



FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

OVERVIEW

Food Explorers is a five-week course aimed at making children savvy consumers of food. Student detectives investigate the impact of too much sugar, salt, and fat in their diets, and uncover the tactics of food marketing, portion distortion, and highly-processed foods. Each week, children enjoy a new culinary adventure in the kitchen—cooking up healthy snacks, breakfasts, lunches, and dinners. Through Food Explorers, children learn to examine their own food choices and to make smart decisions on how and what to eat.

Food Explorers was created by the Greater Richmond Coalition for Healthy Children and made possible by the CarMax foundation.

SESSION 1:

What's in my snack?



- Investigating highly-processed foods marketed as “healthy”
- Making fun, flavorful snacks

SESSION 2:

What's in my cup?



- Investigating sugar-sweetened beverages
- Making delicious drinks

SESSION 3:

What's on my plate?



- Investigating food groups and what makes a balanced meal
- Making power-packed breakfasts

SESSION 4:

What's in my Big Mac?



- Investigating fast food restaurants and portion distortion
- Making lip-smacking lunches

SESSION 5:

What's for dinner?



- Investigating how salt sneaks into food
- Making a meal to share with family and friends
- Food Explorers graduation



WELCOME!

Thanks for your interest in facilitating a Food Explorers course. This guide will give you everything you need to know to have a meaningful, successful experience.

All documents referenced in the guide can be found online at grfit4kids.org/what-we-do/food-explorers/

The information and documents are meant to serve as a guide, but please adapt the material to meet the unique needs of your students and situation.

Hope you enjoy the Food Explorers adventure!

KEY MESSAGES TO BE LEARNED IN FOOD EXPLORERS

SESSION 1

- Real food is found in nature, not processed too much, and filled with nutrients to make you healthy.
- Highly-processed food is made in a factory, stripped of most of its nutrients, contains too much sugar, salt, and/or fat, and has many artificial ingredients.
- The more a food is processed, the less healthy it is.
- Food companies try to trick kids (and their families) into thinking highly-processed foods are healthy.
- Don't be fooled by packaging with super-heroes, exaggerated claims, and asterisks *(the little star that leads to information companies don't want you to see).
- Read labels closely, and try not to eat foods that have lots of ingredients you can't pronounce.
- Do your best to snack on real foods that you make yourself.

SESSION 2

- Companies spend a fortune marketing sodas to young people.
- Athletes don't become great by drinking soda (even though it looks that way in the commercials).
- Soda slows you down!
- Sugar gives you a big burst of energy but then makes you crash.
- When you drink sugar, your brain can't tell you that you're getting full.
- Sugar-sweetened beverages are the largest contributor to childhood obesity in the USA.
- In addition to weight gain, too much sugar can cause diabetes and tooth decay.
- Eating or drinking too much sugar makes it difficult to concentrate at school.
- There's a difference between natural sugars (found in fruits and vegetables) and added sugar. Natural sugar is combined with fiber and nutrients your body needs. Added sugars have ZERO benefit.

- Food with zero benefits (no nutrients) are called **EMPTY CALORIES**.
- A calorie is a measurement of energy and a young person should consume 1600 to 1800 calories a day.
- A Super Big Gulp has 572 calories—more than a meal should have!
- It's OK to have a sugar-sweetened beverage sometimes, but think of it as a dessert, not a drink.
- It's great to hydrate with water.

SESSION 3

- A healthy breakfast is essential to a great day!
- A winning breakfast includes protein, whole grains, fiber, and not too much added sugar.
- Whole grains are different than refined grains—they are more nutritious and give you energy for longer.
- You need at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Try to eat a wide variety of colors...eat a rainbow!
- MyPlate can help you create balanced meals.

SESSION 4

- Fast food should be a treat, not a regular part of our diet.
- Fast food restaurants spend billions of dollars trying to convince young people to eat unhealthy food.
- Fast food restaurants use portion distortion—the amount of food served is much more than you need in a meal.
- Fast food is high in calories, salt, and the harmful kind of fat.
- A small amount of the right kind of fat is good for our bodies, but too much of the wrong kinds of fat will lead to heart disease.
- One McDonalds meal has more fat than children should eat in an entire day!
- If you do go to a fast food restaurant, make smart choices—drink water, don't order a large size of anything, and try fresh fruit or veggies if available.

SESSION 5

- Too much salt, or sodium, can be hard on our health.
- Salt makes our body hold on to water, which puts extra pressure on our heart and can cause high blood pressure.
- Try to choose products that are low-sodium.
- Herbs and spices are a great way to flavor food instead of using too much salt.
- Eating home-cooked foods is a smart way to limit salt in your diet.
- Have fun making foods at home!

PHILOSOPHY OF FOOD EDUCATION

Food Explorers was created to approach food education in a fun, interactive, playful way that empowers children. Teaching people about nutrition and what they “should eat” can be really boring and even shameful. It is important for facilitators to not be preachy and patronizing. Avoid phrases such as “this type of food is bad for you” and “you shouldn’t try to eat this type of food.” It is more helpful to say “this is a sometimes food...it’s ok to eat it occasionally, but be thoughtful about it.” Be sensitive to children’s situations, and remember that they aren’t the main decision makers when it comes to purchasing and providing food. Food Explorers should give children the knowledge and capacity to make informed choices when they can. And most of all, Food Explorers should teach children that healthy food can be delicious and fun!

TIPS FOR TEACHING

- Make learning fun, interactive, and memorable
- Be empowering, not discouraging
- Emphasize key messages
- Try not to be preachy
- Avoid phrases like “that food is bad for you” and “you shouldn’t eat that type of food”
- Use phrases like “that is a sometimes food”
- Inspire children to become informed eaters
- Recognize and respect children’s limited choices of food
- Give students strategies and skills for making smarter choices when they can

CRITERIA FOR FOOD EXPLORERS COURSE

- Partner with an after-school program
- Ten to fifteen students enrolled
- Students in 4th or 5th grade, 10 and 11 year-olds. Students younger than 10 have a difficult time focusing and grasping the complex concepts taught in Food Explorers. Students much older than 11 are more set in their food preferences and are not as eager to try new foods. Ten and eleven-year-olds are the prime target of Food Explorers.
- One facilitator and two additional assistants to run the course
- One point person at the partner organization to coordinate details with the students
- Each session lasts for 75 to 90 minutes.
- The course does not need to be held in a kitchen, but you will need a sink. A stove and oven would be useful, but not necessary (Fit4Kids has transportable appliances).
- You will need a space large enough to have discussions, investigation activities, and cooking. There should be chairs for all students and multiple tables.
- Food Explorers can be taught once a week for five weeks or everyday for a week.

COSTS TO RUN THE COURSE

The food for each session is approximately \$50. An entire Food Explorers course can therefore be done for \$250. The food costs can be less if using simpler recipes. And the sessions can also be done without any cooking at all.

RECIPES

Food Explorers was first designed during the winter and the chosen recipes reflect that. But feel free to choose recipes that meet the needs and taste buds of your specific group of students. There are a range of recipes posted on the Food Explorers website, including simple or more complex recipes, along with recipes for warmer months of the year. And there are a host of other kid-friendly, healthy recipes online at:

- weelicious.com
- chopchopmag.org
- superhealthykids.com
- myplate.gov
- jamieoliver.com/us/foundation/jamies-food-revolution/recipes
- chefannfoundation.org/for-parents/home-recipes/

GUIDELINES FOR CHOOSING INGREDIENTS

- As much as possible, buy food items that students and their family will be familiar with—generics, store brand, etc.
- Try not to buy foods that are inaccessible to students and their families—organic, free range, etc.
- It is ok to occasionally highlight a new type of food to stretch students’ culinary imagination and taste buds!

SESSION FORMAT

Each Food Explorers session has 3 main components:

DISCUSSION



INVESTIGATION



COOKING



The Session Guide for each session can be found online at: grfit4kids.org/what-we-do/food-explorers/

Timing breakdown for a 90 minute Food Explorers session:

- Discussion: 15 minutes
- Investigation: 25 minutes
- Cooking, eating, and wrap up: 50 minutes

AGENDA:

- Fill out nametags and take attendance
- Welcome
- Review what students learned in last session and ask about their exploration at home.
- Discussion
- Investigation
- Cooking
- Always come back together at the end of the session to taste the foods
- Discuss what they learned and review the key messages
- Exploration at home: Give students assignments to explore at home

SETTING UP FOR EACH SESSION

Put chairs in a circle for discussion (keeps children away from distractions).

Have three different tables for investigations activities (one for each group).

Set up tables for cooking (the more space the better).

Each cooking station should have:

- A copy of the recipe for each student
- All of the ingredients needed to make the recipe
- All of the equipment needed to make the recipe
- Waste bin
- Dirty dishes bin
- Roll of paper towels
- Dish towel

Have an adult with each group to supervise.

Have something to keep students focused during down time. If there is no more cooking or cleaning up to do, students can enjoy looking at food games, cookbooks, food books, or watching food-related videos.

BEFORE THE FIRST SESSION:

- Set the dates and times for all five sessions of Food Explorers.
- Send home a permission slip to all students' parents which includes information about any allergies as well as permission to take photos during the course (found on the Food Explorers website at the end of the facilitator's guide).
- Make an attendance roll with all the students' names.

TIME COMMITMENT TO RUN THE COURSE

For each session, an average amount of time required:

- 30 minutes reviewing materials and deciding on recipe
- 30 minutes of shopping for food
- 30 minutes of set up time in the classroom
- 90 minute session
- 30 minutes of clean up time afterwards

Total = 3.5 hours per session

FOOD EXPLORERS BIN CONTENTS

For each class, bring the:

- Admin bin
- Cleaning products bin
- Paper/plastic products bin
- Bin for the specific session

A D M I N I S T R A T I V E B I N

- Name tags
- Sharpies (for nametags)
- Pens
- Blank paper
- Clip boards
- Magnifying glasses
- Markers (for MyPlate activity)
- Scissors
- DVDs
- Tape
- Promotional material
- Cookbooks, Food Book, Food Card Games

C L E A N I N G P R O D U C T S B I N :

- Disinfectant wipes (to wipe down surfaces)
- Disinfectant multi-purpose cleaning spray
- Paper towels
- Wipes
- Hand soap
- Dish soap
- Garbage bags

PAPER / PLASTIC PRODUCTS BIN:

- Plates (big and small)
- Drinking cups
- Sample cups
- Napkins
- Forks, knives, spoons
- Table clothes
- Zip lock bags (big and small)
- Tinfoil
- Take-away containers



SESSION # 1 BIN

- Fruit by the Foot
- Fruit snacks
- Doritos, Cheetos, Fritos, Lays potato chips
- Granola bars and other highly-processed snacks
- Processed food cards



SESSION # 2 BIN

- 10 to 15 sugar-sweetened beverages: Coke, Mountain Dew, Fanta, Vitamin Water, Gatorade, orange juice, apple juice, chocolate milk, etc.
- Super Big Gulp, Big Gulp, and Gulp cups
- Granulated sugar
- Snickers candy bars
- Plastic cups
- Teaspoons for measuring
- Rethink Your Drink cards
- Sugar Shocker cards
- Sugar calculation sheets
- Rev Your Bev posters
- 95210 handouts



SESSION # 3 BIN

- Unhealthy breakfast options such as Coco Puffs, Fruit Loops, Lucky Charms, and Trix cereals, donuts and poptarts



SESSION # 4 BIN

- 3 sets of McDonald meals—one for each group of students
- Each set contains the packaging of 1 Big Mac, 1 large fries, 1 large chocolate shake
- Other fast food packaging, toys, and crowns
- Portion Distortion cards

BASIC RULES OF COOKING

- Wash your hands right before you start.
- Make sure your work space is clean.
- Read through the entire recipe first.
- Make sure you have all the ingredients.
- Make sure you have all the correct equipment.
- Follow directions carefully.
- Ask an adult if you don't understand something.
- Don't rush.
- No running.
- Be careful—equipment can be dangerous.
- Only use white plastic knives (metal knives are for teachers only).
- Put dirty items in bins for washing.
- Clean up messes right away.
- Have fun!