



# Positive Food Environments Toolkit

-----

A Guide for Creating Welcoming and Inclusive Spaces

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
Introduction	3
How-to Use This Guide	5
Why are Positive Food Environments Important?	6
Nourish Nova Scotia's Statement on Healthy Eating	8
 <b>Foundational Learning</b>	 <b>9</b>
What is Diet Culture?	11
Positive Body Image	12
Neutral Food Language	13
The Division of Responsibility	14
Food & Culture	15
Food Sovereignty	16
 <b>Toolkit for Dialogue and Teaching</b>	 <b>18</b>
How We Talk About Food	19
Opportunities for Dialogue	20
Interrupting Negative Dialogue	21
Teaching About Food and Nutrition	28

Click on our *flork* icon to  
come back to this page!



# Introduction

## Why We Created this Toolkit

We all want to cultivate and nurture young peoples' positive relationships with food and their bodies, but there's so much noise out there with diet culture as well as our own biases, it's hard to know where to start. That's why we created this toolkit! It's filled with activities and information to help you navigate this complex topic, increasing your confidence and ultimately impacting the children and youth you care about. As you use this guide, you may find that difficult emotions arise, and we encourage you to seek the support you need to navigate these.

When sharing these activities and concepts with young people, it's ok to acknowledge that you are learning alongside them. Most adults will need to unlearn harmful narratives as they learn how to foster positive food environments, and it's important to have a growth mindset.

### Goals of the Toolkit

- Support adults to create environments that support young people to develop a positive relationship with food and their bodies.
- Provide practical examples and activities to illustrate and explore nuanced concepts about food.
- Encourage adults to explore their own relationship with food and their bodies, learning alongside the young people they serve.

### How it was developed

This resource was developed by Nourish Nova Scotia staff members Emily Stevens, RD, and Lindsay Corbin BSc, MAHN, whose background in public health nutrition helped ensure the content throughout is evidence-based. This resource will continue to evolve as evidence and best practices evolve, and we welcome your [feedback](#) to help us improve it further.

**Last updated** June 4, 2025







## What do we mean when we say “Positive Food Environment”?

Positive food environments are supportive and inclusive spaces where young people can build positive relationships with food and their bodies.

This means fostering an environment where learning about food and nutrition is guided by curiosity, exploration, and a non-judgmental attitude. It also involves promoting self-respect and respect for others, including their food preferences, through thoughtful language and meaningful, engaging activities.

Positive food environments also celebrate the deep connections between food, culture, tradition, and identity, encouraging young people to share and experience food in ways that honor their backgrounds and those of others.

## Who this Toolkit is for

This toolkit has been designed for:

- Teachers
  - Educators
  - School Support Staff
  - Community Program Facilitators
- and anyone else who is working with youth!







# How to use this Toolkit

## Step 1: Foundational Learning

The Foundational Learning concepts are meant to serve as brief education that you can explore before diving into activities or dialogue around food and nutrition with the children and youth that you work with. This will allow you to be better prepared to approach these conversations and topics through the lens of creating positive environments.

## Step 2: Guiding Dialogue

How we talk about food is important! Having conversations with young people that open dialogue is a key component of creating welcoming and positive food environments, and nurturing positive relationships with food and bodies.

## Step 3: Teaching about Food and Nutrition

Teaching about food and nutrition can be an important part of food programs or classroom education.

We encourage anyone who is teaching about these concepts to do so in a way that is age-appropriate and promotes positive food environments. That's why we have left this as the final part of our toolkit. We hope that you will be able to read through the foundational learning and open dialogue with your youth prior to diving into education.

**Are you a teacher who has questions related to teaching about food and nutrition?** Contact your [Health Promoting Schools](#) or [Healthy School Communities](#) team for guidance.

**Are you a community organization looking to explore these concepts with youth in your programs?** We are happy to help! [Contact Nourish Nova Scotia](#) for support.



# Why are Positive Food Environments Important?

## Understanding the Vulnerability and Risks

These student profiles were developed by Zoë Bisbing from My Body Positive Home. Although these names and images are fictional, they do represent a real risk and vulnerability in classrooms or program spaces, especially where topics such as health, food, and nutrition are being discussed.



### Meet Lea

Lea's friend group at school recently started eating only raw vegetables for lunch to "be healthy". They google calorie counts together and her best friend told her that purging is a great way to lose weight. Emerging core belief: "The thinner I am, the better and more accepted I am"



### Meet Aiden

Aiden is neurodivergent. He is autistic and has always had sensory differences. He's been called a "picky-eater" his whole life and depends on the "same foods", specifically chicken nuggets, pizza, and ritz crackers to get his energy needs met. He also struggles socially. Emerging core belief: "I am weird and don't belong"

Source: Zoë Bisbing, LCSW My Body Positive Home: <https://www.bodypositivehome.com>





### Meet Rosa

Rosa lives with her single mom who works two jobs and relies on fast food and shelf-stable processed and ultra-processed foods to keep her fed. Rosa has a lot of internalized class stigma. Emerging core belief: “I am less than”



### Meet Charlotte

Charlotte has always been a healthy kid at the 97th percentile for weight. She has an active lifestyle and eats a well-rounded diet. Recently, her pediatrician informed her that she is overweight. Emerging core belief: “There is something wrong with my body”



### Meet Sam

On the outside, Sam is a kind and respectful kid who is a pleasure to teach. On the inside, he is extremely hard on himself and has perfectionist and OCD tendencies. He recently started a 100 jumping jacks ritual after anytime he eats. Emerging core belief: “When I control my body, I feel better”

Source: Zoë Bisbing, LCSW My Body Positive Home: <https://www.bodypositivehome.com>





# Supporting Healthy Relationships with Food and our Bodies

## Nourish Nova Scotia's Statement on Healthy Eating

Healthy\* eating involves a variety of foods that make us feel good and give us energy to do the things we love. There are no good or bad foods. Healthy eating includes sharing food experiences with others. Healthy foods nourish our body, mind, and spirit.

We encourage you to reflect on the statement above and sit with any feelings it might bring up. We all have different experiences with food and eating. These experiences often cause us to have biases that we may or may not be aware of. It is essential that as trusted adults teaching about food to children and youth, that we recognize, acknowledge, and reflect on our own biases so that we can foster positive relationships and associations with food and bodies to the young people we work with.



Evaluate your Biases: Toolkit for Educators

We recognize that the term “healthy” in relation to food means something different to every individual and group. We provide this statement not to define it for you, but rather to clarify to our audience what we mean when we use the term, and keep it standard across our content.

We understand that not everyone has access to foods they enjoy and consider healthy. We also recognize the term healthy is often used to oppress and stigmatize people, in particular those living in larger bodies, those with disabilities, those with lower-income, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour. As we listen and learn from a widening variety of groups who have faced health or body-related oppression, this statement will evolve.





# Foundational Learning

The following section of the Positive Food Environment Toolkit is “Foundational Learning”

The Foundational Learning concepts are meant to serve as brief education that you can explore before diving into activities or dialogue around food and nutrition with the children and youth that you work with.

The concepts on the following pages are not the only concepts that can be applied to creating positive food environments. We have chosen these as a starting point and introduction, but encourage you to remain curious and deepen your learning. As evidence and information evolves, this resource will continue to be updated.

# Foundational Learning

## For Creating Positive Food Environments: Exploring Concepts

The following pages are meant to serve as brief education pieces that speak to both the “why” and the “how” to creating welcoming spaces and positive food environments for children and youth.

We will explore:

- Diet Culture & Positive Body Image
- Neutral Food Language
- The Division of Responsibility
- Cultural Foods & Food Sovereignty





### What is Diet Culture?

Our society is influenced by diet culture. Food and nutrition are complex topics and there's a great deal of misinformation out there, which can make it difficult for people to develop a positive relationship with food & their bodies.

**"Diet culture refers to a set of ever-changing myths about food and bodies, promoting the idea that body weight automatically equates to health status and that foods can be categorised as 'good' or 'bad'."**  
(Jovanovski & Jaeger, 2022)

In addition to labeling and demonizing certain foods, diet culture often emphasizes calorie restriction and normalizes negative self-talk. Diet culture messages condition people to believe that not only does thinness and dieting equate to health, but that the pursuit of health makes one person morally superior to another. (Harrison, 2019; Hogan & Strasburger, 2008; Wiseman et al., 2005) Needless to say, diet culture does not support a positive relationship with food and body.

### Putting it into Practice

It may seem overwhelming to think about how you could counter the negative influence of diet culture on the young people you work with, but **do not underestimate the impact you can have**, especially when you enlist one or more colleagues to work on this with you!

The resources in this guide have been curated to avoid the diet culture trap, but as you put them into practice, you may find diet culture still shows up in the conversation. Now what?! **Take everyone on the journey with you.** Share what you are learning in an age-appropriate way.



When teaching young children about food, we encourage educators to focus on food exploration rather than complex nutrition-related concepts. Like learning to read or do math, learning to eat a variety of nutritious foods is a process that each child undertakes at their own pace. Children are more likely to eat foods they enjoy and foods that are familiar to them. Building food skills and creating positive experiences that familiarize children with a variety of foods is one of the best ways to support them to feel good about eating and learn to enjoy more nutritious foods over time.

### Positive Body Image

## What does Positive Body Image mean?

Positive body image can be defined as a capacity to appreciate the unique features of the body, including but not limited to its appearance, to accept and admire aspects of appearance that deviate from cultural ideals, to be comfortable and safe in the body, and to interact with the environment in ways that promote these characteristics and are protective against appearance pressures (Tylka and Wood-Barcalow, 2015).



Promoting Positive Body Image:  
A Resource for Educators

Every BODY is welcome!



# What is Neutral Food Language?

How we talk about food & bodies matters and messages about food are all around us. Using neutral language helps students feel safe exploring a variety of foods in an environment that is free of judgement by removing the moral value often placed onto foods and bodies. The use of neutral language around food and bodies supports positive food environments.

## Neutral food language can look like:

- Describing a food by **how it looks**: for instance, its colour, size, or shape.
- Describing a food by **how it smells** or tastes: for instance, sweet, sour, or spicy.
- Describing a food by **its texture**: for instance, smooth, soft, chewy.
- Describing **how a fruit or vegetable grows**.
- Stating the **name of the food**.



All Foods Can Fit: A Food Neutrality Resource for Educators

## Ways to Explore

Ask learners if they are there any cultural dishes or traditions in their family where they use and enjoy apples?

Guide students through a mindfulness taste testing experience.



Look

Colour, Shape, Size



Feel

Texture, Firmness



Smell

Noticeable scent



Taste

Sweetness, Bitterness etc.

## Food and Physical Activity

It's important to discuss food without tying it to physical activity or body weight – talk about the values of food for providing energy, nourishing bodies, and celebrating culture.





## The Division of Responsibility

### What is The Division of Responsibility?

Developed by Ellyn Satter, the Division of Responsibility is an evidence-based approach that emphasizes what role adults have during mealtimes and what role children have during mealtimes. The Division of Responsibility can be applied to group and school environments too and can help to foster positive food environments and autonomy.

#### Adults Decide

- When to eat
- Where to eat
- What to offer\*

#### Students Decide

- How much to eat
- To eat or not eat

\*Although it is ultimately your decision, as the adult, to decide what to offer, children and youth appreciate being engaged in the planning process! We would encourage you to engage them in the planning process for your programs.



#### Resource

Learn More About The Division of Responsibility

Teaching Canada's Food Guide: Roles around Food & Eating



#### Activity

Kid Food Explorers:  
My Tummy Feels Activity

An activity by Kid Food Explorers that allows children to recognize and get in touch with their hunger cues.



### A Note About Neurodiversity

It's important to note that many of these concepts were developed with a neurotypical lens, therefore it is not realistic to expect that implementing these concepts will have the same results for all children (i.e. eating more fruits and vegetables, or a wider variety of foods).

Neurodivergent children & youth experience feeding difficulties and eating disorders at higher rates compared to their neurotypical peers. There are many reasons for this, including executive functioning differences, sensory processing differences, common medications as well as experiences of marginalization and trauma from not fitting into social norms.

We are committed to learning more about how to support neurodivergent young people and we look forward to developing resources to share in this toolkit in the future



## The Division of Responsibility

### What is Responsive Feeding?

The Responsive Feeding approach encourages children's autonomy with eating and being responsive to their unique physiological and developmental needs. It requires adults to recognize and respond to children's hunger and fullness cues, and to support the child to continue to do this for themselves as they grow.



Visit the Celebrate Feeding Website for more information and resources on Responsive Feeding.

### Connecting Food and Culture

Food is an essential part of **all cultures**. It connects us to our families and the places we come from, as well as to our beliefs, cultural customs, and family traditions. For many people, foods associated with our culture and heritage contribute to our unique identities and a sense of belonging in family and community.

When young people have an opportunity to learn about and eat these foods together, it can invite discussion around different foods, where they come from, and how they may be culturally significant within different communities. Ultimately, creating new avenues to enjoy and celebrate diverse food cultures while fostering connections with peers and community.

**Cultural foods can be explored through a range of activities, such as:**

Growing projects such as gardens, greenhouses, or food forests are an excellent way for young people to experiment with growing and tasting unique foods that carry cultural significance for different groups. These initiatives also create opportunities for young people to connect to the natural world and draw important links between our food and the vital resources needed to grow it.

Exploring different food cultures by preparing a meal or eating together can invite discussion around different foods, where they come from, and how they may be culturally significant within different communities.



## Food Sovereignty

Food Sovereignty is defined as the right of peoples to nutritious and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. (Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty, 2007). While this is important for all people, it is especially important to consider for equity –deserving communities whose food sovereignty has been threatened. In Mi'kma'ki, this includes Mi'kmaq people as well as Black/African Nova Scotians.

Food Sovereignty is rooted in seven principles that help to ground thinking and practice around food systems in human rights and self-determination - by working towards a more just, sustainable, and democratic food system.

## The 7 Pillars of Food Sovereignty

with Child-Friendly Adaptations by Dr. Michelle Superle

1

### Focuses on Food for People

**Child friendly:** Everyone needs to be able to get healthy food. This is the most important thing to remember when laws are made. Food is more than just something to buy and sell in stores. It is a human right that keeps our bodies alive and connects us with our community.

2

### Builds Knowledge and Skills

**Child friendly:** The old ways our ancestors grew food were good ways.

3

### Works with Nature

**Child friendly:** Good ways of growing food make the earth healthy.

4

### Values Food Providers

**Child friendly:** Farmers and farm workers must earn enough money to take good care of themselves and their families. Good ways of growing food include ways to make sure that everybody who helps get food into our bellies is treated well.





5

## Localizes Food Systems

**Child friendly:** The best places to get our food are places close to where we live. Big companies and far away companies should not be in charge of our food.

6

## Puts Control Locally

**Child friendly:** The people who grow our food near where we live should make the rules about that food.

7

## Food is Sacred

**Child friendly:** Food is a precious gift from the earth. We must not waste it. Food should not be a product that is bought and sold.

### Mi'kmaw Food Culture

Mi'kmaq have lived in this territory since time immemorial, fostering a deep connection to land and place. This connection to land is central to Mi'kmaw food culture, shaping concepts in the Mi'kmaw language such as "Netukulimk". Similar to the concept of "sustainability", Netlukulimk highlights the importance of a reciprocal relationship to the land and the sources of food it provides. Applying this concept also means being guided by Mi'kmaw values and practices. Sharing and gifting food is an important part of these practices, including with Elders and community members, as well as with animals and the land. For example, it's taught that when fishing katew (eel), the first catch should be left as an offering, prioritizing animals who also use it as an important source of food.

Cultural food practices, connection to land, and the language that carries many concepts such as netukulimk, have been severely impacted by colonization. Mi'kmaq continue to build back what has been lost by reclaiming the language, healing, and re-building and remembering food culture.



**Resource**

See Nourish Nova Scotia:  
Mi'kmaq History Month Resource List  
For further learning.





# Toolkit for Dialogue & Teaching

The following section of the Positive Food Environment Toolkit is our “Toolkit for Dialogue and Teaching”.

This portion of the guide is meant to be used to help you guide conversations, activities, and programs to promote positive food environments amongst the youth that you serve.

This section includes:

## **How We Talk About Food:**

- Conversation guides to help you lead dialogue with the youth you serve.
- Tips and examples on how you can interrupt potentially harmful dialogue in your classroom or program spaces.

## **Teaching About Food and Nutrition:**

- An overview of how nutrition education is a key component of food literacy.
- Age appropriate activities and key topics to use when teaching about food and nutrition.



# How We Talk About Food

## Guiding Dialogue in your Environment

Messages about food are all around us. We see messages and advertisements online telling us what is “healthy” and “unhealthy” or what is acceptable and what is not. Remember that “healthy” means different things to different people and that food is a part of who we are. The foods we eat are tied to our memories and experiences. Everybody eats different foods.

Whenever we are gathering children and youth together, guiding dialogue is essential to create positive, welcoming, and inclusive spaces where we come together to learn, explore, and connect over food. As the trusted adult, you play an important role in creating an environment where students can develop positive relationships with food and their bodies.

**Remember that negative comments made with good intent are still negative, so it is important to be conscious of what we say to children and youth in our programs.**







# Opportunities for Dialogue

## A Conversation Guide



### A Guide for Starting Conversations and Opening Dialogue

#### How to Use this Conversation Guide

We've developed a series of conversation guides with prompts designed to spark meaningful interactions around our healthy eating statement and its related concepts. These guides create opportunities for dialogue with yourself, your peers, and the youth you work with.

These guides are ideal for group and classroom settings and offer engaging ways for youth to explore connections between food, memories, culture, and feelings to help build positive associations with food.

We encourage you to use these guides as a starting point for conversation, while remaining open and responsive to where the youth you work with take the discussion.







# 1. Making the Connection Between Food & Energy

“Healthy Eating Involves a Variety of Foods that Make us Feel Good and Give Us Energy”

We need energy to do all of the awesome things we love, like running, dancing, thinking, laughing, and just being ourselves. That energy comes from the food we eat. Different types of food give us different types of fuel - fruits, vegetables, grains, and even snacks like chocolate can play a role in keeping us feeling energized, focused, and feeling good physically and emotionally. This is an important conversation to have with youth to highlight the connection between the foods we eat and how we feel.

To guide this conversation, you will ask students about what feeling good feels like to them to make connections to their body and how it feels.

## Ask Youth:

“How do you feel when you feel your best?”

“What does feeling good mean to you?”

“How can food give us energy? What is something you love to do that you need energy for?”

## Listen for:

**Connections to emotions:** For instance, some youth may share that they feel their best when they're happy, joyful, or calm, and that they don't feel as good when they're sad, angry, or frustrated. This is a great opportunity to talk about how emotions are a normal part of being human, and how “feeling good” can look different for everyone. It's also a chance to encourage youth to check in with their emotions and recognize how they're feeling, which is an important part of caring for both their minds and bodies.

**Connections to food and energy:** For instance, some youth might notice that it's harder to focus in class if they haven't had breakfast, or that they feel more energized for their favourite activities after eating a balanced meal. This is a great moment to talk about how food gives our bodies the energy we need to do all the amazing things we enjoy, like learning, playing, and being active. Remind youth that energy comes from all kinds of foods, and that eating a variety helps us feel our best throughout the day.





## 2. Removing the Food Hierarchy

### “There Are No Good or Bad Foods”

Removing hierarchy where foods are ranked above or below one another (i.e. good foods vs. bad foods) is a key component of developing positive relationships with food. This is an important conversation to have with youth, particularly before and during teaching more complex topics around nutrition.

To guide this conversation, you will ask students about the foods they love, the foods that make them feel happy, and what good food means to them.

#### Ask Youth:

“What does good food mean to you?”

“What is a food that you love?”

“What is a food that makes you feel happy?”

#### Listen for:

**Connections to positive food experiences:** For instance, some youth might describe “good food” as a grandparent’s homemade baked goods or a warm, comforting family meal. This is a great opportunity to highlight that “good food” can mean different things to different people. It’s not just about nutrition, it’s also about connection, comfort, culture, and memories. These personal experiences help shape our relationships with food in meaningful and unique ways.

**Youth who talk about foods that make them feel happy or joyful:** For instance, some youth may talk about good food being food that makes them feel happy or joyful and this is a good chance to explore the emotional side of eating. This is a great time to highlight that food isn’t just about fuelling our bodies and that it can also bring comfort, joy, and connection. It’s completely natural for certain foods to make us feel good, whether it’s a favourite snack, a celebratory meal, or something tied to a special memory. Recognizing these feelings helps young people build a more mindful and positive relationship with food.

**Youth who talk about “healthy food” as being good:** For instance, some youth may respond to this prompt by describing fruits and vegetables as being good because they’re good for us, or say something like treats like chocolate or candy aren’t. This is a great opportunity to gently explore these ideas and remind them that all foods can have a place in our lives. It’s helpful to talk about how different foods do different things for our bodies. Some give us long-lasting energy, some bring comfort or joy, and some do both! Encouraging youth to listen to their bodies and enjoy a variety of foods without fear or judgment can help them build a more positive, balanced relationship with food.





### 3. Highlighting Food as a Powerful Connector

#### “Healthy Eating Includes Sharing Food Experiences With Others”

Food plays a vital role in every culture. It connects us to our families, our roots, our beliefs, and the customs and traditions passed down through generations. For many, the foods tied to our cultural backgrounds help shape our identities and foster a strong sense of belonging within our families and communities. Maintaining these connections is especially important for younger generations.

To guide this conversation, invite youth to share the meals and traditions that are meaningful to their families, cultures, and communities. This discussion serves as a starting point for young people to explore and celebrate their cultural heritage and to recognize the deep connection between food and cultural identity.

#### Ask Youth:

“Can you share a story about a time you shared a meal with someone you cared about? What was the meal, and who was the person?”

“Can you think of a holiday or event from your culture where people gather around food? Or, a family tradition that includes food?”

#### Listen for:

**Connections to positive food experiences:** Encourage youth to reflect on a meaningful meal they shared with someone they care about. This is a great opportunity to ask what the meal was and what made it special. Remind them that food isn't just about nourishment; it also plays a powerful role in strengthening our relationships and creating lasting social connections.

**Connections to culture and tradition:** For instance, some youth may talk about a meal that's tied to a cultural holiday or tradition. These moments offer a meaningful opportunity to learn about the diverse cultures and customs within your group, and the special foods that are part of them. Remind students that food is a powerful link to our cultural roots, helping shape our identities and deepening our sense of belonging within our families and communities.



# Guiding Dialogue in your Environment

## Responding to Negative Food & Body Talk


We can't control what students say about food, but we can control how we respond. The way that we respond to negative food and body talk can protect our program spaces, ensuring that all children and youth continue to feel safe and supported, while building positive relationships and associations with food and their bodies.

See the following examples to use as a guide for how you might respond to certain comments.


### Example #1:

All food cultures use different spices, ingredients, and preparation/preservation methods that make food smell certain ways. Remind kids if they aren't familiar with the smell\* or appearance of food\*, they can ask respectfully about it or decide not to comment.

\*Some children may be sensitive to smells. Helping them avoid strong smells is an appropriate accommodation.



Yuck, that looks gross!



Ew, that smells bad!

### Possible Responses:

- Everyone eats different food!
- I think it smells good, tell me what you're eating!
- We don't make comments like that about food.







### Example #2:

Keep an eye out for kids who may not have brought a meal or snack and be mindful of the language you use. Don't make assumptions; someone may not have lunch for many reasons (religious fasting, access, forgot, etc.) Don't call attention to it; keep the conversation between you and the student. Remember: many food cultures do not follow a Westernized pattern of 3 meals a day.

Different food cultures have ways of bringing food to their mouths. Some students may need to ingest food in different ways for medical reasons.

Why didn't you bring your lunch today?

Stop eating with your hands!

### Possible Responses:

- Try it yourself!
- Did you know lots of people eat with their hands? We also eat sandwiches with our hands!
- We don't comment on how someone else eats.

### Example #3:

It can be challenging to balance a schedule with individual needs. Acknowledge that the student may not have a snack that day and respect individual hunger cues.

Remind students that judging the food someone eats as bad or good can hurt others and doesn't consider their health, culture, or the food they have access to. People eat a variety of foods for many valid reasons, like religion, ethics, and health.

You didn't eat a snack!

Don't you know that's bad for you?

### Possible Responses:

- They know their body best!
- There are no good foods or bad foods.
- We don't comment on how someone else eats.





# Food & Nutrition Education

## Approaching Nutrition Education with Youth

Teaching about food and nutrition can be a fun and rewarding experience for adults and young people, and learning about nutrition is a key aspect of developing **food literacy**.

Approaches to teaching children about food and nutrition have evolved over time and should be developmentally appropriate for different age groups. However, some strategies are effective across all ages. Key tips for success include:

- **Encouraging Exploration and Curiosity:** Create an educational environment that supports kids in exploring and trying new foods and nutrition concepts. This helps foster a positive and open attitude toward learning.
- **Involving Youth in the Learning Process:** Engage youth in choosing the topics they want to learn about. When young people have a say in their education, they're more likely to be interested and invested in the material.

## What is Food Literacy?

Food literacy is the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that empower individuals and communities to build meaningful relationships with food while actively engaging with and contributing to the broader food system. It involves understanding the interconnected environmental, social, cultural, economic, and political aspects of food and using this awareness to make decisions that support personal well-being and the sustainability of food systems across the lifespan (ICDEP, 2020).





Click on each age group for activity links to guide your lessons!

Start your journey through nutrition education here!

## Elementary Aged Youth

Focus on: Curiosity and Food Exploration

Ages 4-6

- Name different foods.
- Group different foods.
- Use senses to explore food.

Ages 7-8

- Exposure to growing food.
- Explore the importance of water.
- Learn about different cultures and food traditions.

Ages 9-11

- Identify different cooking methods.
- Explore foods that are part of different cultures and traditions.

Practice eating thoughtfully and making eating enjoyable.

## Junior High Aged Youth

Focus on: Critical Thinking and Nutrition Awareness

Ages 12-15

- Develop media literacy related to food advertising.
- Plan balanced snacks for sustained energy.
- Understand the social and cultural aspects of food.

## High School Aged Youth

Focus on: Independence and Nutrition for Well-Being

Ages 16-18

- Learn budget-friendly meal planning.
- Understand how food can influence energy, mood, and stress.
- Navigate food choices with autonomy and confidence.

## Post-Secondary and Beyond

Focus on: Lifelong Nutrition and Sustainable Eating

Ages 18+

- Learn practical grocery shopping and meal prep skills.
- Understand sustainability in food choices.
- Develop a critical approach to understanding nutrition messaging.



# Closing

Cultivating and nurturing young peoples' positive relationships with food is a part of our responsibility when facilitating programs, teaching, or gathering young people around food.

We recognize that as evidence and best practice for creating positive food experiences evolves, this guide will continue to evolve as well.

We hope that this guide has provided a starting point for your journey of learning and that you will be able to use these concepts and activities as part of your programs.

Our team is always willing to support your learning journey!

**Get in Touch with the Nourish Nova Scotia team**

**Concerned that a child or youth is dealing with disordered eating or do you just have questions?**

**Find out more:**

**National Eating Disorder Information Centre**

**Body Peace Canada**

**Eating Disorders Nova Scotia**

