

# 101 TIPS

FOR TEACHING  
**NUTRITION CONCEPTS**  
IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION



**A**s a physical education professional, you know that making healthy food choices and getting plenty of physical activity go hand in hand. You also are in the position to impart important nutrition information to your students. That's why SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators and Fuel Up to Play 60 have teamed up to provide these tips to help physical education teachers integrate nutrition concepts into their teaching routines. The tips that follow were suggested by Fuel Up to Play 60 supporters from around the country . . . PE teachers just like you!

## About Fuel Up to Play 60

Fuel Up to Play 60, launched by the National Dairy Council and the National Football League, in collaboration with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), encourages students to eat healthy, be active, and implement long-term, positive changes for themselves and their schools. Visit the Tools area of [FuelUptoPlay60.com](http://FuelUptoPlay60.com), where you'll find links to materials and organizations that can help you implement many of the tips included in this brochure. In addition, your local dairy council can provide assistance. Locate your dairy council at [FuelUptoPlay60.com/local-dairy-council-locator](http://FuelUptoPlay60.com/local-dairy-council-locator).



## What Are Nutritious Foods?

USDA's MyPlate illustrates the five food groups that are the building blocks for a healthy diet:

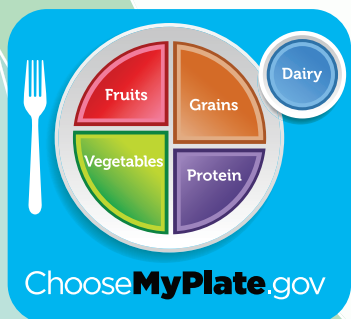
**Dairy:** Get your calcium-rich foods.

**Fruits:** Focus on fruits.

**Vegetables:** Vary your veggies.

**Grains:** Make at least half your grains whole.

**Protein Foods:** Go lean with protein.



## TIP #8

Talk about the importance of starting the day with breakfast! Find great breakfast tips at [FuelUptoPlay60.com](http://FuelUptoPlay60.com).



## Cook Up a Nutritious Classroom

1. Celebrate National Nutrition Month in March. Share with students the messages of nutrition, activity and fun. Visit [www.eatright.org/food/resources/national-nutrition-month](http://www.eatright.org/food/resources/national-nutrition-month) for ideas.
2. Hold a student health fair during National Nutrition Month. Have students work in groups of two to three to create interactive exhibits on various health topics. Invite the entire school to visit the fair.
3. Hang posters/pictures of nutritious foods around the gym.
4. Display a list of nutritious foods and their health benefits.
5. Display pictures of spices. Students might not know that many spices come from flowers and trees.

## Nutrition in Every Lesson

6. Post a Nutrition Word of the Week and use that word within your lessons.
7. Teach students about energy balance: the relationship between calories in and calories out.
8. Talk about the importance of starting the day with breakfast! Find great breakfast tips at [FuelUptoPlay60.com/playbooks/fuel-up-to-play-60-playbook](http://FuelUptoPlay60.com/playbooks/fuel-up-to-play-60-playbook).
9. Share a Healthy Eating Fact of the Day with each class. Visit [ChooseMyPlate.gov/food-fact-cards](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov/food-fact-cards) for great ideas!
10. Hold Wellness Wednesdays, when students engage in a variety of fitness activities and talk about fitness and nutrition habits and choices.

11. Set up a computer station in the gym where students can complete a five-minute lesson on food and nutrition.
12. Have students create a Fuel Up to Play 60 Pledge to encourage healthy eating and physical activity behaviors at <http://bit.ly/2MyudGk>.
13. Give students a nutrition question as they arrive for class. Discuss the question and answer(s) during the lesson closure.
14. Follow physical activity by working with students to determine what they can eat to replace their “spent fuel.”
15. Ask an exit/reflection question, such as “What healthy foods have you already eaten today?”
16. Use the five food groups for names when assigning students to groups.

## Team Up for Nutrition!

17. Pair good nutrition with physical activity by planting a school garden. Students will add physical activity to their day by tending to the garden, and the cafeteria can use the produce to make nutritious meals.
18. Work with your school’s food service professional to arrange a taste test of possible offerings in the cafeteria. Taste tests are a fun way to introduce students to new foods. Check out tips from [FuelUpToPlay60.com/playbooks/last-seasonsplays/a-community-taste-test-event](http://FuelUpToPlay60.com/playbooks/last-seasonsplays/a-community-taste-test-event).



19. Work with classroom teachers to have students create a healthy-eating “rap” that they can perform for their classmates.
20. Work with the school nutrition manager/foodservice director to post a Nutrition Fact of the Week in a visible location, such as in a classroom, the gym, or the cafeteria.
21. Host food-group “commercials” — created by students — during school-wide assemblies.

## TIP #21

Host food-group  
"commercials," created by  
students, during school-wide  
assemblies.



22. Invite school foodservice staff to speak to your classes about good nutrition.
23. Ask the foodservice staff to host a Healthy Foods Month. Encourage students to eat a certain number of servings of the featured food group and use a bulletin board in the gym to keep track of each class's participation. Reward those who are eating well with an extra physical activity opportunity.
24. Ask a local manager of a grocery store to come in to discuss the layout of grocery stores.
25. Take the class on a trip to a local farmers' market to learn about the process of growing healthy fruits and vegetables.
26. Ask the music teacher to help students write a song about healthy eating. Then, have students perform the song with a dance using PE equipment.
27. Invite a guest speaker — such as a registered dietitian — to speak to students about healthy eating choices. Following the presentation, invite the speaker to participate in physical activity with your students. Find a local registered dietitian involved in the Kids Eat Right program through the local dietetic association or at <https://www.eatright.org/find-an-expert>.
28. Invite a local farmer to visit your class to talk about the benefits of healthy eating, or, go on a virtual tour at <https://bit.ly/2gxR2fH>.

## Say 'Yes' to Good Nutrition

29. Focus on choosing nutrient-rich foods first — those that provide the most nutrients for the fewest calories.
30. Brainstorm and post a list of foods which are good sources of nutrients but that many students are lacking from their diets like calcium, potassium, fiber and vitamin D (nutrients of concern).
31. Use Tips 32–44 to remind students that half of their plate should be filled with fruits and vegetables.

## And More Vegetables to Your Day

- 32. Vary your veggies: Eat vegetables in a variety of rich colors.
- 33. Try something new! Introduce items that students might not be aware of — such as artichokes — to spark an interest in new foods.
- 34. Ask students to talk about a vegetable that is native to their country or heritage or that is a staple for their family.

## Focus on Fruits

- 35. Try starting every day by including fruit with breakfast.
- 36. Add important fiber to your body by eating a piece of fruit instead of drinking fruit juice. Whole fruit provides you with valuable fiber that juice often doesn't.
- 37. Roll the dice! The number you roll determines how many new fruits and vegetables you need to incorporate into your meals over the next few months! Remember: It takes 15–20 trials of a food before you will like it!



## Make Half of Your Grains Whole

- 38. Look for nutrition labels that list a whole grain as the first ingredient (e.g., whole wheat, whole oats).
- 39. Keep in mind that foods labeled as “multi-grain,” “100% wheat” or “stone ground” might not actually contain whole grains.

## Got Your Dairy Today?

- 40. Drink skim or 1% milk. You will get all of the good nutrients that milk provides, with less fat. Why milk? Learn more here: <https://bit.ly/3374x9H>.
- 41. Milk and many yogurts can help put more potassium and vitamin D into your diet. Choose low-fat or fat-free options.



## Use Variety to Your Advantage With Proteins

- 42. Snack on nuts and seeds, which are good sources of protein. Be sure to follow the recommended serving size, or the calories will add up quickly.
- 43. Remember that beans and peas, including chickpeas, are another source of protein. They're low in fat and provide fiber.
- 44. Add protein to carbohydrate-heavy snacks by eating them with dips, such as hummus and nut butter.



## Make Good Food Choices at School ... and at Home

- 45. Encourage students to reach for a nutritious snack that contains carbohydrates and protein after participating in vigorous physical activity. Examples include: yogurt, fruit with nuts or nut butter, whole-grain granola bars with low-fat or fat-free milk, and fruit/whole-grain granola parfait with low-fat or fat-free yogurt.
- 46. After vigorous exercise, rehydrate with water or low-fat/fat-free milk.
- 47. Discuss what makes a healthy breakfast or lunch and how those nutritious foods can help students feel better throughout the day.
- 48. Select a student from each class to tally up how many students ate fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein and low-fat and fat-free dairy foods during lunch.
- 49. Urge students to "rethink their drink." Water and low-fat/fat-free milk are excellent choices.

## Use MyPlate as a Teaching Tool

50. Display a MyPlate poster on the gym wall. Download it at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/myplate-posters>.
51. Organize groups by the colors and names of foods groups on MyPlate.
52. Use physical education equipment based on the MyPlate food-group colors.
53. Create a MyPlate bulletin board with fun facts and pictures.
54. Use MyPlate to talk about the school lunch menu for the day. Discuss as a class which food groups are included.
55. Use pictures of foods and drinks to help students build a healthy meal. Here's how: Have students run/skip/hop around the gym, accumulating pictures to develop a healthy meal. At the end of the activity, have students compare their "plates" to MyPlate.
56. Give each student a plastic plate with self-stick dots representing the different food groups. Laminate pictures of vegetables, fruits, lean proteins, grains and low-fat and fat-free dairy foods, and mark each picture with the correct-color dot for its food group. Spread the pictures around the gym floor, and have students work cooperatively to build a balanced plate.
57. Play MyPlate Football. Here's how: As students complete passes, reward them with food cutouts. Have students use the cut-outs to create well-balanced meals.
58. Allow students to earn "fitness bucks" as they complete fitness stations, and let them use the bucks to buy pieces of a MyPlate puzzle.
59. Challenge students at the end of a MyPlate game to answer questions about foods that are included in a balanced, nutritious meal.



## TIP #62

Teach students that milk and yogurt help maintain strong bones and contain nutrients that, in combination with exercise, help build strong muscles.



### Boost the Benefits of Eating Well

60. Remind students that breakfast is an important start to the day because it gives the body energy and helps wake up the brain for classroom activities.
61. Provide a list of vitamins and minerals that help build strong muscles and bones. Include foods that contain those vitamins and minerals. Challenge students to eat at least two foods from the list each day.
62. Teach students that milk and yogurt help maintain strong bones and contain nutrients that, in combination with exercise, help build strong muscles.
63. Write activities on the backs of pictures of nutritious foods. Give each student a picture. Then, have each student say what food he or she has and complete the activity written on the back (e.g., hop on left foot, run in place, perform jumping jacks).
64. Teach students the health benefits of water. For more information, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/drinking/nutrition/index.html>.
65. Tell students that eating lots of fruits and vegetables provides important nutrients that are needed every day.
66. Stress the importance of refueling after vigorous physical activity with fluids and a variety of foods that contain carbohydrates, protein, and vitamins and minerals. For example, help refuel with a whole-wheat bagel, a banana and a glass of low-fat or fat-free milk. Check out the National Dairy Council's research overview on milk as a recovery drink at <https://www.nationaldairycouncil.org/content/2018/milk-natures-sports-drink>.
67. Post or hand out "What Foods Can Do for You," a free, downloadable PDF at [FuelUptoPlay60.com/-/media/files/tools-pdfs/futp-60-tool\\_what-foods-can-do-for-you.ashx](https://fueluptoplay60.com/-/media/files/tools-pdfs/futp-60-tool_what-foods-can-do-for-you.ashx).

- 68. Teach students about the benefits of potassium and where they can find it: milk (including flavored milk), and fruits and vegetables, such as bananas and many kinds of beans.
- 69. Remind students that food is “fuel” and is important for physical activity.

## Be a Positive Role Model

- 70. Become a “snack genie” who visits classrooms during snack times and rewards students who are eating healthy snacks and/or provide a quick nutrition tip about snacking when visiting. Help your school “snack smarter” with this Play from Fuel Up to Play 60 at [FuelUpToPlay60.com/playbooks/fuel-up-to-play-60-playbook/highlight-healthy-foods—go-nutritious](http://FuelUpToPlay60.com/playbooks/fuel-up-to-play-60-playbook/highlight-healthy-foods—go-nutritious).
- 71. Model nutritious food choices. Let students catch you snacking on a banana or an apple or drinking low-fat or fat-free milk.
- 72. Show and share with students what you bring for a snack and/or lunch, and describe how it helps fulfill the daily recommended MyPlate servings.

## Take Physical Activity, Add Nutrition, Mix Vigorously

- 73. Include nutrition concepts in your fitness-station rotation. At the nutrition station, have students work together to complete a task, such as placing food pictures on a food plate, creating a well-balanced meal.



**74.** Hold a class discussion to survey students' favorite physical activities. Then, help them brainstorm ways to pair those activities with healthy eating concepts.

**75.** Offer a Nutrition and Fitness Class to secondary school students. The class should feature a variety of activities to improve fitness and enhance nutrition, and should offer information and hands-on experiences in preparing, planning and cooking nutritious snacks or meals.

**76.** Challenge students to keep a Food & Physical Activity Log for two days. Then, have them reflect on their logs, and discuss calories in and calories out.

**77.** Play Pass the Protein, in which students call out the name of a lean protein food as they catch a ball.

**78.** Play the Fruit & Vegetable Game. Students from Team A run to Team B's side of the gym and try to pick a fruit or vegetable and take it back to their side. They continue until time is called. The team with the most fruits and vegetables on its side wins.

**79.** Play a relay game with no more than two or three students per group. Use hoops and colored beanbags, with each color representing a different food group. Students take turns running to collect one beanbag to bring back to their hoop to "fill their plate" using the MyPlate guidelines.

**80.** Play the Parachute Game. Use foam fruits, vegetables, whole grains, proteins and dairy foods on the parachute, explaining each food as it is incorporated into parachute activities.



## **TIP #77**

**Play Pass the Protein, in which students call out the name of a lean protein food as they catch a ball.**

81. Provide baskets full of cards that feature foods and the roles they play in keeping the body healthy. Then, have each student pick a card and travel to the basket/box with the matching food group.
82. Play Which One Doesn't Belong? Place 12–15 numbered file folders around the gym. Inside each folder, place four cardboard pictures of various foods: three from the same food group and one from a different food group. Have pairs of students move around the gym with an answer sheet and clipboard. Working together, students identify the food that doesn't belong in each folder.
83. Play Match the Food Group Relay with relay groups of two or three students. Ask a food-group question, and have teams discuss possible answers. Then, on your signal, have one student from each team run to the team's bucket, search for the correct response, and return to the team.
84. Play Food Group Ball Bounce. Place cards across the room with photos of different types of foods on them. Have students use a bouncing ball to move across the room and find foods from each food group.
85. Ask students to come up with their own ideas for modifying games to include nutrition concepts.

86. Discuss a nutritious food during stretches or cool-down time. Ask students to describe the food's qualities (e.g., taste, smell, texture) and to identify which food group it belongs to.
87. Have students practice skills, such as throwing and catching, with colored equipment that represents the food groups. Ask questions about the food group you are using.



## **TIP #85**

**Ask students to come up with their own ideas for modifying games to include nutrition concepts.**

- 88.** Replace common activity equipment with nutritious food “props”: fruits, vegetables, whole-grain foods, lean proteins and low-fat or fat-free dairy foods. Discuss the food groups when using this equipment.

- 89.** Hold a healthy-food spelling warm-up activity. Here’s how: Tape the letters of the alphabet on the four gym walls. Ask students to use locomotor skills (e.g., galloping, skipping, jogging) to reach the letters and “spell” the names of healthy foods.

- 90.** Create a storyline or scenario through which students can be active and learn about a variety of foods, food groups, nutrients, label reading and caloric expenditure.

- 91.** Reward positive-choice nutrition habits with “line-up” incentives. For example, you could say “Line up if you ate breakfast this morning.”

- 92.** Focus on a letter of the alphabet each week and discuss nutritious foods that begin with that letter.

- 93.** Have students choose nutritious food items to represent group names. Examples: Cool Cucumbers or Awesome Apples.

## **Invite Families and the Community to the Table!**

- 94.** Hold a health fair for families and community members. Include your students in the planning process.
- 95.** Provide a wellness calendar to students and their families. The calendar should include physical activity ideas and healthy-eating tips.
- 96.** Publicize the benefits of healthy eating and physical activity to parents, students and others in your community.
- 97.** Send an introductory letter home to parents explaining how to integrate nutrition and physical activity at home. Include tips on nutritious foods.



98. Send a monthly newsletter to parents and students, offering advice on physical activity and family games. Include suggestions for healthy snacks.
99. Suggest that students teach their parents about MyPlate and help plan a meal for the entire family to eat.
100. Urge students to go grocery shopping with their parents to help teach their families about MyPlate and the healthy nutrition habits they have learned.
101. Ask students to read a bedtime story about healthy eating. Find some good books here: <https://www.healthyeating.org/Schools/Tips-Trends/Health-Nutrition-Books> or <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/myplate>.



**Find more resources at**  
**[www.shapeamerica.org](http://www.shapeamerica.org)**



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**101 Tips for Teaching Nutrition Concepts  
in Physical Education**

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# HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON STUDENTS THAT CAN LAST A LIFETIME



**Fuel Up to Play 60 is the nation's leading in-school health and wellness program.**

The program offers tools and resources to help you and your school increase access to healthy foods and expand opportunities for more physical activity.

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