

Why and When do We Eat Video Discussion Guide - Primary Division

LET'S START A CONVERSATION

Food literacy includes developing mindful eating behaviours. Mindful eating behaviours increase our awareness of our experiences with food. Mindful eating includes:

- focusing on overall eating habits - taking time to eat, and paying attention to how, why, what, when, where, with whom, and how much we eat;
- focusing on the whole food experience by making connections to our feelings, thoughts, emotions and behaviours;
- increasing our awareness of enjoying the taste, smell and texture of food, the social engagement, and the experience of preparing the food;
- trying new foods to expand our food choices; and
- making healthier choices more often by being conscious of our eating habits and decisions.¹

The intent of the video, *Why and When do We Eat*, is to help students develop their food literacy by understanding the role of food in nurturing their body and mind and their ability to learn, recognize body cues, and develop their understanding and application of mindful eating behaviours for overall health and well-being. Students will learn about the role of food in nurturing their body and mind and their ability to learn about factors that affect their food choices.

It is important to note that in Canada, 33% of food bank users are children², and one in three children are at risk of going to school on an empty stomach³. Students may come to school hungry and without access to food or control over the actions they might take related to hunger cues. Learning about thirst and hunger cues and feelings of fullness is one concept included in this video as part of learning about mindful eating but it is not the only focus. Several other mindful eating concepts have been included to support students in developing food literacy skills that support their lifelong well-being. Refer to the Themes to Reinforce the Learning section within the guide for points to consider when engaging your students in conversations about food.

1 Adapted from: Health Canada. (2022). [Canada's Food Guide, Be mindful of your eating habits.](#)

2 Food Banks Canada. (2022). [Hungercount.](#)

3 Breakfast Club of Canada. (2020). [Our Purpose.](#)

HOW TO USE THE VIDEO AND GUIDE

Together, watch the video, *Why and When do We Eat*, with your students. Use the Conversation Starter Questions (within the video and this guide) and the Themes to Reinforce the Learning (within this guide) to facilitate conversations with your students to support the development of their food literacy.

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

It is a typical morning in a primary classroom, where students are actively working on projects or reading together. The teacher encourages students to practice what they are learning about mindful eating by accessing the snack table located in their classroom whenever they want, encouraging them to pay attention to their hunger and thirst cues, and selecting from the variety of foods.

CONVERSATION STARTER QUESTIONS

Use the following teacher prompts and student responses to facilitate conversations with your students.

- **Teacher prompt:** “Healthy eating habits is more than the food we eat. It is about being mindful of our eating habits, enjoying our food and eating meals with others.”⁴
- **Teacher prompt:** “What does mindful eating mean to you?”
Student responses:
 - “Mindful eating means eating with others and taking time to enjoy our food.”
 - “Learning to make easy snacks and meals to fuel our body.”
 - “Paying attention to our body cues like feeling hungry, full or thirsty.”
- **Teacher prompt:** “What are some factors that contribute to your enjoyment of eating?”
Student responses:
 - “Tasting all the different flavours of food I like and trying new foods.”
 - “I like eating with others so we can spend time together and have fun.”
 - “I like going food shopping so I can select foods I like and nourish my body.”

⁴ Adapted from: Health Canada. (2022). [Canada’s Food Guide, Be mindful of your eating habits.](#)

CONVERSATION STARTER QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

- **Teacher prompt:** “Describe some mindful eating habits that you have, and some eating habits you would like to change to be more mindful of how and when you eat.”

Student responses:

- “I choose to drink water when I am thirsty and make sure I drink often enough throughout the day.”
- “I try new foods when they are available because I enjoy it.”
- “I could try to avoid distractions when I am eating, like not eating in front of the TV.”
- “I could eat more often with others so we can find out about each other’s day.”

- **Teacher prompt:** “What can you do to practice mindful eating habits?”

Student responses:

- “I can sit at a table and enjoy my food.”
- “I can eat with other people.”
- “I can try foods I don’t usually choose when they are offered to me.”
- “I can take more time to eat rather than rushing to eat my food.”
- “I can choose water more often.”

- **Teacher prompt:** “What would you share about what you have learned about mindful eating with other people?”

Student responses:

- “Eating healthy is not only about the food we eat. There are other habits to focus on too.”
- “Mindful eating is about enjoying all foods on a regular basis.”
- “We shouldn’t talk about food as good or bad. All food fits into healthy eating habits.”
- “Food should be fun too.”

THEMES TO REINFORCE THE LEARNING

- Focus on the where, when, why, how and with whom we eat rather than on what we eat.
- Make conversations about food fun. Talk about how it looks, smells, tastes, and feels. Talk about which foods you enjoy when you eat them and why you like them.
- Talk about other elements of food enjoyment such as cooking, baking, celebrating holidays, and food shopping. These are also important ways to learn about food.
- Encourage students to share the connection between their culture and food traditions, including what foods are eaten and why, and the feelings, thoughts, and emotions they experience with food in these experiences.

THEMES TO REINFORCE THE LEARNING (CONTINUED)

- Honour and promote diverse perspectives about food and food culture. Families may define 'healthy food' differently and children have different health needs (e.g., food allergies or sensitivities, health conditions).
- Keep messages and views about food positive and avoid negative or fear-based statements. Avoid labelling food as 'good' or 'bad' and 'healthy' or 'unhealthy' (e.g., 'X food isn't healthy'). All foods can align when learning about mindful eating.
- Address judgmental or negative statements about food or weight or focus on calories or nutrients for every food they eat. This promotes harmful diet culture and obsessive food behaviours.
- Reinforce that bodies are unique and come in all shapes and sizes. They are all beautiful and equal.

School to Home Connections

This optional task provides your students with an opportunity to consolidate their learning by sharing what they have learned about mindful eating with others beyond the classroom setting. Students also have the opportunity to extend their learning by engaging in conversations with others about mindful eating.

Review the following instructions with your students to clarify their understanding of the task and help them plan their conversations. Consider having students work in pairs or triads to plan their conversations. **Note:** This is meant to be an oral assignment; however, you may consider providing students with a reflection card to record key ideas about their conversations to share during a follow-up class/small-group discussion.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Select one or two people outside our class with whom you would like to share what you have learned about mindful eating.
2. Decide when and where you will engage in a conversation with them (e.g., with a friend while walking home from school, with a caregiver after school, with a friend or other adult at school during a break in our school day).
3. Identify three pieces of information you would like to share about what you have learned about mindful eating.
4. What are two questions you want to ask them about mindful eating (e.g., what they know, what they want to know more about)?

Remember your conversation or write a few notes so you can share it with others the next time we talk about mindful eating.

For additional information about food literacy, consider consulting [Ophea's Food For Thought - Improving Food Literacy](#) resources.

For more information on Ophea, visit www.ophea.net.