

# 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.

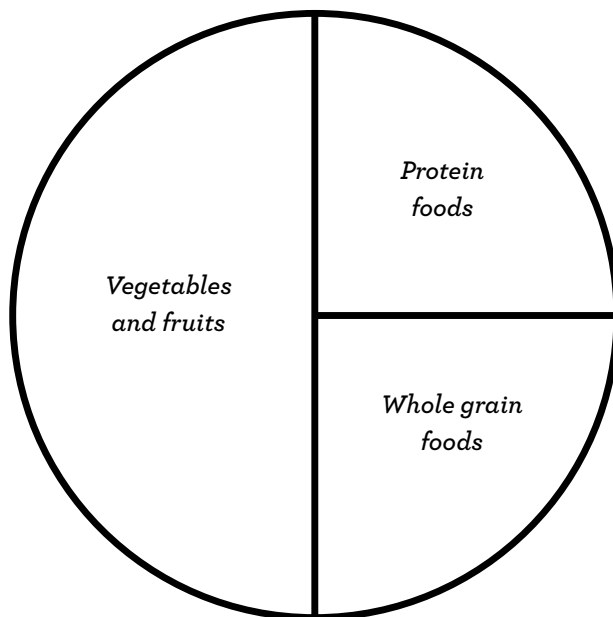
#### Reducing Risk Of Harm

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.*

3. Do you think this image of a plate is an example of what a meal should look like (i.e., small portions of many foods)? Why or why not?

- *No. The plate provides examples of foods that fit into the categories and is not meant to represent an actual meal. All foods are not meant to be consumed in one meal or even one day. These are examples of how we can use the plate as a guide to include the foods that we enjoy.<sup>5</sup>*

Click on the glass of water pictured beside the CFG Plate. 

This page reviews the importance of water and other drink choices that hydrate your body.

#### 4. Describe a scenario where you might need more water than usual. Why?


- *Water helps to keep your body working properly. Its jobs include helping to remove waste, keeping your bowels regular, and maintaining your body temperature.*
- *We may need more fluid than normal;*
  - *on hot days in the summer;*
  - *when we are physically active; and*
  - *when we are sick.*

##### Why?

- *During these times, we lose more water through our sweat, breath, and potentially vomit or diarrhea. Since we are losing more water, we need to replace this loss by drinking more fluid.*
- *When our body loses too much water, we can become dehydrated. Early cues of dehydration include thirst, dry mouth and eyes, muscle cramping, headaches, and dizziness.<sup>6</sup>*

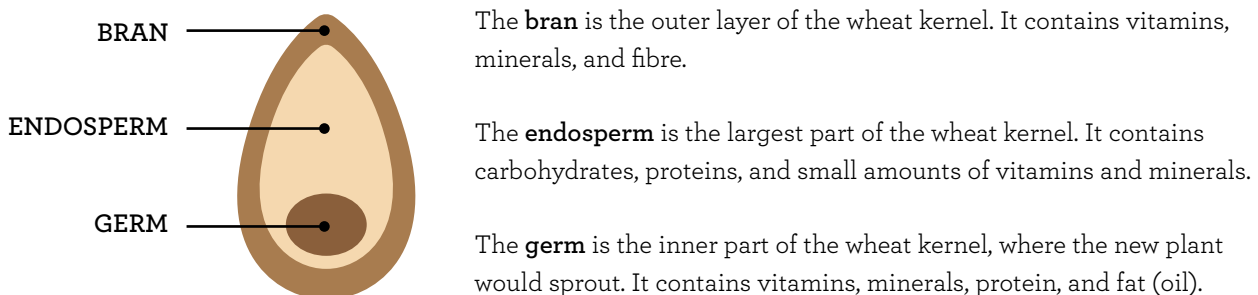
#### 5. Make two suggestions to keep yourself hydrated.

- *Examples include drinking a full glass of water in the morning, bringing a water bottle to class, drinking one cup of water during each class at school, and drinking milk with meals and/or snacks.*

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.

**A grain of wheat has three main parts: bran, endosperm, and germ.**



#### 6. What is the difference between a whole grain and a refined grain? Try to include the terms bran, endosperm, and germ in your answer.

- *Whole grains contain all parts of the grain, including the bran, endosperm, and the germ. They contain more fibre, vitamins, and minerals than refined grains, which have some parts of the grain removed during processing.*

7. Circle the grain product included in each meal and provide a suggestion to ensure this is a whole grain food.

For example: toast with jam; use whole grain bread for the toast.

- Cereal with sliced banana, cooked in milk • Choose a whole grain cereal such as oatmeal, shredded wheat, or bran flakes.
- Stew with potatoes and bread • Choose whole grain bread.
- Pasta and meatballs with parmesan cheese on top • Choose whole wheat pasta.
- Curry with vegetables and rice • Choose brown rice.
- Muffin with yogurt on the side • Choose a bran muffin.
- Pancakes topped with butter and maple syrup • Choose whole grain flour for the pancakes.
- Soup with crackers • Choose whole grain crackers.
- Chicken and vegetables in a flatbread • Choose a whole grain flatbread.

8. 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.

9. 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.



**10. 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.

**11. 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).*

**12. 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.

**13. 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.*

**14. 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.*

**15. 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.*

**16. Select one ingredient in the recipe. If you did not have this ingredient at home, can you think of an ingredient you could replace it with?**

- *This is an opportunity for students to get creative with ingredient alternatives.*

## BONUS QUESTION

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

**Note the tips on this page in bold. Is there a tip you would like to try? Why or why not?**

- *Tips include:*
  - *Get involved*
  - *Plan meals and snacks*
  - *Eat meals with your family*
  - *Eat without distractions*
  - *Be aware of food marketing*
  - *Make it a habit to choose healthy foods*

**The first line of this page reads, “You have likely heard that healthy eating is important. But maybe you think these messages do not apply to you.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?**

*This is an opportunity for students to reflect on their own thoughts around food and eating. Encourage students to provide justification on why they agree or disagree.*

## 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. Barr S. Is the 2019 Canada's Food Guide Snapshot nutritionally adequate? *Appl Physiol Nutr Metab* 2019;44(12):1387-1390.
6. Government of Alberta. 2019. Dehydration in children. [www.MyHealth.Alberta.ca](http://www.MyHealth.Alberta.ca). Accessed on October 16, 2020.



