

# Food and Nutrition Lesson Plan: Grade 8

## Guide for Educators



Lessons include:

[Planning for Meals Away from Home](#)

Developed by AHS, Nutrition Services in consultation with the Body Image Research Lab at the University of Calgary's Werklund School of Education

## Overview

This lesson addresses W-8.5 of the Grade 8 [Health and Life Skills Curriculum](#) and was developed using [age-appropriate food and nutrition literacy guidance](#).

Students will:

- Determine why eating a variety of foods found on Canada's food guide supports nutritional health and helps them to feel full and satisfied.
- Identify the benefits of planning ahead to bring food from home and explain why it is one of the best strategies to ensure they are eating a variety of foods.
- Plan and design a 1-week menu of balanced lunches and snacks.



**Teaching considerations:** To support students in developing healthy eating patterns, approach food and nutrition education in a way that promotes a [healthy relationship with food](#), recognizes that students may have [varying access to food](#), and [considers potential biases](#) toward food and eating practices.

## Learning Outcome:

W-8.5 Evaluate personal food choices and identify strategies to maintain optimal nutrition when eating away from home.

## Teacher Background

One of the best ways to maintain healthy eating habits is to plan meals and snacks in advance, especially when away from home. For students in grade 8, this could be packing food for school lunches, after school snacks, tournaments, or other activities away from home.





To optimize nutrition, encourage students to use the types of foods and proportions outlined in Canada's food guide. This helps ensure a balanced and varied eating pattern. Since vegetables and fruit make up the largest portion of Canada's food guide plate, they should be a focus. Fresh, frozen, and canned options are all nutritious choices to enjoy throughout the day.

## Nutrition Services

Encourage students to eat enough to support their energy needs and enjoy a variety of foods. Nutrients like fibre, protein, and fat digest slowly and can help students feel satisfied (full) after eating.

Most students this age will plan lunches and snacks around the foods that have been made available to them, either at home or at school. They will need to consider their schedule, what foods they like, what appliances are available for reheating food, and how they will keep their food at temperatures for food safety and quality.

## Additional Sources of Background Information

-  [Plan what you eat](#) (Health Canada)  
Information and tips on menu planning from Canada's food guide.
-  [Make healthy meals with Canada's food guide plate](#) (Health Canada)  
Includes videos about using Canada's food guide to plan snacks and meals.
-  [Snack ideas](#) (AHS Nutrition Services)  
Pictorial handout of snack ideas.
-  [Nutrients in food](#) (Health Canada)  
Information about the nutrients in food. Please note that any discussion of nutrients should be framed around the positive benefits provided by eating a variety of foods.

## Lesson: Planning for Meals Away from Home

### Estimated Time

The lecture portion and discussion take approximately 30-40 minutes, in addition to a multi-class project and teach back by students.

### Required Materials

- Interactive whiteboard or projector
- [Grade 8 Planning for Meals Away from Home presentation](#)
- [Grade 8 Planning for Meals Away from Home presentation \(educator version with notes\)](#)
- [Eating Away from Home Menu Planning Assignment - Student Package](#)

### Instructions

1. Use the [presentation](#) to introduce the benefits of planning for eating away from home. The [educator version with notes](#) has teaching points and suggested answers for discussion questions.

There are questions for engagement throughout the presentation. Three of the discussion questions and sample answers are listed below. You may choose to have students come up with answers via a think-pair-share model or have an open class discussion.

**Ask:** Why do we need to eat a variety of food? (Slides 6 & 7)

#### Sample Answers:

- Don't get bored with eating the same thing
- Help get all the different nutrients our body needs to function
- Experiment with different foods and flavours. There are 5 different basic tastes, including sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and savory (umami). Eating a variety of foods can help you try different tastes and textures and expand your food preferences.
- Getting too much or too little of a nutrient is not good for our body. It can impact how we feel and our health.

**Ask:** Why plan ahead for meals and snacks? (Slides 15 & 16)

#### Sample Answers:

- **Fueled for the day:** Avoid midday slumps, loss of concentration during your afternoon test, or low energy at your after-school activities by ensuring you have enough to eat.
- **May eat more variety:** When we plan ahead, we are more likely to eat a variety and more balanced meals/snacks (to help get the nutrients you need).
- **Have the foods you enjoy:** Planning ahead can help make sure that you have access to foods you like the taste and texture of and enjoy eating. This can also help reduce stress.
- **Help the environment:** Helps you use up food and limit food waste. Also, foods brought from home are likely to use less packaging.
- **Save money:** Buying meals and snacks away from home tends to be more expensive than bringing your own food.

**Ask:** What do you need to consider when planning lunches and snacks for yourself? (Slides 17 & 18)

### Sample Answers:

- **Availability:** What is generally available in your home or community? What is available when planning and what needs to be purchased if possible?
- **Schedule:** How much time do you have to prepare lunches and snacks? Can you set a reminder to yourself to make time? How much time do you have to eat? How many activities are planned into your day? Do you need to pack more food for some activities (e.g. sports)? Your schedule can influence how much and the types of food you pack for school and other activities.
- **Access to appliances:** Do you have access to a microwave, or do you need to keep food warm in a thermos? If you have access to a microwave, do you have time to heat up food during lunchtime? Do you need to bring cutlery?
- **Food likes:** What foods do you like or dislike? How does the food taste if it is not eaten right away? Does this affect whether you bring it or not?
- **Food safety:** How can you keep your food at a safe temperature? (ice packs, freeze your liquids (like water, a smoothie, or yogurt), pack in thermos, insulated lunch bag, etc.)

## 2. Introduce Assignment – Eating Away from Home Menu (Slides 19–22)

You can either print the [Eating Away from Home Menu Planning Assignment – Student Package](#) or upload it to your virtual teaching platform.

Please note that this assignment is developed around a fictional character. This is intentional. Having students track their personal eating habits is not recommended. Access to food varies and tracking personal eating habits may lead to some students becoming overly preoccupied with their food intake and/or contribute to feelings of shame relating to food purchasing decisions outside of the student's control.

**Scenario:** Jesse has after school activities 3 days this week. On the other days Jesse goes home to start on homework. Jesse needs to plan what foods to pack for the school day (lunch and 1-2 snacks), as well as an after-school snack.

### Assignment:

1. Describe Jesse (suggested length: 1–2 paragraphs).
  - Who do you imagine Jesse to be? Make Jesse whoever you would like them to be.
  - What types of activities are they involved in? (examples might include track and field, dance, drama, band, robotics)
  - List 1 dietary consideration that Jesse has (examples might include food allergy, vegetarian, cultural and/or religious practices, likes/dislikes).
  - Research what is needed for this dietary consideration and make a few notes about it. (examples might include a list of foods they cannot eat or a list of foods they need to make sure they eat)
  - How you will plan meals and snacks around it? (In other words, how will you still offer a variety of vegetables/fruit, protein foods, and whole grain foods?)
2. Explain why Jesse wants to plan ahead (suggested length: 1 paragraph).

Using examples shared in the classroom or ideas you come up with on your own, explain the benefits of planning ahead for Jesse. Examples may include, fueling for their activity, eating more variety, saving money, having foods you like, feeling good, etc. Please expand on these reasons to connect back to what we know about Jesse.
3. Create a menu plan. Use the template in the [student package](#) to plan a lunch, 1-2 snacks for during the school day, and 1 after school snack for a 5-day school week.

### Tips:

- Use Canada's food guide as a guide for planning. A snack can include 1 or more foods from the guide. It is best if the general pattern of eating over the day represents the proportions modelled on the plate ( $\frac{1}{2}$  vegetables and fruits,  $\frac{1}{4}$  protein foods,  $\frac{1}{4}$  whole grain foods), including when planning snacks.
- Include details about the main foods in your meals and snacks. For example, instead of writing "sandwich," write "tuna sandwich with mayonnaise, lettuce and tomato on a bun, an apple, and strawberry yogurt.
- Think about which foods need to stay hot or cold and how best to pack them (examples might include using a thermos or an ice pack). Make note of this on your menu.

## Nutrition Services

4. Write a grocery list (use template). List the foods Jesse will need for the upcoming week based on your menu.
5. Submit your work. Submit steps 1 and 2 in a typed write up, along with your menu and grocery list.

Optional (1 page). Use print media or a digital program to create a 1-page poster encouraging fellow students to plan ahead and pack a variety of foods for school and activities. Focus your information on 1 of the key messages you learned during this unit.

## Assessment

- Participation in group discussion (recall previously learned material about Canada's food guide, identify reasons and considerations for planning for eating away from home).
- Completion of each element of menu planning assignment
  - Find information about dietary consideration
  - Recall class lecture material about planning meals and snacks and apply it to a new scenario
  - Plan a menu and grocery list

