *During winter when there is less availability of fresh produce.*
- *To increase affordability of produce (often lower cost).*
- *To save time (often less preparation than fresh produce).*



Click on “Eat protein foods.”



This section reviews the many types of protein foods, including plant- and animal-based protein foods.

### Iron

Animal-based protein foods contain iron, which helps carry the oxygen in your blood to other areas of your body. When your body has too little iron, you may feel tired or grumpy. You may also be more likely to get sick as your body’s ability to fight off infections is reduced.

### Calcium

Milk-based protein foods contain calcium, which helps build strong bones. Right now you are in your prime bone building years! This means that you are building the bones that you will have as an adult. Including milk-based protein foods in your meals and snacks will help your bones be strong when you’re an adult!

### Fibre

Plant-based protein foods contain fibre, which keeps your gut (intestines) healthy by helping your body’s waste move through your gut and prevent constipation.

## 9. Describe a lunch you enjoy that includes at least one protein food. Identify the protein food.

- *Examples include egg salad sandwich (eggs), beef and noodle bowl (beef), three sisters’ soup (beans), wrap with hummus and veggies (hummus), chana masala (chickpeas), grilled cheese sandwich (cheese), chicken congee (chicken), and cheese and crackers snack box (cheese).*

## 10. Did the lunch you suggested include a bone building food? Yes / No (circle).

If yes, what is the bone building food?

- *Examples include milk, cheese, kefir, yogurt, and paneer.*

If not, what could you add to your lunch to include a bone building food?

- *Examples include milk, cheese, kefir, yogurt, and paneer.*



## PUT IT ALL TOGETHER: RECIPES

Click on the CFG logo in the top left corner to go back to the main screen.  
On the left side toolbar, click “Recipes.”



This page shows recipes that include foods from CFG.

### 11. Look through the recipes listed on this page and choose one you would like to make.

*Students can choose any recipe included on the “Recipes” page.*

#### Why did you choose this recipe?

*Examples include:*

- *I’ve never tried a recipe like this before.*
- *I’ve tried something similar and liked the taste.*
- *I like an ingredient in this recipe.*
- *The recipe instructions seem easy to follow.*

### 12. Would you need to add another food to have one from each of the three categories?

**Yes / No (circle)**

*Students can review the recipe that they chose and assess if it includes a food from vegetables and fruit, whole grain foods, and protein foods.*

#### If yes, what food would you add?

*Students can choose any food from the missing category to include with their recipe.*

### 13. Would you add anything to this recipe to make it more enjoyable? Yes / No (circle)

**If yes, what food or ingredient would you add?**

*This is an opportunity for students to get creative and alter recipes to match their own preferences.*

*Examples include vegetable, fruit, whole grain food, protein food, sauce, beverage, spice, or dessert.*

## BONUS QUESTION

CFG includes additional tips. Find the tips for healthy eating and answer the following question:

**If you were involved in creating CFG, what is one tip you would add for healthy eating**

- **at school?**
  - *Ensure lunch breaks are long enough to eat your meal.*
  - *Eat lunches and snacks with friends.*
  - *Bring snacks that include foods from at least two CFG categories.*
  - *Have class reminders to drink water.*
  - *Include some whole grain options in the school cafeteria and vending machine.*
  - *Pack your lunch in an insulated lunch kit with an ice pack to ensure food is kept cool until lunch.*
  
- **at home?**
  - *Choose meals that include foods from each of the three food categories.*
  - *Eat dinner at the table instead of in front of the television.*
  - *Eat dinner with family or friends.*
  - *Keep a water glass on the counter to remind yourself to drink water throughout the day.*

## REFERENCES

1. The Office of Nutrition Policy and Promotion/Health Products and Food Branch (personal communication, September 2020) responded to queries regarding Health Canada's definition of healthy eating.
2. Health Canada. 2021. Canada's Food Guide. [food-guide.canada.ca](https://www.food-guide.canada.ca). Accessed January 18, 2021.
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4. Pinhas et al. Trading health for a healthy weight: the uncharted side of healthy weights initiatives. *Eat Disord* 2013;21:109-116.
5. Government of Alberta. 2019. Dehydration in children. [www.MyHealth.Alberta.ca](http://www.MyHealth.Alberta.ca). Accessed on October 16, 2020.



