

# Energizers **FOR NUTRITION EDUCATION**



Energizers for Nutrition Education was developed by Health and Nutrition staff from the University of Minnesota Extension, led by Extension Educators in Health & Nutrition: Mary Caskey, M.Ed., LD, Betsy Johnson, MPH, and Kathleen Lovett, M. Ed.

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# Air Writing

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades K-2; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing, with arm's length space around each participant

**EQUIPMENT:** 1 scarf, 18" string, or ribbon stick for each participant

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

*Youth:*

1. Begin by asking students to move in place or around the room by jumping, hopping, marching, or twisting.
2. Teacher calls out "stop" or "freeze" and calls out the name of a fruit or vegetable and the name of a body part (hand, arm, leg, head, elbow, knee, or any combination).
3. Using the named body part, students write the name of the fruit or vegetable in the air and continue the movement until the teacher calls out a new word to spell and a new body part to use.

*Adult:*

1. Ask each participant to think of a fruit or vegetable that their family enjoys.
2. Ask one person to share the name of their favorite fruit or vegetable. Using the scarf or ribbon, each person spells out the name using large arm motions in the air. Switch arms and repeat.
3. Continue this activity until each person has had a chance to share about their families' fruit or vegetable or for 3-5 minutes.

**TEACHING TIP:** Write the words on a board or poster to aid in spelling.

**VARIATION:** Use Ojibwe (or other language) words for different foods.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with lesson on increasing the intake of fruits and/or vegetables.





# Apples to Oranges Relay

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 1-5

**FORMATION:** Two lines, single file, arms-length apart

**EQUIPMENT:** One plastic apple, one plastic orange

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Organize two relay teams: Apple team and Orange team.
2. On the word “go” from the teacher, first student uses two hands overhead to pass the fruit to the student behind.
3. Second student uses two hands, between their legs, to pass the fruit to the student behind.
4. Continue passing the fruit in the over-head, under-the-legs pattern until the fruit reaches the last student in each line.
5. Last student in line raises fruit high in the air.

**VARIATION:** Separate lines by boys and girls.  
Pass sideways by twisting to the left and right.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Try with different fruits and vegetables.  
Ask students about how the game would work with different fruits and vegetables, such as a watermelon or a blueberry.







# As If

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades K-3

**FORMATION:** Standing at desks

**EQUIPMENT:** None

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Students act out the following food “as if”s. Perform each activity for 20-30 seconds. If you are going to use an audio or visual cue to start and stop the action, explain it before you begin.

- Jog as if you are going to get your favorite vegetable.
- Climb as if you are on a mountain of your favorite ice cream.
- Jump as if you were a jumping bean on a hot plate.
- Reach as if you were picking your favorite tree fruit; use both arms.
- Stomp your feet as if you were mashing potatoes.
- Paint in the air as if you had a broccoli paintbrush.
- Swim as if you were a fish being chased by a shark.
- Slide your feet as if you were putting peanut butter on bread.
- Wiggle and twist as if you were a banana in a blender.
- Bend and swish as if you were a cloth cleaning yogurt off the floor.
- Tip toe quietly to your seat as if you were going to sleep.

**VARIATION:** Ask students to create their own food and action “as if”s.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Prepare a snack that uses some foods mentioned in the activity, e.g., banana yogurt smoothie, peanut butter on bread topped with banana, broccoli paintbrushes dipped in a yogurt dip.





# Berry Adventures

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades K-4

**FORMATION:** Circle around room perimeter, or stand at desks

**EQUIPMENT:** None required; hats and buckets for each student optional

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Choose an adventure that fits the nutrition lesson or focus.
2. Teacher leads the line of students around the room, acting out the activities (about 20-30 seconds per action).
  - To get started, the teacher says something like: “Today we are going on a Berry Picking Adventure, so let’s get dressed! Pull on your hat to keep off the sun. Let’s bend over and pick up our berry-picking bucket. Here we go.”
  - Example story for blueberry picking: “March lifting your knees high, or hop or jump as we look for the blueberry plants, going through the field. Stop! Set down your bucket and stand on your tip toes to scan the horizon for bears and other habitat.” (Resume marching action.) “Now it is time to pick berries, so bend over and gather fruit to fill up your bucket. (After a minute or two, say): It’s time for a break. Stand and stretch, reaching high for the sky.” (Return by walking or marching back to desks to finish activity.)

**VARIATION:** Raspberry, strawberry, or June berry picking: Change picking action to approximate level of berry growth.  
  
Narrate a whole adventure from putting on berry-picking clothes, walking to the berry farm, picking berries, walking home with the berries, and eating a berry snack.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with fruit lesson to discuss the variety of berries.





# Bowl Me Over

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Individual turns

**EQUIPMENT:** 10 clean, empty soda cans and an empty gallon milk jug

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Set up soda cans in the formation of 10 bowling pins at one end of the room. Each participant takes a turn at bowling down the soda cans by rolling the empty milk jug. Give each participant two tries and then set the cans back up for the next person. Award one point for each can knocked over.
2. Depending on the amount of time and number of participants, you could go for more rounds and keep score. In a larger group, you may want to set up more “lanes” with additional soda cans and milk jugs.
3. The person who knocks over the most cans (and gets the most points) is the winner.

**VARIATION:** Instead of a milk jug, you could use an orange, apple or other round fruit to knock over the soda cans.

Substitute clean 12 or 20-ounce plastic bottles for the soda cans.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** This activity could be used with a lesson on drinking milk, eating calcium-rich snacks , or with a “cut your sugar intake” lesson.

Crackling noise of pins being knocked over can represent bones cracking without calcium.





# Bowling

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Seated or standing by chair

**EQUIPMENT:** Laminated paper bowling pins labeled with topics for the lesson; examples: Food Groups, Healthy Lifestyle Choices, Physical Activity, Shopping Tips, Food Safety, Oils, Fats, and Sodium

A set of 1-3 questions for each bowling pin (prepared in advance)

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Begin the class with some warm-up bowling moves, seated or standing. Stop for bowling breaks at intervals during the lesson. Have all participants pretend to bowl (as if playing Wii bowling).
2. Ask one participant to pick a pin (by label); teacher will ask one question related to that pin (Food Groups or other topic).
3. For a correct answer, participants high-five each other; for an incorrect answer, stomp their feet in place.

**VARIATION:** Can use arm motions from other games, such as shuffleboard (pushing the paddle), curling (delivering the stone), or baseball (throwing the ball).







# Calcium Rescue

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 3-5

**FORMATION:** Standing at desks

**EQUIPMENT:** 4 sets of pictures:

- Calcium rich foods (e.g., dairy or leafy greens)
- Calcium-depleting foods (e.g., soda pop, candy, or chips)
- Bone-building activities (e.g., running, swimming, or walking)
- Activities that don't build bones (e.g., video games, sitting, or laying down)

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Explain which types of food and activity are good for your body (“calcium rescue”) and which are not (“calcium danger”):
  - Calcium rich foods – Calcium rescue
  - Calcium-depleting foods – Calcium danger
  - Bone-building activities – Calcium rescue
  - Non-bone-building activities – Calcium danger
2. Teacher flashes a picture and identifies an action to do if it is a calcium rescue and a different action to do if it is a calcium danger. For example: “If you think this is a calcium rescue, do 5 jumping jacks; if you think this is a calcium danger, make your body puddle to the floor like you have no bones.”
3. Teacher continues to flash pictures from all categories, changing exercises for each calcium rescue. e.g., jump up and down 5 times, turn around 5 times, touch the floor 5 times, etc. Continue to use the same action until a new calcium rescue is called.
4. Continue for at least 5 minutes or until you have gone through all pictures.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with lesson on building bone strength by eating calcium-rich foods and doing physical activities that build bones.





# Calcium Smart

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 1-5; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing

**EQUIPMENT:** None

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Begin by having participants practice jumping in place several times, then squatting or falling down in place several times.
2. Teacher calls out a habit or behavior that strengthens or does not strengthen bones.
  - If the habit or behavior strengthens bones, participants jump in place. Examples:
    - Drinking 3 glasses of milk a day
    - Eating yogurt
    - Eating broccoli
    - Drinking calcium-fortified orange juice
    - Getting 60 minutes of physical activity each day (adults: 30 minutes)
    - Walking your dog
    - Playing basketball
    - Teens and adults: Lifting weights
  - If the habit or behavior does not strengthen bones, students squat or fall down. Examples:
    - Smoking cigarettes
    - Sitting in the house, watching TV
    - Never drinking milk
    - Going on the elevator instead of taking the stairs
    - Eating potato chips and Twinkies
    - Drinking soda pop

**VARIATION:** Whole Grain Smart – on back  
Heart Smart – on back

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with a dairy or calcium lesson and be sure to discuss physical activities and behaviors that strengthen or don't strengthen bones.

Use with a healthy beverages lesson.

**Variation:** Whole Grain Smart

**Equipment:** Pictures of whole grains and enriched grain products

**Rules/Directions:**

1. Discuss whole grains vs. enriched grain products, including different kinds of whole grains and how to identify a whole grain product.
2. Call out names of whole grain products (reach up) and enriched grain products (squat down). Examples:
  - Whole grains: popcorn, brown rice, wild rice, oatmeal, whole grain cereal, or food label with “whole” as the first ingredient
  - Enriched grains: white bread, white rice, pasta, or food label with “enriched” as the first ingredient

**Variation:** Heart Smart

**Equipment:** Heart disease lesson from University of Minnesota Extension’s Health and Nutrition [For Seniors] curriculum

**Rules/Directions:**

1. Discuss heart disease and habits or behaviors that strengthen the heart – are “heart rescues” – and habits or behaviors that are risk factors for heart disease – are “heart dangers.”
2. Call out a habit or behavior that is a heart rescue (reach up) or a habit or behavior that is a heart danger (squat down). Examples:
  - Heart rescues: physical activity, olive oil, herbs and spices instead of salt for flavor, not smoking, healthy body weight, monounsaturated oil, or diet high in fruits and vegetables
  - Heart dangers: High sodium foods, trans fats, high fat foods, physical inactivity or sedentary lifestyle, smoking or tobacco use, or overweight



# Cool or Not

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth Grades 1-5; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing or seated with partners

**EQUIPMENT:** Paper, bean bags, or pompoms; one for each pair or participant

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Each student picks a partner; each pair crumples paper into a ball (or uses a bean bag or pompom).
2. Teacher explains that the ball/bean bag/pompom is a food.
3. Teacher names two body parts and a food. Participants pick up their food with the designated body parts and put the food away, either in the refrigerator (on desk or table) or in the cupboard (on chair). Here's a suggested order:
  - Elbow to elbow – Ground beef (refrigerator)
  - Foot to foot – Milk (refrigerator)
  - Knee to knee – Cereal (cupboard)
  - Forearm to elbow – Crackers (cupboard)
  - Foot to elbow – Bananas (cupboard)
  - Knee to elbow – Eggs (refrigerator)
  - Forehead to back of hand – Potatoes (cupboard)
  - Toe to finger – Leftovers (refrigerator)
4. Repeat with additional foods, such as butter, other vegetables, whole grains, nuts, meat to be defrosted, etc.
5. Final action is to throw paper balls away or return bean bags or pompoms to storage.

**VARIATION:** Add a third location and foods to store in the freezer.  
Each participant uses their own ball and plays individually.  
Do activity as a team relay in pairs. Each pair is given a food; the pair moves together to place the food where it goes and then returns to the back of the line. Keep all participants marching or moving throughout the relay.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use as a review or reinforcement of food safety lessons.





# Explore Minnesota Foods

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades K-6; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing or seated

**EQUIPMENT:** None; optional: map of Minnesota

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher leads the group on a virtual tour of Minnesota farms; participants move 30 seconds for each action:

- Squat and pick blueberries (or strawberries).
- Reach high to pick corn; husk the corn with large arm movements.
- Reach high to pick apples; peel the apples with large circular arm movements (crank apple peeler). Alternate arms.
- Bend over or squat to pull beets or carrots; stand up.
- Climb an apple tree; do climbing motion with arms and legs in place.
- Walk (in place) out to the barn.
  - Milk the cows; squat and swing arms up and down.
  - Feed the hogs; step side to side while dumping an imaginary bucket.
  - Walk (in place) while sweeping corn stalks to the side with arms.

**VARIATION:** Actions can be performed seated in a chair.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Can be used with a “Minnesota Grown” discussion of local foods. Point to areas in Minnesota that feature certain foods:

- Sugar beets – grown in Red River Valley
- Soybeans – grown throughout the state, mostly west of the Mississippi River
- Sweet corn – grown throughout the state, mostly west of the Mississippi River
- Garlic – predominantly grown in south central Minnesota (Hutchinson has Garlic Festival)







# Food Fitness

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 2-5

**FORMATION:** Standing at desks

**EQUIPMENT:** None

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher calls out the following actions for students to perform for 15-20 seconds each.

- Cauliflower crawl
- Pumpkin punch
- Corn husk
- Strawberry shake
- Apple picker
- Banana peel
- Watermelon wiggle
- Popcorn pop
- Pretzel twist
- Shrimp swim
- Potato masher
- Jumping bean
- Cheese chop
- Egg beater
- Tuna trot
- Yogurt yell or yawn
- Carrot crunch

**VARIATION:** Wild card: Anytime the teacher calls out “couch potato,” students perform any action they like.

Bean lesson: Add bean-related actions like pinto bean pop, black-eyed pea boogie, lima bean laugh, red bean run, or navy bean salute

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Quiz students on which of these foods they have eaten.





# Food Group Movement

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 1-5; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** 5 groups, each in a separate area of the room

**EQUIPMENT:** Food group labels: 5 pieces of paper (color optional) labeled with the following: Grains (orange), Fruits (red), Vegetables (green), Dairy (blue), and Proteins (purple); alternatively 1 game spinner with the food group names or food group colors

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher labels 5 areas of the room with one of the food group labels and assigns one group of students to each area.
2. Teacher calls out the name of a food from a food group either randomly or by spinning the wheel. Teacher also calls out one movement (e.g., jumping, skipping, walking, hopping on one foot, or marching).
3. Participants who are in the named food group move to any other food group area, using the assigned movement. Example: Teacher calls out “broccoli” and “jumping” and participants in the vegetable (green) group jump to any other group.
4. Participants continue the movement in place until another food from their new food group is called. Example: Participants in the above example would continue jumping in place until their new group is called, at which point they would move to a different food group area using the new assigned movement.
5. Once a food from each group is called, all participants should be moving in place.

**VARIATION:** Works well with University of Minnesota Extension’s Go Wild with Fruits & Veggies! curriculum – <http://z.umn.edu/gowild>. Use paper in Go Wild colors with no labels. Teacher can call:

- The name of a fruit or vegetable.
- Name of a vitamin or phytochemical associated with a specific Go Wild color.
- A trivia question from the Go Wild curriculum.





# Food Group Wiggles

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades K-6; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing or sitting

**EQUIPMENT:** None

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher calls out a food group.
2. The teacher signals the first participant to name a food in the food group; when the participant names the food, all participants begin to wiggle their fingers.
3. The teacher then calls on or points to the next participant to name a food in the food group; when a food is named, everyone adds their wrists to the finger wiggle.
4. Continue with each participant, adding wiggles as listed:
  - Forearms
  - Elbow
  - Shoulders
  - Rib cage
  - Hips
  - Knees
  - Head

**VARIATION:** Participants jog or march in place while doing the wiggles.  
Start wiggles with toes and work up the body, ending with the head.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Challenge participants to name nutrient-dense foods in each food group.

Use with a food group lesson.





# For Your Breakfast

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades K-6; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing at desks

**EQUIPMENT:** “For Your Breakfast” chant on poster or handouts

## **RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Have participants begin the lesson with a series of simple activities done while reciting a chant together:

*a. Fruit Group - Jog in place*

For your breakfast, for your breakfast, You could have fruits: Apples, strawberries, peaches, and plums, kiwi, banana, oranges, and grapes.

*b. Vegetable Group - Knee lifts*

For your breakfast, for your breakfast, You could have vegetables: Celery, carrots, broccoli, and beans, Lettuce, tomatoes, potatoes, and peas.

*c. Grains Group - Flap arms like birds*

For your breakfast, for your breakfast, You could have grains: Pita bread, cereal, tortillas, and oats, Bagel, pancakes, rice, and toast.

*d. Protein Group – Hop in place*

For your breakfast, for your breakfast, You could have protein: Peanut butter, chicken, beef, and nuts, Tofu, pinto beans, eggs, and fish.

*e. Dairy Group – Scissors*

For your breakfast, for your breakfast, You could have dairy: Swiss cheese, cottage cheese, custard, and curds, Yogurt, cream cheese, and low-fat milk.

*f. All over body wiggles*

For your breakfast, for your breakfast, Eat good food. YAY!

2. Cool down activity with slow and easy stretching movements. Teacher asks participants to call out foods they ate for breakfast from each food group, while performing the following actions:

- Fruit – Reach high and low to pick fruit.
- Vegetable – Bend low to pull vegetables out of ground.
- Grains – Jump up and down like popcorn.
- Protein – Swim like a fish.
- Dairy – Shake body like a smoothie.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with food group lesson.







# Freeze that Food

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 2-5

**FORMATION:** Standing at desks

**EQUIPMENT:** None

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Begin by having students do an activity for 30 seconds, standing at their desks. Examples:
  - Jumping
  - Twisting
  - Jogging
  - Jumping Jacks
  - Push-Ups
  - Hopping

2. Teacher calls out a food and the students freeze.

3. Teacher calls on a volunteer to name a healthier form of food and name a benefit of the healthier choice. Examples:

<i>Food</i>	<i>Healthier choice</i>	<i>Benefit</i>
Flour	Whole grain Flour	Fiber
Butter	Olive oil	Mono unsaturated fat
Whole milk	Nonfat milk	No fat
Fruit juice	100% fruit juice	No sugar added
Candy	Fresh fruit/Veggies	Fiber, no sugar
Soda pop	Water	No sugar, no caffeine
Light green veggie	Dark green veggie	Phytochemicals
French fries	Baked sweet potato fries	Less fat

4. When a student names a healthier form of food and why it’s a better choice, students resume activity or begin a new activity that the teacher calls.

5. Steps 2 through 4 are repeated until all students have had a turn or the time is up.

**VARIATION:** Play music to move; stop music for “freeze.”  
Teacher calls out “sometimes” food and students name a healthier option.

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# Frozen Food Groups

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 1-6; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing in place or in a large circle around the room

**EQUIPMENT:** None; questions based on lesson topic, prepared in advance

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Begin by having participants move in place or around the room for 30 seconds; choose activities that suit the fitness level of participants:
  - Jumping
  - Twisting
  - Jogging
  - Jumping jacks
  - Hopping
  - Knee lifts
  - Playing air guitar
  - Walking
  - Do-si-do (square dancing)
  - Side stepping
2. Participants continue the activity until the teacher calls out the name of a food group; at this point the participants freeze.
3. Teacher calls on the first or last participant to freeze and asks a question (depending on age). Types of questions that could be asked:
  - Name a food in that food group; spell the name of the food.
  - Give one health or nutritional benefit of that food or food group.
  - Answer a provided question about that food or food group, such as:
    - What vegetable has the most vitamin C?
    - Which food products have the most calcium?
    - How big is a serving of the food?
    - How many servings of this food should we eat each day?
  - Develop questions based on content covered with the class.
4. Resume activity or begin a new activity when the participant gives the correct answer.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with a food group, serving size, or food benefits lesson.





# Fruit and Vegetable Line

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 2-5

**FORMATION:** Standing at desks

**EQUIPMENT:** Fruit and vegetable food models or pictures

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher gives each student a food model or picture.
2. Teacher asks students to line up, in order, by the size of the food in their model or picture.
3. Teacher then asks students to move into groups by a characteristic of the fruit or vegetable, such as color or type – root, stem, flower, or leaf.
4. Once in a group, students act out how their fruit or vegetable would look in a certain situation. Examples:
  - Swaying in the wind
  - In a thunderstorm
  - Weighted down with snow

**VARIATION:** Use other food groups with appropriate food models or pictures.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with fruits and vegetables lesson or corresponding lesson if the variation is followed.





# Gallop

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades K-3

**FORMATION:** Standing by desk

**EQUIPMENT:** None

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. At appropriate times throughout the lesson, have students stand up and ride their horse (gallop) to an imaginary location based on the lesson:
  - Fruits and vegetables – Ride to the farmers’ market, farm, or orchard.
  - Grains – Ride to the farm, grocery store, or flour mill.
  - Milk – Ride to the dairy farm, grocery store, or processing plant.
  - Proteins – Ride to the farm or grocery store.
2. Upon arriving at the destination, students perform the action related to the destination:
  - Pick the fruit or vegetable; e.g., reach high for apples, low for beans.
  - Toss the wheat high in the air and catch it in a basket to separate the chaff from the grain.
  - Milk the cow.
  - Herd the cows or pigs to the barn.
3. After performing the chore, get back on the horse and ride back to class.

**VARIATION:** Divide students into two groups. Group 1 acts out harvesting, preparing, and eating something from one of the food groups; group 2 guesses which food group 1 chose.  
  
Teacher narrates a story of producing, gathering, and preparing a food to eat; students act out the story.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Accompany with a snack that fits the story.







# Garden Groove

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades K-3

**FORMATION:** Standing at desk

**EQUIPMENT:** None

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

As the teacher reads the story, students jump up and down 5 times for each fruit or vegetable (in italics) and does movement for each action word (in **bold**). Pause the story for 20-30 seconds for each movement.

“Hello, my name is Weedy and I live in the garden on Mr. Green’s farm. Today I will lead you on a tour through Mr. Green’s garden. First we need to **pull on** our garden galoshes. They will allow us to **walk** in the garden without getting our shoes muddy. The first stop will be the isle of *spinach*. Since *spinach* has minerals and makes us strong, let’s **lift some weights** at this stop. Carefully **put your weights down** and **tiptoe** on over to the next row, the row of *squash*. *Squash* provides Vitamin A for us, and Vitamin A is good for our eyes and skin. While we’re in this row, let’s **wiggle** in our skin from our head to our toes. Wow!

Now that we got rid of some **wiggles**, let’s **skip** on over to the *strawberry* patch. *Strawberries* are deliciously sweet, and they keep us healthy by giving us Vitamin C. I love **biting** into a big red *strawberry*. It makes me want to do the **strawberry swirl dance** (twisting to the floor and back up with body). Ummm! I love *strawberries*! I see Mr. Green has some tall trees at the edge of his garden. Let’s **skip** past some rows and check out the trees over there. OOOOOH! Mr. Green has *bananas* growing on this tree! They’re sooo far up though! We’ll have to **jump** to reach the *bananas* that are so high up! *Bananas* give us potassium – an essential nutrient for our bodies. Monkeys like *bananas*...let’s pretend we are monkeys and **swing** from the trees!

Just a few more stops for us in Mr. Green’s Garden. We will need to **swim** across this little river in the middle of the garden to get to the rest of the *fruits and vegetables*. **Swim** hard!!! Now **climb** up the bank to the other side. Is everybody here? Oh good! Look at the delicious *green beans*, *peas*, and *carrots* over here! They look so tasty, and they are so good for our bodies!!! Now we just need to **get really low** and **duck** under these *mushrooms* and *corn* stalks to get to the *watermelons*.

Wow! I think we have explored the whole garden!! Did you see anything that looked good to eat? I sure did! And all of those *fruits and vegetables* are so healthy for us!! Yummmmm!!! Now! Let's **skip** on back to where we started from and meet at Mr. Green's big red barn."

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with fruit and vegetable lesson.

Works well with University of Minnesota Extension's  
Go Wild with Fruits & Veggies! curriculum –

<http://z.umn.edu/gowild>.

Rosie Rabbit takes students on a tour of her garden.



# Go Bananas

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades K-2

**FORMATION:** Standing at desks

**EQUIPMENT:** Food models in a box

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher picks one food model out of the box:
  - For each healthy food drawn, students jump up high.
  - For each “sometimes” food drawn, students squat low.
  - For each fruit drawn, students say “GO BANANAS” and wiggle their bodies in all directions or imitate a monkey.
2. Continue each movement for 15-20 seconds before drawing another food.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with a healthy snack or healthy food choices lesson.





# Heart Smart

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 2-5

**FORMATION:** Standing at desks

**EQUIPMENT:** None; music optional

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher leads a general discussion about the heart. Example:
  - *The heart is located in the left-center chest; it's about the size of your fist. Its function is to deliver blood to the body. Certain types of activities, called cardio or aerobic, are especially good for the heart. Running, playing sports, jumping rope, biking, sledding, and swimming are all good examples. Checking our heart rate tells us if we're working hard enough to benefit our heart.*
2. Teacher leads demonstration of the effects of activity on heart rate:
  - Students check heart rate while resting for 30 seconds, finding pulse either in the wrist or neck and counting the beats.
  - Students record the number and then run in place for 1 to 2 minutes.
  - Students check heart rate and compare. How has it changed? Is your heart working harder when you move? (If not, repeat the test.)
3. Teacher calls out the names of activities that strengthen or weaken the heart. If the activity strengthens the heart, students do 10 jumps. If the activity weakens the heart, students do 5 squats. Upbeat music can be played at this time. Examples:
  - Riding a bike (jump)
  - Eating 4 pepperoni pizzas (squat)
  - Walking your dog (jump)
  - Watching TV (squat)
  - Dancing (jump)
  - Skating (jump)
  - Never eating fruits or vegetables (squat)
  - Shooting hoops (jump)
  - Smoking cigarettes (squat)
  - Jumping rope (jump)
  - Playing PlayStation (squat)

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Can use with dairy lesson; the heart needs calcium for proper function.





# Hit the Deck

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 2-5; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing

**EQUIPMENT:** 1 deck of cards or 4 sets of cards representing each suit, shuffled;  
optional: poster board or chart paper listing activities for each suit

## **RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher writes the suits and their corresponding activities on the board; each suit represents a different type of activity. Examples:
  - Heart (cardiovascular)
    - Jog or march in place
    - Touch left elbow to right knee, alternating sides
  - Diamond (bone strengthening)
    - Hop on one foot
    - Jumping jacks (modification – one foot at a time to the side)
    - Jump rope with an imaginary rope
  - Club (muscle strengthening)
    - Biceps curls
    - Push-ups (modification – do a push-up against the wall)
    - Triceps dips – place hands behind you on table or desk; dip down (bend elbows) and then push up
    - Stomach crunches
  - Spade (flexibility/stretching)
    - Hip circles (like dancing the hula or the twist)
    - Upper body twists (rotate torso from side to side, but keep hips still)
    - Forward lunge; hold for 5 seconds to stretch back leg calf.
2. Teacher places deck of cards in front of entire group of participants. Each participant takes turns selecting a card, and the whole group performs the activity corresponding to the card's suit for 20-30 seconds. Repeat the cycle and continue for 5 minutes or until all participants have selected a card.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with a lesson on physical activity and the components of fitness.

Use with a calcium lesson – strengthening bones through weight bearing exercise.







# Hot Potato!

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 3-5; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Stand at chairs or desks, or form a circle around perimeter of room

**EQUIPMENT:** MyPlate.gov poster from USDA; 5 food group models or colored bean bags representing food groups; music

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher gives a food model or bean bag to 5 participants. Start the music; all participants march around the room, passing the food models or bean bags around the circle like a hot potato. Stop the music; the participants stop passing.
2. The participants who end up with the hot potatoes each go to the poster and name a food in the food group that match their food model or bean bag. Make sure everyone gets a chance to go to the poster. Continue the activity until everyone gets a turn. To give everyone a turn, the teacher can choose different participants to go to the poster in these ways:
  - The second person to the left of the one holding the hot potato
  - The fourth person to the right of the holder
  - The person across the circle from the holder
  - The person in front of the one with the hot potato
  - The person to the right or left of the holder

**VARIATION:** While participants are at the poster, the rest of the class continues movement by marching in place, jumping, lunging, etc.

Ask food-group-specific questions to the participants holding the hot potatoes (see sample questions on back).

Participants pass the food models or bean bag differently: between the legs, behind the back, overhead, etc.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with food group lesson

Works well with University of Minnesota Extension's Go Wild with Fruits & Veggies! curriculum – <http://z.umn.edu/gowild>.

Use colored bean bags to prompt naming a fruit or vegetable in the Go Wild colors.

## SAMPLE FOOD-GROUP-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS:

*If there are specific correct answers, they are listed in **boldface**.*

### Grains:

1. True or False: Oatmeal is a food choice in the grains group. (**True**)
2. Name a food from the grains group you could eat for breakfast.
3. Foods in the grains group supply our bodies with carbohydrates that give us what: a) better eyesight, **b) energy**, or c) stronger bones?
4. What would be the healthiest choice: a) white bread, b) biscuit, or **c) whole grain bread**?
5. You should eat 6 ounces from the grains group each day. How many ounces should be whole grains: a) 1 or 2 ounces, **b) 3 ounces (half)**, or c) 6 ounces (all)?

### Vegetables:

1. True or False: You should eat the same colors of vegetables every day. (**False**)
2. Name a food from the vegetable group that you could eat for a snack.
3. Orange and yellow vegetables supply our bodies with vitamin A that helps us do what: a) build muscle, b) run faster, or **c) see better in the dark**?
4. Vegetables supply our bodies with fiber that helps us do what: **a) go to the bathroom regularly**, b) heal cuts, or c) build strong teeth?
5. What would be the healthiest choice: a) french fries, b) potato chips, or **c) baked potato**?

### Fruits:

1. True or False: Drinking 100% juice is a healthier choice than eating whole fruits. (**False**)
2. Name a fruit that you could add to your breakfast cereal.
3. Many fruits have vitamin C that helps us do what: a) grow taller, **b) heal cuts**, or c) keep our balance?
4. What would be the healthiest choice: a) strawberry Pop Tart, **b) strawberry smoothie**, or c) strawberry Fruit Rollup?
5. For better health, it is important to eat a variety of colored fruits. Name one fruit of each color: green (e.g., grapes, kiwi), orange (e.g., oranges, papayas – inside), red (e.g., apples – outside, strawberries), and purple (e.g., plums, grapes).

### Dairy/Milk/Calcium:

1. True or False: Whole milk has more fat than skim milk. (**True**)
2. Name a food from the dairy group other than milk.
3. Dairy foods supply our bodies with calcium that helps us do what: **a) build strong bones and teeth**, b) have more energy, or c) think more clearly?
4. How many cups of milk or dairy foods should you have each day: a) 1, b) 7, or **c) 3**.
5. What would be the healthiest choice: a) chocolate ice cream, **b) low-fat yogurt**, or c) cheddar cheese?

### Proteins:

1. True or False: Peanut butter is a food in the proteins group. (**True**)
2. Name a food in the plant family that is also in the proteins group.
3. Foods in the proteins group supply our bodies with protein, which helps our bodies do what: **a) build muscle**, b) heal cuts, or c) help us be more physically fit?
4. What would be the healthiest choice: a) bacon, b) sausage, or **c) fish**?
5. When eating at a restaurant, what would be the healthiest menu choice: a) cheeseburger and french fries, b) pepperoni pizza and soda, or **c) turkey sandwich and fruit cup**?



# It's a Kitchen in Here

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades K-2; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing

**EQUIPMENT:** None

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher calls out a food, kitchen appliance, or kitchen tasks and related action;

Examples:

- Toast: Pop up (jump) or raise arms.
- Popcorn: Pop up (jump) or step side to side.
- Banana or carrots: Use your hands to peel yourself from head to toe.
- Tortilla or pie crust: Roll your arms like you're rolling a tortilla or pie crust.
- Bread: Punch the bread dough down, left then right.
- Soup: Stir big soup pot with both hands
- Juice or wine: Stomp grapes with your feet – left, right, left, right.
- Mixer: Twist hands or legs like beaters.
- Faucet: Run or march (in place) like flowing water.
- Blender: Shake and wiggle like spinning food.
- Mixing bowl: Circle your hips to stir your ingredients.
- Garden: Squat or bend down to pick vegetables.
- Wash counter: Circle hands/arms with large movements, left then right.

2. Participants stand and continue action until another is called (at least 30 seconds each).

**VARIATION:** Make cards with pictures and/or names of the food or kitchen items to hold up as a signal to change activities.

Participants call out the names of the food and kitchen items to act out.

Do activity seated, adjusting related actions as needed.





# Kernels in the Popper

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades K-2; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing in a circle, in gymnasium or outside

**EQUIPMENT:** Timer; for adults: 5 bean bags representing different food groups; optional: lively, high-energy music

## **RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

### *Youth:*

1. Teacher selects a student to be “Poppy,” the popcorn leader. All other students are kernels, scattered around the room. On teacher’s signal (or start of music), the kernels start to sizzle and move around the room in any motion other than jumping (e.g., running, hopping, skipping, wiggling).
2. Poppy jumps around the room to tag other kernels and turn them into popcorn. Once tagged, students can jump to tag other kernels so they turn into popcorn, too.
3. Change role of Poppy after 2 minutes and continue the game.

### *Adult:*

1. Participants line up in a circle. Teacher selects a participant to be “Poppy,” the popcorn leader. All other participants are kernels. On teacher’s signal (or start of music), the kernels start to sizzle by marching in place.
2. Poppy tosses 1 bean bag to someone in the circle; the catcher tosses it to someone else in the circle, who then tosses it to another, similar to hot potato.
3. Poppy tosses another bean bag to a different catcher, until all 5 bean bags are in play.
4. Once all beanbags are in play, Poppy calls out a food group; the catcher with that beanbag must name a food in that food group before tossing it to someone else.
5. Change role of Poppy after 3 minutes and continue the game.

**VARIATION:** Teacher assigns each participant the name of a food. Participants wiggle in place beside their chairs (kernels sizzling). Teacher calls out a question based on the day’s nutrition lesson. Participants whose assigned food is the answer to the question “pop” and begin to jump in place. This variation is good for small spaces.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with whole grains lesson.





# Kitchen Heat

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Seated or standing

**EQUIPMENT:** None

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher calls out “stovetop flame” and participants reply with the following words and actions:
  - Stop: Push arms straight out in front of chest.
  - Drop: Push arms straight down by sides.
  - Roll: Roll forearms in front of chest.
2. Teacher calls out “flame out” and participants rest.
3. Repeat the chant and actions, or alternate with:
  - Teacher calls out “when the heat’s up high” and participants respond by pushing arms up in “raise the roof” motion.
  - Participants reply with “you get down low” and push arms down by sides or down to floor.

**VARIATION:** To increase activity level, participants march in place while performing arm motions.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with kitchen safety lesson.







# Kitchen Utensil Relay

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 3-5; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** 2 or more groups for relay teams

**EQUIPMENT:** A variety of kitchen utensils, one [different] list of utensils for each relay team

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Place all utensils in one central location
2. Give each team a list of 1/2 the utensils; each team's list has different utensils
3. Leader signals teams to start; each relay group sends one member at a time to the central location to choose the listed item, return it to the group (hand off to next team member) before the next team member takes a turn.
4. The relay is over once all teams retrieve the utensils on their list and correctly identify the utensils.

**VARIATION:** To increase the difficulty, balance the utensil on a spoon or frying pan to carry it back to the team.

Teams can exchange lists and run the relay again to identify more utensils.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use for cooking-skills based nutrition classes





# Label Moves

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing by chair or seated

**EQUIPMENT:** Variety of nutrition facts labels or food packages

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Give one label or food package to each participant; ask them to read to themselves.
2. Teacher gives directions for actions, allowing time in between for participants to perform the actions, as follows:
  - If your product has whole grain listed as the first ingredient, do 10 arm circles.
  - If your product has more than 5 grams of fiber, give your neighbor a high five.
  - If your product is low in fat, sit in your chair and lift each foot 10 times.
  - If your product has 300 milligrams or more of calcium, do 10 knee lifts.
  - If your product is low sodium (5 percent or less of daily value), march in place.

**VARIATION:** Use large print labels for older adult audiences.

Participants repeat the set of movements for each product feature (e.g., 10 foot lifts for low-fat) until the teacher calls the next feature and accompanying movement. If a participant's product does not have the feature called, he or she continues doing the previous movement until a feature does match.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Can accompany lessons on nutrition label reading, whole grains, low-fat, or low-sodium.





# Milk Cap Toss

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Two person teams, standing or sitting 6-10 feet apart

**EQUIPMENT:** Several empty milk jugs, cut to form a catching scoop; milk jug caps or similar sized items; optional: masking tape

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher marks two spots in the room, 6-10 feet apart, with masking tape or similar marker.
2. Each 2-person team receives 10 milk jug caps (or adjust to whatever number you have) and 2 milk jug scoops. For a large group, you could have half of the teams play and then switch turns.
3. One team member stands by 1 line as the catcher; the other stands by the other line as the thrower. The thrower puts one cap in their scoop and tosses the cap to the catcher.
4. Once the thrower has thrown all 10 caps, switch roles so the catcher becomes the thrower and the thrower becomes the catcher.
5. Catching and throwing continues until everyone has had a chance to catch and throw and/or the teacher calls time.

**VARIATION:** Instead of milk jug caps, use water bottle caps, buttons, dried beans, etc.

For a group of older adults, the participants could do the activity seated across from each other at a set distance.

Instead of throwing to each other, participants toss milk jug caps into jugs sitting 3-5 feet away on the floor. (Cut slightly larger jug openings.) All participants are given several caps and throw them into the jugs simultaneously or take turns.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with dairy lesson.





# Minnesota Living

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 3-5

**FORMATION:** Standing at desks

**EQUIPMENT:** None; optional: map of Minnesota

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher leads the class on a virtual tour of Minnesota, while students simulate each action for at least 30 seconds. Examples:
  - Canoe up the Mississippi River against the current; paddle hard.
  - Ice fish on Lake Mille Lacs; dip your pole down the hole, pull it up as high as you can.
  - March up the Capitol steps in St. Paul.
  - Swim in one of the 10,000 lakes; ask “Which one is your favorite?”
  - Throw a snowball in Fort Snelling State Park.
  - Fly like an eagle over the Mississippi River in Wabasha.
  - Climb Eagle Mountain near Grand Marais; ask “How high is it?” (Answer: 2,301 feet)
  - Paddle the Red River.
  - Pick vegetables with the Jolly Green Giant in LeSueur.
  - Hike the trails by Gooseberry Falls; say “They’re steep.”
  - Dig in an iron mine near Hibbing.
  - Climb the tallest Minnesota Red Pine in Itasca State Park; ask “How tall is it?” (Answer: 126 feet)
  - Hit a home run for the Twins at Target Field.
  - Crawl through the Forestville Mystery Cave.
  - Jog on the River Road in Minneapolis.
  - Cast your line and reel to catch the biggest fish in Lake Superior.

**VARIATION:** Use a state map to help point out the landmarks named.  
Show pictures of the landmarks that are being named.  
Use landmarks in your own region of Minnesota.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Discuss the types of foods to eat for the activity; for example, talk about the carbohydrates required to burn energy in long-distance jogging.

“Energizers for Nutrition Education” was developed by Health and Nutrition staff from the University of Minnesota Extension in July 2011. It was adapted with permission from the “Energizers Classroom-based Physical Activities” program developed by East Carolina University’s Activity Promotion Laboratory, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, North Carolina Healthy Schools, and Be Active North Carolina. University of Minnesota Extension is an equal opportunity educator and employer. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this resource is available in alternative formats upon request. Direct requests to 1-888-241-4591. For more information on Health and Nutrition, visit [www.extension.umn.edu/family/health-and-nutrition/](http://www.extension.umn.edu/family/health-and-nutrition/).







# Mix it Up Salad!

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 2-3

**FORMATION:** 2 semi-circles facing each other – forming a full circle

**EQUIPMENT:** Fruit and vegetable food models or pictures

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Give students on one side of the circle a red, green, or yellow food model or picture; give students on other side an orange, blue, or white food model or picture.
2. Teacher calls out a color for each side and students with that color hop to the center of the circle to form a new, small inner circle.
3. Students in the inner circle face out and walk, skip, or hop around the circle one complete time – showing the students in the outer circle their mix of food for the salad.
4. Repeat with new colors to add to the existing salad or start over with new colors.
5. Mix specific fruits and vegetables in a salad; for example, ask students with models or pictures of strawberries and spinach or carrots and apples to hop to the center.
6. Teacher asks students to hop back to their original semi-circles. Repeat the cycle for at least 5 minutes.

**VARIATION:** Jumping Stir Fry! – Use pictures or models of vegetables and jumping in place (rather than hopping to the center) as the activity.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with fruit and vegetable lesson.





# Monkey Says

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades K-3

**FORMATION:** Standing at desks

**EQUIPMENT:** None

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher leads the Energizer, instructing students to do the activity only if “monkey says” (like Simon says). Students who act out an activity without “monkey says” march in place until another “monkey says” activity is called.
2. Continue each activity for 15-30 seconds. Suggested activities:

**Monkey says** eat a banana for a snack.

**Monkey says** snap your fingers.

**Monkey says** act like a monkey.

Drink some grapefruit juice.

**Monkey says** march in place.

**Monkey says** jump up.

Ride a bike.

Roller skate.

**Monkey says** peel a banana.

**Monkey says** do jumping jacks.

Turn around.

Fly a kite.

**Monkey says** spin left, then right.

**Monkey says** march.

Wiggle your toes.

**Monkey says** touch your knees.

**Monkey says** jump rope.

Make a salad.

**Monkey says** wipe the table.

**Monkey says** eat a vegetable pizza.

**Monkey says** jump up and down.

**Monkey says** pull carrots in the garden.

**Monkey says** snap green beans.

**Monkey says** hoe in the garden.

**Monkey says** pick some raspberries.

Eat an apple.

Shake your body.

**Monkey says** stretch and pick bananas.

**Monkey says** brush your teeth.

**Monkey says** shoot 7 baskets.

**Monkey says** hop left, then right.

**Monkey says** swim.

**Monkey says** dance.

Walk.

Jog in place.

**Monkey says** stir some vegetable soup.

**Monkey says** bend and touch your toes.

Wash the pears.

**Monkey says** walk on your tip toes.

Wash your hands.

**Monkey says** go bananas.

**Monkey says** rest and relax.

**VARIATION:** Rewrite commands to incorporate food from the other food groups.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with fruits and vegetables lesson.





# Musical Pedometer

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Circle of chairs (musical chairs)

**EQUIPMENT:** Pedometer for each participant; music and music player

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Set up chairs for musical chairs—in a circle. Assign a non-participant to stop the music when teacher removes a chair.
2. Instruct participants to wear pedometer on hip and set the tally to 0.
3. Participants march around the chair circle while the music plays; teacher removes one chair and when the music stops, everyone sits. The participant left standing then marches to the side. The music resumes and the cycle repeats until there is only one participant left in the game (the winner).
4. Suggested movements:
  - Walk
  - Jump
  - Skip
  - Hop
  - Step-together-step-, alternating starting foot (left, right)
  - Gallop
5. Check pedometer each time the music stops to compare the number of steps each type of movement generates.
6. Adjust the level of activity to your group.

**VARIATION:** If you only have one pedometer, you can pass the pedometer to a new person each time the music stops; compare movements and how they're recorded in steps on the pedometer.

Activity can be done without pedometers.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with lesson on physical activity and cardiovascular exercise.





# MyPlate Pokey

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades Pre-K-2

**FORMATION:** Standing in a circle

**EQUIPMENT:** None; optional: music

## **RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher reviews the traditional hokey pokey song with movements. Students form a circle around the perimeter of the room; teacher leads hokey pokey actions while singing the “MyPlate Pokey” (lyrics by Dianne David Kenning):

### **Movement Verse**

Right Arm	You put your grain group in, you put your grain group out, you put your grain group in and you shake it all about. You eat the whole grain and you help your insides out; that’s what it’s all about!
Left Arm	You put your dairy group in, you put your dairy group out, you put your dairy group in and you shake it all about. You drink a glass of milk and you build some strong bones; that’s what it’s all about!
Right Leg	You put your fruit group in, you put your fruit group out, you put your fruit group in and you shake it all about. You eat a grape or two and you eat a couple more; that’s what it’s all about!
Left Leg	You put your vegetable group in, you put your vegetable group out, you put your vegetable group in and you shake it all about. You crunch on a carrot and you peel a sweet potato; that’s what it’s all about!
Head	You put your protein group in, you put your protein group out, you put your protein group in and you shake it all about. You throw in meat and beans and you make a pot of chili; that’s what it’s all about!
Whole Self	You put all your food groups in, you put all your food groups out, you put all your food groups in and you shake it all about. You do the MyPlate Pokey and you turn yourself around; that’s what it’s all about!

**VARIATION:** Students hold a food model, picture, or food package during the song and perform in the center of the circle when their food matches the corresponding group verse.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with food group lesson.







# MyPlate Relay

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 1-6; Teens

**FORMATION:** Two or three lines of students, single file; each line is a relay team

**EQUIPMENT:** 5 sheets of large colored paper, labeled by food group: orange – grains, green – vegetables, red – fruits, blue – dairy, and purple – proteins; a variety of food models or photos from all food groups; optional: laminate the colored paper for durability

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Place food group papers on a table or the floor, several feet away from the start line.
2. Teacher hands a food model or photo to every student.
3. The first student in each relay team runs (or any variety of movement called by the teacher), places their food model or photo on the correct food group paper, and then returns to their team and tags the next student in line.
4. After having a turn, students go to the end of their line and start marching for the rest of the game (to remain active).
5. The first team to finish with their correct food group placements wins.

**VARIATION:** Food models are placed in plastic buckets at the beginning of each line; once tagged, each student picks out a food to place on the food group posters.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with food group lesson.





# MyPlate Servings

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing or seated

**EQUIPMENT:** Two cans of food (6-16 ounces) for each participant

## **RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

Teacher leads class through the different color sections of MyPlate (Grains, Vegetables, Fruit, Dairy, Proteins). Each student holds one can in each hand and moves arms in different motions to the count of recommended servings for each food group. For this activity, a half serving counts as one repetition:

- \* Grains – 6 ounces (6 repetitions)
- \* Vegetables – 2 ½ cups (3 repetitions)
- \* Fruits – 2 cups (2 repetitions)
- \* Milk – 3 cups (3 repetitions)
- \* Protein – 5 ½ ounces (6 repetitions)

- Example 1: Student sits or stands with arms straight down at sides holding can in each hand. Teacher says “Grains – 6 ounces;” student raises both arms to side, shoulder height, holding for one second to the count of 6.
- Example 2: Student sits or stands, bending forward slightly at the waist; holding can in each hand, student extends both arms forward as teacher says “Fruit – 2 1/2 cups.” Student pulls arms back, bending elbows into a 90-degree angle and then slowly straightens arms, extending them forward to count of 3 as teacher says, “one ounce, two ounces, one-half ounce.”

**VARIATION:** Can be done without cans.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with serving size lesson.





# Nutrient Rap

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Teens, Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing or sitting

**EQUIPMENT:** Copy of the Nutrient rap for each participant or large copy for the group

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher gives each participant a copy of Nutrient Rap or displays a large copy for everyone to see.
2. Teacher demonstrates actions to go along with each stanza.

**Verses**

Pick six oranges off the tree,  
Remember they give us Vitamin C!  
  
High five left and high five right,  
Vitamin A protects our sight!  
  
Milk the cow every day,  
'Cause exercise keeps the blues away!  
  
Tap your elbows on the table,  
Eat the peel if you are able!  
  
If you can, raise your knees,  
Sunshine gives us vitamin D!  
  
With your hands begin to drum,  
Remember strong bones need calcium!  
  
Tap your toe, then tap your heel,  
Make yourself a balanced meal!  
  
Pretend you can fly like Superman,  
Prevent disease, wash your hands!  
  
Pound your fist upon your chest,  
Last but not least, get your rest!

**Actions**

Reach both hands high, pretending to pick oranges off a tree.  
  
High five the air to the left and right, two times each.  
  
With closed fists, make milking motions with hands in front of you.  
  
Tap left elbow, then right elbow; repeat.  
  
Raise left knee, then right knee; repeat.  
  
Pretend to drum with hands on table.  
  
With slightly straightened legs, tap toe, then tap heel of each foot on the floor; repeat.  
  
Hold arms out in front, move them up and down slightly in a flying motion.  
  
Arms bent with elbows out to the side, "pound" chest with fists.

**VARIATION:** For people with limited mobility: Remind participants to follow your lead but only do what they can comfortably do.

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# On the Farm

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades K-3

**FORMATION:** Standing at desk, with room to move

**EQUIPMENT:** None; “Old McDonald Had a Farm” music optional

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher reviews the original Old McDonald song.
2. Teacher leads exercises using the Old McDonald song but with the new lyrics below; repeat each exercise continuously (about 20-30 seconds) through each verse of the song:

**Verses**

Old McDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O.  
And on his farm he had a cow, E-I-E-I-O.  
With a “cowabunga mooove” here and a  
“cowabunga mooove” there;  
Here a “mooove” there a “mooove;”  
Everywhere a “mooove mooove.”  
Old McDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O.

Old McDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O.  
And on his farm he had a pig, E-I-E-I-O.  
With a “piggy doo” here and a “piggy doo”  
there;  
Here an oink there an oink;  
Everywhere an oink-oink.  
(Repeat cow verse)  
Old McDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O.

Old McDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O.  
And on his farm he had a horse, E-I-E-I-O.  
With a “Charlie horse” here and a “Charlie horse”  
there;  
Here a neigh there a neigh;  
Everywhere a neigh-neigh.  
(Repeat pig verse)  
(Repeat cow verse)  
Old MacDonalld had a farm, E-I-E-I-O.

**Actions**

Cowabunga moooves: Lunge forward on left foot, then right foot; switch throughout verse. Can also step or scissor jump.

Piggy doos: From a crab-sit position on the floor, bend elbows and push body up and down like reverse push-ups.

Repeat cowabunga moooves (lunges).

Charlie horse: Hands and feet on floor (in push-up position), kick feet up on each neigh. Lower energy alternate: Lift one foot toward ceiling with each neigh.  
Repeat Piggy doos (crab push-ups).  
Repeat Cowabunga moooves (lunges).

**VARIATION:** See back for additional verses and actions.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Discuss where food comes from and what the animals might eat to keep themselves healthy.

## **ADDITIONAL VERSES AND ACTIONS:**

*Beginning and end of verses are the same as the other side*

### **Verses**

And on his farm he had a chicken, E-I-E-I-O.  
With a flap, flap here and a cluck, cluck there.  
Here an flap there cluck;  
Everywhere a flap-cluck.

And on his farm he had a rooster, E-I-E-I-O.  
With a cock-a-doodle here and a cock-a-doodle  
there.  
Here a cock-a-doodle there a cock-a-doodle;  
Everywhere a cock-a-doodle.

And on his farm he had a sheep, E-I-E-I-O.  
With a baa-baa here and a baa-baa there.  
Here a baa there a baa;  
Everywhere a baa-baa.

And on his farm he had a sheep, E-I-E-I-O.  
With a bow-wow here and a bow-wow there.  
Here a bow there a wow;  
Everywhere a bow-wow.

And on his farm he had a duck, E-I-E-I-O.  
With a quack-quack here and a quack-quack  
there.  
Here a quack there a quack;  
Everywhere a quack-quack.

### **Actions**

Flap-cluck: Clasp hands behind neck,  
elbows out to side. Flap elbows back  
and forth on "flap;" twist left and right on  
"cluck."

Cock-a-doodle doos: Arms straight out to  
sides at shoulder level; make circles with  
arms – large, small, fast and slow.

Sheep squatters: Stand, feet apart, hands on  
hips; bend at knees to squat on each "baa."

Bow-wow dog crawl: Down on all fours  
(hands and knees or hands and feet); crawl  
forward and back with each "bow-wow."

Jumping jacks: Arms up and feet out on  
"quack;" arms down and feet together on  
"quack."





# Passport to Fitness

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Learning stations around the room, each with a nutrition topic and a physical activity

**EQUIPMENT:** “Passports” for each participant; stickers or stamps for each activity; signs indicating nutrition topic and accompanying physical activity at each station

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Participants move from station to station, performing physical activity for each nutrition topic. Examples:
  - Healthy Snacks station – Physical activity is shoulder rolls. Participant sits or stands with straight posture, rolls shoulders forward 10 times, then rolls shoulders backward 10 times.
  - Healthy Beverage station – Physical activity is side leg raises. Participant stands behind chair, holding its back with one hand. Keeping back and both legs straight, participant slowly lifts right leg 6-10 inches out to the side and holds leg in that position for 10 seconds. Repeats 5 times, then does same routine with left leg.
2. Passports are validated after completing the activity at each station.

**VARIATION:** Physical activity stations: Set up stations to perform different physical activities while the food bakes (example: Pizzas – assemble at table then go back to stations for physical activity while the pizzas bake).

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Create stations and activities based on the planned nutrition topic.





# Pass the Salmonella, Please

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades K-6; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing in a circle

**EQUIPMENT:** Rubber chicken; music (CD or radio); optional: Glo-germ

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher starts the music; participants then pass the rubber chicken from one person to another.
2. When the music stops, the person holding the chicken is “out;” he or she must pass the chicken to the person behind, then step out of the circle. Once out, he or she continues to march in place.
3. When the music starts again, the person who just received the chicken starts to pass it again.
4. With each music interval, participants can pass the rubber chicken in a different manner.  
Examples:
  - Throw high or throw low
  - Throw behind back
  - Throw between legs
  - Throw with opposite hand (from their usual)
5. The last person standing (without the chicken) is the winner.

**VARIATION:** Before starting, secretly put some Glo Germ on the rubber chicken to indicate the presence of germs on food. This could be used as a warm-up for a food safety lesson or a lesson on cooking whole chickens for a meal. View hands with blacklight after activity.

To increase the activity level, have participants march or do knee lifts while music plays.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with food safety and/or hand washing lesson.





# Polka

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Pre-K-5; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing or seated

**EQUIPMENT:** Polka music CD; CD player

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Instructor teaches basic polka step before starting the music; YouTube has several videos.
  - First step long, followed by two half-steps (oom pa pa): Move left foot forward, close the right foot to the left and step left again, then bounce the right foot forward. Close the left foot to the right and step right again; repeat.
2. Teacher asks students to dance around the room or in place; vary the intensity by the length of the step, height of the leg lift and/or bounce. Suggestions for use during a nutrition class:
  - Start the lesson with a polka dance
  - Insert a polka dance break into the lesson
  - End the lesson with a polka dance
3. Suggested polkas (most found on YouTube):
  - *Hoop Dee Doo polka* (with words); this song features positive upbeat lyrics referencing soup and fish.
  - *Apple Peaches Pumpkin Pie* (without words); use acoustic (music-only) version as not all lyrics are appropriate for young people. Use with a fruit lesson.
  - *Alphabet polka*; visit <http://www.pintsizepolkas.com/music.htm> or search for “Pint Size Polkas” on YouTube to hear this song.

**VARIATION:** Polka steps can be performed with legs while seated; participants can clap to the rhythm.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Match the theme of the music to the lesson, or make up words that match the theme of the lesson.

Use with a lesson on Central and Eastern European foods.





# Silent Signs

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 4-5; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing or seated

**EQUIPMENT:** Poster with a variety of fruits and vegetables or food pictures posted around the room

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher chooses one participant to select a food to start the game; that person randomly points to a food on the poster or to one of the pictures at the front of the room.
2. Teacher chooses another food (from those posted) and tells the group but not the designated finder; teacher can write the name of the chosen food on a piece of paper and show the class.
3. Without talking, the group uses movement to guide the student from the randomly-selected food to the teacher-chosen food; suggestions:
  - Right – Knee lifts or marching
  - Left – Jumping jacks (adaptation: one-foot at a time)
  - Up – Raise the roof
  - Down – Squats or knee touches
4. Continue movements until the participant finds the correct food. No talking!
5. Repeat with new participant and new chosen food.

**VARIATION:** Post the movements that correspond to the directions on the board.  
Make the activity competitive by dividing the group into two teams and creating two sets of posters or food pictures.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Works well with University of Minnesota Extension’s Go Wild with Fruits & Veggies! curriculum – <http://z.umn.edu/gowild>  
Remind participants to eat a variety of colors of fruits and vegetables every day.

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# Stop and List

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Pre-3-6; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing near desk or table

**EQUIPMENT:** Paper and pen or pencil for each participant

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher gives paper and pen or pencil to each participant; activity instructions are reviewed.
2. Teacher calls out a physical activity and participants do that activity until they hear the word “stop” (about 30 seconds); suggested activities:
  - Marching
  - Dancing the Twist
  - Jumping jacks
  - Hula hoop (circle hips)
  - Jogging in place
3. At “stop,” participants list as many fruits or vegetables they can think of on their paper until teacher says “stop” again (about 30 seconds).
4. Repeat sequence for 5-10 minutes.

**VARIATION:** When activity is complete, find out who listed the most fruits and vegetables and give them a small prize.

Ask participants to name the fruits and/or vegetables from their lists and write on the board as a way to introduce lesson.

Use with the other food groups.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with fruits and vegetables lesson.





# Stop and Read the Label

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Pre-K-5; Teens; Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing at desks

**EQUIPMENT:** Music; food nutrition labels; optional: balls of different sizes

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Set up:
  - Teacher scatters food nutrition labels around the room.
  - Teacher assigns each participant a number of grams of carbohydrates or fat from a master list of the food labels.
2. When the teacher says “go” or starts the music, students begin hopping, dribbling balls, or dancing while they look for the nutrition label that has their designated number of carbohydrate or fat grams.
3. Upon finding the right label, students hop, dribble a ball, or dance to the teacher and:
  - Show the label.
  - State the food.
  - Give the designated number of carbohydrate or fat grams.
  - Say whether the food is healthy or not according to carbohydrate and fat content.
4. After completing the task, students hop, dribble a ball, or dance the label back to the place they found it in the room and listen for a new assignment from the teacher.

**VARIATION:** Designate any of the nutrients as the target for finding labels (sodium, serving size, calories, etc.).

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with label reading, grains, and fat lessons; review the general form of a nutrition label and discuss the importance of appropriate carbohydrate- and fat-levels in the diet.





# Stop and Scribble

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 2-5

**FORMATION:** Standing at desks with partners, or individually

**EQUIPMENT:** Piece of paper and pencil or pen for each pair or student

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher gives each student paper and a pencil or pen.
2. Teacher calls out physical activity; suggestions:
  - Jumping
  - Twisting
  - Jogging
  - Jumping jacks
  - Hopping
  - Knee lifts
  - Playing air guitar
  - Marching
3. Students begin activity and continue for about 30 seconds until teacher calls out a food group from MyPlate (grain, vegetable, fruit, dairy, protein).
4. Students freeze and partners (or individuals) write down a food that fits into that food group.
5. After 5-10 seconds, teacher calls out a new physical activity.
6. Repeat for at least 5 minutes or until all food groups are covered.
7. As students cool down, teacher writes the food groups on the board and asks students to share the foods they wrote down for each of the groups.

**VARIATION:** Can be done outdoors using sidewalk chalk.  
Use music to signal physical activity and silence for writing down foods.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Introduce food groups and MyPlate and use the activity to reinforce food groups.





# Stop, Drop, and Roll

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 3-6; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing in a circle or in pairs

**EQUIPMENT:** 1 ball for each student or every 2 students

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher reminds the participants that the words “stop, drop, and roll” are often used to teach fire safety. Remind them of the relevance of those words and then explain that today we’ll use those words in a different way.
2. Teacher lists physical activities that represent aspects of the nutrition lesson; for example:
  - Marching – Whole grains
  - Walking – Green vegetables
  - Jogging – Dairy
  - Sliding – Red fruits
  - Jumping – Popcorn
  - Touch toes – Beans
  - Reaching – Lean meat
3. Teacher calls out one of the listed physical activities; participants move around in the circle performing that activity for 30-45 seconds.
4. Teacher calls “stop;” participants stop and freeze in place.
5. Teacher calls “drop;” participants bounce their ball and catch it.
6. Teacher calls “roll;” participants roll the ball across the circle to another student or pair.
7. Repeat for at least 5 minutes of movement.

**VARIATION:** “Stop, drop, and pass” the ball if there is no space for rolling.







# Stretch Band Relief

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Seated in a circle of chairs

**EQUIPMENT:** Stretch (resistance) bands of 4-6 feet length for each participant

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher reviews posture tips for seated position from Healthy & Fit on the Go: Resistance Bands (on back).
2. Teacher leads participants through selected Healthy & Fit on the Go exercises; remind participants to perform only as many repetitions as is comfortable.
3. For stretching and/or relaxing the upper back and neck:
  - Hold the band, one end in each hand.
  - Loop the center of the band across upper back.
  - Slowly straighten arms out to the front while sitting straight.
  - Release and repeat.
  - Slowly straighten arms out to the sides while sitting straight.
4. Invite participants to experiment with the bands and share an exercise or movement that helps to stretch or relax the neck and upper back.

**VARIATION:** Exercises and stretches can be performed from standing position.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with a lesson on physical activity to promote a healthy lifestyle.

## HEALTHY & FIT ON THE GO: RESISTANCE BANDS

Also available at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/Health/healthy-fit-go.html>.

**Chest:** Wrap ends of band around each hand; raise bent elbows out to the sides, palms down. Straighten arms to the count of 3; resist and count to 3 as you return to bent elbow starting position.

**Upper Back:** Wrap ends of band around each hand; raise bent elbows out to the sides, palms down. Lay your chest on your knees; place feet on the center of the band. Slowly squeeze your elbows together and return to starting position.

**Shoulders:** Sit straight. Keeping band under feet, lock your wrists and raise and lower straight arms from the front corners of the chair to a “V” at shoulder level.

**Biceps:** With band under feet, squeeze your elbows to your ribs, arms bent, palms up; curl your hands up to your shoulders and lower slowly.

**Triceps:** Place feet on one end of the band. Hold the other end behind your head with both hands; squeeze your head with your elbows; raise and lower hands to straighten and bend at elbow.

**Abdomen:** Without your band, sit straight in chair. Tighten abdominal muscles (pull belly button toward spine). Lean body back about 10 degrees and straighten your legs, hands resting on chair. Slowly lift one knee toward chest and lower. Lift other leg toward chest and lower. Repeat 10 times.

**Lower Back:** Wrap ends of band around hands with middle of band under your feet. Lay your chest on your knees; squeeze your ribs with your elbows, and lock your arms in the bent elbow position. Using your waist as the hinge, slowly raise your body to a seated position. Lower slowly and repeat. Keep your abdominal muscles tight throughout the range of motion to protect back.

**Thighs:** Set left foot on one end of the band. Wrap the other end around right foot while sitting upright, arms resting at sides, knees pointed forward. Slowly raise and lower right foot to straight leg position. Push heel down first as you lower your foot. Switch sides and repeat with left leg.

**Hips:** Set left foot on one end of the band. Wrap the other end around right foot while sitting upright, arms resting at sides, knees pointed forward. Straighten right leg and slowly push your ankle out to the side. Slowly return to front; repeat 10 times. Switch sides.

**Calves:** Wrap one end of band around each hand. Put right foot in center of band; hold your leg straight out to the front. Slowly point your toe away from you, pull toes up to point to the ceiling. Repeat 10 times and switch legs.



# Toe and Ankle Stretches

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 3-6; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Seated or standing

**EQUIPMENT:** None

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher tells participants to stand while holding on to chairs, or to sit in chairs, using good posture.
2. As teacher calls out the name of a whole grain food, participants raise one leg straight out in front and spell the name of the whole grain with that foot.
3. Participants alternate legs, spelling the whole grains as they are named.

**VARIATION:** Use with names of foods from any of the food groups.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use as an icebreaker to a whole grain (or any food group) lesson.





# Twelve Days of Produce

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 3-6; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing or seated

**EQUIPMENT:** Posters of fruit and vegetable color groups or large sheets of colored paper (red, green, orange/yellow, blue/purple, white/tan); if needed, review the tune of “The 12 Days of Christmas”

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Begin by participants or teacher assigning a movement to each color group; suggestions:  
Stork stand (balance on one foot); cross punches; jumping jacks (adaptations: tap one foot out to the side for each “jack” or perform seated jumping jacks); raise the roof (arms); knee lifts; side stretches; jog/march in place; punches/jabs; kick to front; hula hoops (circle hips); jump rope (imaginary rope); muscle poses (biceps); scissors (feet apart, cross in front, feet apart, cross in back); squats.
2. Post a color/movement list on the wall (all on one poster or on colored papers with movements listed on them).
3. Sing “The 12 Days of Christmas” tune using the following lyrics: “On the first day of vibrant produce, my gardener gave to me...”
  - One brown tree
  - Two blue fruits
  - Three red vegetables
  - Four white fruits
  - Five green vegetables
  - Six orange fruits
  - Seven purple vegetables
  - Eight tan fruits
  - Nine blue vegetables
  - Ten red fruits
  - Eleven yellow vegetables
  - Twelve green fruits
4. Participants perform the movement that corresponds to the named color while shouting out as many of the fruits or vegetables of that color as possible.

**VARIATION:** Sing song through once for a shorter activity, or repeat each verse as in the original song.





# Unpack the Groceries

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 3-5; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Standing

**EQUIPMENT:** Paper grocery bag; timer; food models, names or pictures of food for each food group

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher tells participants to fill grocery bag with items from different food groups. Tell them the bag should contain “anytime” foods (OK to eat any time) and “sometimes” foods (OK to eat only sometimes). Teacher also instructs participants to choose (and announce to the class) any movement or activity for each food and perform it as indicated below.
2. One participant at a time announces a movement or activity and pulls a food out of the bag; the class determines if it’s a sometimes or anytime food, and then performs repetitions of the chosen movement:
  - Sometimes food – 20-30 repetitions
  - Anytime food – 10 repetitions
3. Repeat with each participant; allow approximately 5 minutes per food group.

**VARIATION:** Teacher can pre-assign movements by food group; post for all to see.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Accompany with a discussion of “sometimes” foods as more calorie dense, which requires more physical activity.

Can be used to introduce the food groups in MyPlate.







# Water Measure Relay

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Relay lines

**EQUIPMENT:** 2-cup measuring cups; pitchers; labeled cards; volunteers to help with activity; optional: drinking cups

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Set-up:

- Table or desks 10-20 feet from the start line with a water station for each relay line.
- Each water station contains one 2-cup measuring cup, 1 pitcher, drinking cups for each participant, and a stack of labeled cards (1 cup, 1/2 cup, 1/3 cup, and 1/4 cup).
- Teacher and volunteers stand at water stations.

2. Relay:

- Teacher divides class into groups and asks participants to form separate relay lines (10-20 feet) before each water station.
- Water station attendants draw a card and calls out a measurement.
- First person in each line moves (run, walk, jog, hop, skip, gallop, step-together-step, etc.) to water station, measures water from pitcher into measuring cup.
- Teacher and other station attendants checks accuracy; participant pours the water back into the pitcher and moves back to tag the next person in line.
- Once turn is completed, participants move to the end of their line and march in place while teammates finish relay.

**VARIATION:** Participants can pour the measured water into a clean drinking cup and drink the water before returning to tag the next runner.

Participants can measure water into a drinking cup, carry it back to the team, and pass it to the next person in line who must pour it back into the pitcher before measuring their own.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with any of the following lessons: Safe and accurate cooking methods (measuring) methods; increasing healthy beverages by drinking more water.





# What's for Dinner

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 2-5; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Sitting or standing at tables or desks

**EQUIPMENT:** 1 paper plate per participant; crayons or markers

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher gives each participant one paper plate and crayons or markers, and asks each to draw a nutritious meal.
2. Participants choose (or are assigned) a partner and everyone stands up.
3. One partner holds both plates
4. On teacher's signal, the participants with the plates perform an aerobic activity using the plates as props. Examples:
  - Jogging in place – plates as wings
  - Waving plates up and down in front of body
  - Swimming underwater – plates as fins
  - Jumping jacks, waving plates
5. Teacher identifies one participant performing an aerobic activity and directs the entire class to perform that movement for 10-15 seconds.
6. Switch partners holding plates and repeat until class has performed aerobic activities for at least 5 minutes.
7. Participants return to seats with their own plates and discuss healthy meals and portion sizes.

**VARIATION:** Set a time limit (1-2 minutes) for drawing on plates.  
Use food stickers for creating a healthy plate.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with portion size lesson or healthy meals lesson.  
Use with introduction to MyPlate.





# Whole Grain Relay

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades 4-6; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Relay: Single file lines

**EQUIPMENT:** 1 box with photos of grain foods and/or grain product food labels;  
2 boxes labeled “Whole Grain” and “Not Whole Grain” for each line of participants

**RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Set box with food photos or labels 10-20 feet from start line; set a “Whole Grain” and “Not Whole Grain” box at each line’s start.
2. The first participant in each line walks briskly (or other movement as called by teacher) to the box of food photos/labels and picks one; participant walks briskly back to their line and puts their “food” in either “Whole Grain” or “Not Whole Grain” box.
3. Repeat for 5-10 minutes; participants standing in line can march in place to keep up activity level.
4. The team that finishes first with the most correct items in the boxes wins!

**VARIATION:** Work in pairs to increase active participants and reduce embarrassment if incorrect choices are made.

Label boxes “High Sodium” and “Low Sodium;” accompany with lesson on sodium levels.

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Use with whole grain, sodium, or label reading lesson.





# Work it Out UNO (MyPlate) Style

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL:** Youth, Grades Pre-K-6; Teens; Adults and Older Adults

**FORMATION:** Form a circle around perimeter of room, standing or sitting

**EQUIPMENT:** UNO cards or plain, colored cards corresponding to the MyPlate food group colors; optional: indicate physical activity movement on the UNO or MyPlate color cards

## **RULES/DIRECTIONS:**

1. Teacher distributes one UNO or MyPlate color card to each participant.
2. Each participant performs the activity (for 10-15 seconds) and names a food that corresponds to the color/food group on their card; suggestions:
  - Blue – Jumping jacks (adaptation: perform one-footed, placing right foot out to right side, crossing in front of left, left foot out to side, crossing in front of right) and name a blue fruit or vegetable.
  - Red – March in place, do sit-ups, or squats and name a red fruit or vegetable.
  - Yellow – Toe touches, left-right twists, or bend over and touch knees (standing) or toes (seated) and name a yellow fruit or vegetable.
  - Green – Run, march, or swim in place (moving arms) and name a green fruit or vegetable.
  - Orange – Raise the roof (lift arms) and name a whole grain.
  - Blue – Side steps and name a low-fat dairy food.
3. Teacher says “pass it on” after 10-15 seconds and each participant passes their card to the person on their right.
4. Each participant performs activity that corresponds to their new color.
5. Continue changing cards at 10-15 second intervals for up to 10 minutes.

**VARIATION:** Use music to set the tempo and indicate when to start and stop movements.

Participants can pass the card in different ways; suggestions:

- Slide the card with foot
- Hand it over head
- Hand it across their body

**NUTRITION NOTE:** Corresponds to lessons featuring the MyPlate food groups.





# USDA Key Messages Related to Energizers

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