

COMPLETE THE MEAL TEACHER GUIDE

How this activity helps students learn about eating well

No single food or type of food can provide us with everything we need. When children eat a variety of foods, they are more likely to get the nutrition their growing bodies and minds need. That's why it's important to choose foods from all three food categories and to choose many different foods from each category.

The Complete the Meal activity encourages students to classify and apply their knowledge of the *Food Guide*, including foods they like to eat from each category. Each student has their own likes and dislikes based on their own experiences and family traditions. Encouraging students to complete these meals with foods they enjoy eating helps students build positive connections between *Canada's Food Guide* and their own world.

To learn more about how to engage your students in learning about *Canada's Food Guide* from kindergarten to grade 12, review the article [How to Teach *Canada's Food Guide*](#).

Introducing the activity

Sample introduction: *Today we are going to take what we have learned about the Food Guide and use it to help us complete real meals! Each of you will get your own copy of the Complete the Meal activity as well as the Lunch Box Guide to take home. Today we are going to complete a lunch together as a class. Then you'll have time to try this activity using foods you like to eat.*

Consider starting this activity with a discussion question.

- What is one food from the example meals that you like to eat?
- What is one food from the examples meals that you would like to try?

Feel free to share a personal example as you explore these questions with students.

For example,

- "One meal I always make in the winter is stew. I've made it with beef and lamb but have never tried it with moose. Moose meat stew is something I would like to try."

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Sample instructions: As you go through this activity sheet, try to find the individual foods in each meal. Once you're able to name the different foods, list them in the food category you think is the best fit. For example, a grilled cheese sandwich is made with cheese and bread. What food category do you think cheese would go in? That's right – it's a protein food. So, we'll put a checkmark next to protein foods and write cheese in the space provided.

What about bread? It's a whole grain food, and we will do the same thing. What about water? It's something that many people enjoy drinking. It's pictured next to the Food Guide Plate, because it's a great drink throughout the day. As it doesn't belong to a food category, we can leave it out for now.

Can anyone see any vegetables or fruit?

Let's think of vegetables and fruits that would go well with this sandwich. There are lots of options. Your final choice will be based on what you think would taste the best. For example, you could add...

- A whole piece of fruit, such as an apple, an orange, or a pear
- Veggies and dip, such as carrots, broccoli, celery, cucumbers, peppers, or radishes
- A salad
- Vegetables in the sandwich – for example, sliced tomato
- A bowl of vegetable soup
- A fruit smoothie

You get to decide!

What about sauces and sides? Is there anything you would add to make the grilled cheese more enjoyable? Some people like to eat theirs with ketchup or pickles. Some prefer theirs plain. If you added vegetables, would you have dip or dressing with them? To complete this meal, I would add sliced pepper and dip.

Example Meal: Grilled cheese and water



VEGETABLES
AND FRUITS



WHOLE GRAIN
FOODS



PROTEIN
FOODS



SAUCES AND
SIDES



To complete this meal, I would add: sliced pepper and dip

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Activity answer key

Because this activity is partially based on personal preference, students are encouraged to add a food from the missing category that is most appealing to them. In the answer key below, we have offered different options that students may suggest.

Important note: In the answer key we have offered multiple ingredients pictured in each meal. For example, in Meal 1, the foods from the vegetables and fruits category that students might identify are lettuce, tomato, cucumber, and celery. Students do not need to identify all of these foods to answer this question correctly.

When students share their answers with peers or the class, it can be a good opportunity to learn what types of foods other students identified and are familiar with. The aim of this activity is to correctly name one food pictured in each meal example. If any food categories are missing, students also need to name one food from the missing category to complete the meal.



Meal 1: Pasta, tomato sauce, salad with salad dressing, and cookie



VEGETABLES
AND FRUITS



Lettuce, tomato, tomato sauce, cucumber, celery

WHOLE GRAIN
FOODS



Pasta

PROTEIN
FOODS



SAUCES AND
SIDES



Salad dressing, cookie

To complete this meal, I would add: Protein food options include beans; lentils; ground meat (beef, chicken, lamb, or pork); meatballs; shrimp; seafood; cheese; or a glass of milk.

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Meal 2: Moose stew, carrot sticks, and milk



VEGETABLES
AND FRUITS



Carrots, celery, potato, cauliflower, broccoli

WHOLE GRAIN
FOODS



PROTEIN
FOODS



Milk, moose

SAUCES AND
SIDES



Broth and spices

To complete this meal, I would add: Whole grain food options include bread, a bun, crackers, bannock, or dumplings.

Meal 3: Tuna sandwich



VEGETABLES
AND FRUITS



WHOLE GRAIN
FOODS



Bread

PROTEIN
FOODS



Tuna

SAUCES AND
SIDES



Mayonnaise

To complete this meal, I would add: Vegetables and fruit options include bell pepper, carrots, celery, cucumber, lettuce, tomato, apple, banana, grapes, orange, or pear.

Note: for hydration, students may also want to add something to drink such as water or milk.

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Wrapping up

Think-Pair-Share: After students have completed this activity, have them tell another student which foods they chose to complete the meal. Invite students to share their idea with the whole class.

Food for thought

Why assess example meals rather than student food records? Our team is committed to creating resources that enhance students learning while minimizing inadvertent negative impacts on mental health. Research has started to connect food tracking activities to weight preoccupation and disordered eating behaviours in vulnerable adolescents.* The meal examples in this activity offer real, full-colour visuals of foods for students to apply new learning. The focus is on what could be added to enhance enjoyment as well as the nutrition profile of a meal, rather than grading personal food choices as “good” or “bad.”

Students have reported that it can be stressful to track and be graded on the foods they eat, especially when they may have little control over what foods are available in the home. Applying learning to general rather than personal examples helps to create safety for learners in this activity.

*Pinhas et al. Trading health for a healthy weight: the uncharted side of healthy weights initiatives. *Eat Disord* 2013;21:109-116.

Keep the learning going

Build Your Own Lunch: After completing this activity, students might be inspired to create their own lunch creations. Introduce them to this topic with the Build Your Own Lunch activity sheet.

Food Picture Cards: It can be helpful to revisit the concept of mixed dishes and learn about a wide variety of foods. Keep the learning going in an engaging way with the [What's in a Mixed Dish?](#) online learning activity. To order a hard copy of this resource for free, visit [our store](#).

To learn more about how the Lunch Box Guide was created, read the [Teacher Guide](#).