

Introduction

The Enrichment Zone (EZ) supplement to the Smart from the Start Pre-K lessons is intended for use by parents, caregivers and volunteers—whether at home, in childcare programs or in non-profit community organizations. It introduces and reinforces key health and wellness concepts through fun, play-based activities to teach children the skills they need to develop healthy habits.

Overview

Preschool-aged children are not expected to understand things like calories, but they can begin to learn important concepts related to what they eat and how they move. The Enrichment Zone's Pre-K activities are designed to introduce the fundamentals of wellness, teaching kids to make healthy decisions that foster healthy habits throughout their lives. We encourage you to try them in your home or program and adapt them to your needs. By taking part in these activities, children will learn how food provides the energy they need to work and play; expand their palates by trying new types of nutritious foods; learn how to eat and drink from a variety of food groups; and how to move throughout the day with fun activities that help keep their bodies strong and healthy.

How Do I Use the Pre-K Enrichment Zone Program?

The EZ lessons and activities are designed to be fun, playful and motivational; age and developmentally appropriate and inclusive of all skill levels and abilities; and suitable for a range of indoor/outdoor spaces with a variety of resources.

EZ can be used as a full program (three sequential 30-minute sessions, followed by your choice of 15 to 30 minute activities a few times a week for 4-6 weeks, followed by a wrap-up party), or as a handy resource for creative activities.

As with any program for preschoolers, flexibility is key! You may choose to use these lessons and activities exactly as presented, or as inspiration for some creative adaptations of your own. They may be used as a supplement to the Smart from the Start Pre-K [classroom curriculum](#), or as a stand-alone set of lessons, activities and ideas to get you started from scratch.

1: “EZ Overview” Talking Points + Mini Lesson

Begin with a very basic overview of health and wellness principles, using age-appropriate language for the 3–5 year olds in your group. Use the following talking points, along with hands-on props and visual aids. (Find pictures from magazines or the Internet, or see the Appendix for links to pictures and downloads.)

Though wellness is more than just being healthy, a healthy diet and being physically active, for children this age, it’s a good place to start. Let your kids know that things like having good personal hygiene (bathing daily, brushing your teeth) and getting along with others are also important to their overall wellness.

A. What is Energy?

Energy makes things move. (Energy makes cars, trucks and airplanes move.)

Energy makes things work. (Energy makes computers, televisions and cell phones work.)

Energy makes...

- bees buzz
- birds fly
- frogs leap
- rabbits hop
- kangaroos jump
- ponies gallop
- sharks swim
- ice-skaters spin
- ballerinas twirl
- bulldozers dig
- monster trucks smash
- rockets shoot up into space

All of those things need energy to move. Do kids need energy too? Yes! Kids need energy to...

- walk and run
- dance and skip
- do karate moves
- play ball or play pretend
- build with blocks, put away toys, wash hands
- sing a song, color a picture or read a book!

Kids need energy to move, to grow, to think, to work and to PLAY!

B. Where Does Energy Come From?

Where does a car get its energy?

Gasoline. If a car runs out of gas, it cannot move.

Where does a flower or tree get its energy to grow?

From the sun. Without sun, a plant cannot grow.

Where do people get their energy?

From foods they eat and drink. Without food and drink, our bodies cannot move, grow, work or play!

Does all food and drink give us energy?

Yes. We're going to learn more about that and how to create healthy habits.

C. Mini-Lesson: Busy Bees

Let's all pretend we're bees. Busy bees buzzing with energy. Make a bzzzz sound. Now bend your elbows, extend your hands out to each side and flap your wings (hands) as fast as you can. Now, using little steps, run around in circles as fast as you can for one minute. Ready, set, go! [Count to 60.]

Now stop! Your bodies just used energy to buzz around. Bees get their energy from nectar and pollen. They eat nectar (sugary water) and pollen (a yellow-brown substance) from flowers. Let's have a snack to put some energy back in our bodies — just like bees.

Snack Recipe: Serve whole-grain crackers with small cups of 100% fruit juice or a fresh fruit smoothie. Pineapple, mango or other tropical fruit juices make a sweet nectar-like treat.

Extension: Serve string cheese as well and have kids peel down layers to look like outer petals and inner parts of flowers. Show them close-up pictures of flowers.

Variation: Be "fruit bats" rather than bees and serve chunks of mangoes and bananas.

After finishing your snacks ask children, "Do you feel like you have more energy now, after eating and drinking your snack? Good! Let's use that energy for [name the next activity, e.g., cleaning up the table, listening to a story, playing outside.]

2: “Eat Together” Activities

A. Strive for Five

Kids make their own snack with ingredients from the 5 main food groups. They learn about the concept of a balanced diet and end up with a tasty snack they can replicate at home. This hands-on activity teaches and reinforces lessons about the 5 food groups and encourages children to try new food combinations. As studies show, kids are much more likely to try new foods and food combinations when they help make them themselves!

Talking Points

Today we are going to make a snack using ingredients from the 5 food groups. We should eat things from the 5 food groups each day. These foods give us energy to grow, and play. The 5 food groups are: Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Protein and Dairy. (Display pictures of the 5 food groups, with each group labeled and examples of each type of food illustrated.) Ask kids to repeat the name of each group as you point to each picture. Then ask kids to raise their hands and give an example of a food from each group.

Watch what I do, and then you can have a turn and make one of your own.

Ingredients and Steps

- First, take a whole-grain tortilla. This is from the GRAIN group.
- Spread it with peanut butter*. This is from the PROTEIN group.
- Sprinkle some shredded carrots. This is from the VEGETABLE group.
- Now top with raisins or grapes. This is from the FRUIT group.
- Now roll it all up and take a bite. There’s only one group missing. Which one?
- That’s right, DAIRY. Let’s all drink a glass of milk** with our snack and we’ll have a complete meal—with all 5 food groups.

* Alternatives to peanut butter: sunflower seed butter, soy nut butter, hummus

**Alternatives to milk: soy milk, almond milk

Learn more about [food allergies](#).

Learn more about [food safety guidelines for preschoolers](#).

To accommodate those with food allergies or family diet preferences (such as vegan), experiment with other ingredients, for instance:

GRAIN: brown rice cakes, rice crackers

PROTEIN: hummus, tahini, refried beans (or have kids mash beans with fork), soy nut butter with honey

DAIRY: substitute soy, almond, rice or coconut milk and stress that people who don't eat or drink dairy products can get their daily calcium from other sources (like calcium-fortified orange juice, soy yogurt and broccoli)

B. Let's Sort It Out!

Sorting is important work. In addition to being a fun and satisfying activity, sorting is a key foundational math skill for preschoolers. It's important to give children the opportunity to sort, classify and order objects by size, shape, color and a variety of other attributes. The more they practice, the more they engage in analytical thinking and the better prepared they will be for kindergarten.

Materials:

- Toy food or pictures of food clipped from magazines and flyers (ideally laminated)
- 10 Bowls
- 2 Baskets
- Assorted tongs (if using toy food)
- Labels for the 5 food groups with a picture to represent each (Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Protein and Dairy)
- Labels for the 5 fruit/veg colors with a colored tag for each (Red, Orange/Yellow, Green, Blue/Purple, White)
- Printouts of the [MyPlate template](#)

Set---up:

For this activity, set up two sorting stations and label them:

- 5 Food Groups
- 5 Colors

For the "5 Food Groups" station, set up a row of 5 bowls with 5 labels. Place a basket behind the bowls and fill it with play food or food pictures of all 5 food groups. Ideally you will have enough to put 2 or 3 food items in each of the 5 bowls.

For the "5 Colors" station, set up a row of 5 bowls with 5 labels. Place a basket behind the bowls and fill it with play food or food pictures of just 2 of the food groups—Fruits and Vegetables. Ideally you will have enough to put 2 or 3 food items in each of the 5 bowls.

Note: If you use toy food pieces, you may add tongs to the activity and have kids use them to pick up and place the items in the bowls. This adds a fun dimension and also helps to exercise pincer muscles and develop fine-motor skills.

Instructions:

5 Food Groups Station

Demonstrate how to sort and classify the foods at this station, talking through each step of the way. For instance:

- “I’m going to reach inside the basket and pick a piece of food. Look: here’s a fish. Where does that belong? In the Protein basket. Lean protein like fish, chicken and beans give us energy and help us grow strong.”
- “Here’s some broccoli. That goes in the Vegetable basket. Vegetables are one of the 5 food groups. It’s good for our bodies to eat vegetables every day.”

5 Colors Station

Demonstrate how to sort and classify the fruits and vegetables, explaining as you go. For instance:

- “Fruits and vegetables come in a range of colors—just like a rainbow! It’s good to eat a rainbow of colors every day.”
- “Look: here’s a kiwifruit. I’m going to put it in the Green basket. Here’s a pumpkin. I’m going to put it in Yellow and Orange basket.”

Then have kids do the exercise themselves. Keep the stations set up and accessible so kids can play with them freely when they have time.

Extensions:

“Perfect Portions” — Sort food from the 5 Food Groups basket into recommended meal portions, using ChooseMyPlate.gov templates. Make a “perfect plate” yourself as an example, stressing the recommendation that fruits and vegetables make up half your plate.

“Fruits vs. Veggies” — Have kids choose one fruit and one vegetable of each color and place them in each bowl. Demonstrate how it’s done, e.g.

- “Find a fruit that’s red. (apple) Find a vegetable that’s red. (beets)”
- “Find a fruit that’s green (kiwi). Find a vegetable that’s green (broccoli).”

C. Play dough Master Chefs

Once preschoolers grasp the concept of the 5 different food groups and the different types foods that belong in each, they can begin learning about recommended portions and balanced meals. MyPlate is great way to teach this concept. And, as any preschooler will tell you, anything involving play dough is just plain fun!

Materials:

- Play dough (homemade or store-bought) in different colors

- Plastic knives, rolling pin and other tools for making play food
- Printouts of [MyPlate templates](#) (laminated, if possible)

Instructions:

Print out the [MyPlate Poster](#) and decorate each category with a picture (e.g., a fish and chicken drumstick in the Protein section; pasta noodles and bread in the Grains section). Hang this up on a bulletin board or wall to use as reference.

Demonstrate how to make a few pieces of food using play dough. Make these as basic as possible, but add some distinguishing features and teach kids how to do the same. Show how to use different techniques:

- pasta: make a long skinny noodle shape by rolling it against the table; the more you roll, the longer and skinnier it gets!
- grapes: roll small pieces of play dough in your hands to form small marble shapes
- orange: roll a big piece of play dough in your hands to form a large ball
- bread slice: roll out a sheet of play dough with a rolling pin and cut into rectangles; even better, trace around a cold piece of toast!
- shrimp: take a blob of play dough and form it into a C shape, pinch one end to form a two-pronged tail
- carrots: take a small blob of play dough and roll in your hands

Encourage kids to use different colors and to aim for a rainbow of fruits and vegetables on their plates. When the children have made a complete plate of food, declare them Master Chefs! Take a photograph to display on a bulletin board or make a poster of all the MyPlate meals and have kids dictate descriptions of their creations.

3: “Energy Out” Activities

From age 3 to 5, children develop gross motor skills naturally while playing and running around during unstructured time. But many important motor skills can be strengthened through structured play-based activities as well. The following activities help build locomotor and manipulative skills, both of which are developmentally appropriate for the preschool age group.

Locomotor activities include:

Walking * Running * Jumping * Hopping * Galloping * Sliding * Skipping

Manipulative activities include:

Throwing * Two-handed catching * Batting/Striking * Ball bouncing * Kicking

These types of activities help us use our energy, grow strong and have fun!

Aerobic activity is important for all age groups, and preschoolers are not too young to learn that exercise is good for the heart. Encourage them to run and play to keep their hearts pumping, their bodies strong and their energy levels up!

The following lessons incorporate a mix of these activity types and reinforce important messages about fitness. For more creative ways to keep preschoolers moving and grooving, see the Activity Basket in the next section.

A. High Five!

Preschoolers need at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day. This does not have to be done all at the same time or in a structured way. Many short bursts of activity can also do the trick! This lesson shows kids how to make the most of a 5-minute burst of activity and encourages them to engage in aerobic activities to keep their energy levels up throughout the day. They may be surprised to see how quickly 5 minutes of activity can go by when you're having fun!

Instructions:

Set up two markers, one on either side of a large room or about 20 feet apart in a gym or field. The object is to speed-walk back and forth between point A to point B and count (to yourself) how many laps you can take in 5 minutes.

Tell preschoolers that you're all going to get your bodies moving for 5 minutes. Give them the option of running, speed walking, or a mix of the two. Stress that this is not a race, and there is no winner!

Begin by asking:

- Is 5 minutes a lot of time or a little bit of time?
- Since children at this age do not know how to tell time, think of examples of things kids do for 5 minutes to give them a sense of how long this is: putting on their clothes, putting away their toys or even getting ready for bed by brushing teeth, using the bathroom and getting into PJ's can take "about 5 minutes".
- Let's look at the clock. How many times do you think you can go back and forth in 5 minutes? Count to yourself and if you need to rest, just walk instead of run.
- Okay, ready, set, GO!

At the end of 5 minutes, give every child a star to stick next to their name. After they stick on their star, give them a high five! Keep the chart up and find different ways to do 5-minute bursts throughout the year — when preschoolers have excess energy to release, a few minutes to spare, or need a pick-me-up on a rainy day.

Come up with other creative ideas and write them down. What ELSE do you think you can you do in 5 minutes?

- You could dance to 2 songs.
- You could run from one end of the playground to the other 5 times.
- Maybe you could bounce a basketball 100 times.
- Any other ideas?

Extension: High Five for the Heart!

Do this before and after your 5-minute activity burst.

Ask students if they know what and where their heart is. Explain that their heart helps blood move through their bodies. Show students where their hearts are. Explain that when we use a lot of energy (like when they are running around), our hearts beat faster. That means our hearts are working hard—to keep our bodies healthy!

Place your hand over your heart. Can you feel it beating? When you run around, does it make your heart pump faster or slower? Let's have fun and use up some energy for 5 minutes and see how it makes us feel.

B. Follow the Leader

In this classic game, the leader walks, marches, hops, gallops and skips around, and the others follow and mimic the movements. Mix things up with creative moves, like walking on tiptoes, leaping like a frog, shuffling like a penguin, stomping like a monster. Ask kids to come up with ideas as well!

Instructions:

Before you begin, give a quick demonstration of the following moves. You may think they're intuitive, but terms can be interpreted in different ways by different children, and some may find it difficult to follow your cues. Take extra time to demonstrate galloping and skipping, as most children don't master this until age 4 or 5. If the children in your group are younger, keep it simple.

Walking: Swing arms and lift knees high.

Jumping: Bend knees and then push off with both feet and land on both feet. How high can you jump?

Hopping: Hop on one foot, then the other, pushing with your toes. Is one foot harder than the other?

Leaping: Lead with one foot and land on the other.

Galloping: Lead with one foot while the other foot follows behind.

Side sliding: Spread arms wide, lead one leg far sideways and slide the other to follow.

Skipping: March with knees high, demonstrating the basic step— and— hop motion.

Be the leader for the first round or two of this game to show the children how it's done. Once they get the hang of it, let them take turns at the lead.

C. Ball Buddies

Preschoolers practice manipulative and ball-handling skills in this simple, scalable game. You may also use this as an opportunity to practice counting or language skills.

Instructions:

Sit on the ground, form a wide a circle and spread legs wide apart. Take one medium size playground ball and show children how to pass it back and forth look to the person opposite you in the circle. Roll the ball back and forth to the person directly opposite. Then hand it to the person next to you and have them roll it back and forth to the person opposite them.

While passing the ball back and forth, take turns counting (see how high you can go) or saying the names of sports and activities (like football! basketball! dancing! skating! karate!) or fruits and vegetables (pineapple! sweet potato! avocado!). Or follow children's interests to keep them engaged, choosing animals (like dog! cat! lizard! tiger! panda!) or dinosaur names. The challenge is to say a word that hasn't been said already by someone else!

Variation:

Have children pair up and get more ball handling time with their buddy. Have them sit facing each other, several feet apart, and see how many times they can go back and forth with the ball. Then have them stand and gently throw the ball, making it bounce once before being caught by their buddy. For dexterous kids who need a challenge, challenge them to clap their hands once before catching it. Still too easy? Step back and move further apart.

4. ACTIVITY BASKET: "Play Together" Activities

Monster, May I?

This silly variation on the old-fashioned game "Mother, May I" is a great way to practice the locomotor skills learned in the Pre-K EZ Activity #3.

Materials:

Monster costume accessories (silly, not scary!) — for example, a hat with googly eyes or monster horns — that's easy to take on and off.

Assume the role of Monster yourself for the first round, to show how it's done. Have the children line up 10–15 feet away, facing you.

Now give instructions for movements, taking care to balance the different types of locomotor movements.

"Take 8 monster steps."

"Take 7 lizard leaps."

"Take 6 dinosaur stomps."

"Take 5 bunny hops."

"Take 4 baby steps backward."

"Slide to the side 3 times."

"Buzz like a bee around in a circle 2 times."

Before following the instructions, the child must ask, "Monster, may I?"

Monster responds with, "Yes, you may" and then the child follows the steps.

If a child forgets to ask, "Monster, may I?" he or she goes back to the starting line.

Play again and again and make up new moves as you go along. Be sure to ask your preschoolers for suggestions!

Jump the Creek!

This simple game is a great way for kids to practice hopping and jumping — locomotor activities that build leg muscles, gross motor skills and strong bones. Since it requires minimal materials (a roll of masking tape or a few pieces of rope), it's an easy go-to game when kids have extra energy to release!

Instructions:

Use masking tape or rope to make a line on the floor. Tell kids to use their imaginations and pretend this is a small creek (a tiny river of water). Now practice hopping back and forth over the creek. What is a hop? Think of a bunny hop—which is like a tiny jump.

Now add a second line of tape or rope. Make it parallel to the first, 6-12 inches apart, depending on the age of your preschoolers. Tell kids to use their imaginations and pretend this is a rolling river. To cross the river, kids must JUMP!

Show kids how to jump:

- Bend knees, spring off on two feet and swing your arms forward when you jump...then
 - Land on two feet, with knees bent and feet spread shoulder width apart
- Now set up a course with several “creeks” and “rivers” to cross throughout your room or outdoor space.

Kids’ Corral

Materials:

- Kitchen brooms (child-size if available)
- Dress---up clothes: Cowboy hats, bandanas, vests, etc.
- Cones, etc. for obstacle course
- Music player

Calling all cowgirls and cowboys! Grab a cowboy hat if you have one and a small broom and get ready to gallop and rustle around on your “horse.” Don’t have a broom? Use your imagination! Galloping is a key locomotor skill that combines a step and a leap. Preschoolers usually master this before skipping, but only after practice.

Instructions:

Practice galloping around your room or outdoor space, and give kids some help if they don’t get the hang of it at first. Once they’re ready, have kids ride a broom of their own (or an invisible horse if you don’t have a broom) and gallop away! Play some upbeat Country & Western music to get kids in the spirit.

For a challenge, set up an obstacle course with traffic cones and other markers and pretend you’re at a horse show. Gallop through the course, following zigzag patterns, turns and small jumps for older preschoolers.

Scarf Dancing

Materials:

- Scarves, handkerchiefs, bandanas or pieces of fabric
- Music player and a variety of songs
- Computer and Internet to research multicultural dances and music

Dance is a great aerobic activity and a good way to develop gross motor skills and physical coordination. Adding a prop like scarves provides an extra dimension for creative expression and is a simple way to keep kids interested and engaged. The longer they dance, the better!

Have the children begin by mimicking your dance moves. Then encourage them to dance freely, making up creative movements with their bodies and scarves as they listen to different types of music.

Play clips of songs with different tempos, rhythms and moods and encourage children to make creative movements with the scarves as they dance along. Start with a fun upbeat song clip and demonstrate how to dance along with the beat. Then switch to song that's slower and more flowing and follow along with swishing, fluttering and floating scarves.

How about an American cowboy/cowgirl dance? Put on some Country & Western music, twirl scarves in circles overhead and make lasso motions on your imaginary ranch while galloping around the room.

Now choose a different music style from a different country. Try African drum music and have kids dance with their scarves to the beat. Each time you do this activity, try two different styles of music from two different countries.

Extension:

Research different scarf dances from different countries and try simplified versions with your preschoolers. There are traditional scarf dances from West Africa, China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Greece, and many parts of the Middle East. Find a wide range of different styles of music to broaden children's horizons, challenge their listening skills and encourage an interest in dance and creative movement.

There's a Bear!

This is a very simple game involving walking and running, and therefore best done outside. It can be done in 5 minutes or 15 minutes, with two children or a dozen.

Take a walk and tell children you're going on a "bear hunt." Tell them that they should walk, not run, EXCEPT if you spot a bear. Ask for a volunteer to help you role-play as you explain how it's done.

Instructions:

Go for a walk in a field, park, back yard or small open space. Walk for a minute or so and then say "There's a bear!" Children say, "Where?"

You point and say, "Over there!"

Now the children RUN in the other direction until you yell "STOP."

You can say, “Sorry, that was only a [fill in the blank with a different small animal each time, e.g., chipmunk, mouse, salamander, etc.]

Now all must walk until the next time you spot a bear!

Let’s Play Ball!

Materials:

- Recycled newspapers
- Cardboard paper towel tubes
- Masking tape and duct tape

Make your own balls and bats using recycled paper and paper towel tubes. Go green, get crafty and use your imaginations!

To make a bat:

Have kids tear up small pieces of newspaper and stuff them into cardboard tubes. Now tape two stuffed tubes together and secure with duct tape. Tape both ends as well to keep the newspaper stuffed inside.

To make a ball:

Have kids crumple newspaper pieces into the size and shape of a softball. Go round and round the ball with masking tape until strong and secure.

Now play ball!

Take Five!

Have five minutes to spare while transitioning between activities? Are preschoolers feeling antsy or looking like they need a pick-me-up? Tell them it’s a good time to “Take Five!” Now lead them through 5 repetitions of some quick activities like:

- 5 Jumping Jacks
- 5 Toe Touches
- 5 Squats
- 5 Hops
- Reach to the sky 5 times!

Have them count along as they do these and then repeat! Or let them choose to run in place for the remainder of the 5 minutes.

5. ACTIVITY BASKET: “Eat Together” Activities

Let’s Play Store!

Materials:

- Toy shopping cart or basket
- Toy cash register or shoe box
- Small bags (paper, plastic and/or reusable)
- Grocery items (whatever you can find in your pantry and fridge!)
- Play money (or use imaginary money)
- Construction paper or labels and marker

For this game you can use real food or play food and make it as simple or involved as you like, based on the developmental readiness of the children in your group. Take your cues from the kids and let them drive the process.

Preparation:

- Categorize the food into the 5 food groups: Fruits, Vegetables, Protein, Grains and Dairy.
- Group them together on shelves or on a table and make big labels each group. You may also make labels for each food item or a select few like Apple, Bread, Corn (All preschool-age children benefit from a print-rich environment, even if they’re not starting to read!)
- Set up a checkout station with your cash register (or shoe box) and shopping bags.

Instructions:

Start by making a shopping list. Ask kids to help with suggestions for each of the food groups, or for each meal of the day. Remind the class about the importance of eating a balance of foods from the 5 food groups each day.

Now you can all go “shopping” in your store! Take turns playing checkout clerk and bagger. Based on the number of children in your group, decide how you’d like to divide up the shopping list. Improvise and have some fun!

Grocery Store Guessing Game

This easy game requires minimal props and preparation and can be done anywhere, anytime and with any size group. Ask children to stick to food products, but there are no right or wrong answers!

My grandfather has a grocery store and in it he sells something RED.

My grandfather has a grocery store and in it he sells something ORANGE.
(Continue with YELLOW, GREEN, BLUE, PURPLE and WHITE.)

Variations:

Each time a food item is named, draw or place a picture of it up on a wall or board for all to see. No item may be named twice!

Play this in connection with the “Let’s Play Store!” activity above. Keep your store set up for a week or more for free play time and use it to play games like the “Grocery Store Guessing Game” as well. For this variation, sit in a circle on the floor and play the game. The child who guesses an item correctly goes to the “store,” fetches the item, and brings it back to the circle.

For older preschoolers: Play the game in the style of the “I’m Going on a Camping Trip” game, in which each item must be remembered and repeated. For example:

My grandfather has a grocery store and in it he sells RED APPLES.

My grandfather has a grocery store and in it he sells RED APPLES and ORANGE MANGOES.

My grandfather has a grocery store and in it he sells RED APPLES, ORANGE MANGOES and GREEN GRAPES.

Let’s Play Restaurant!

Materials:

- Play food: Plastic fruits, vegetables, bread, meat, fish, poultry; you may also borrow real food from your own fridge or pantry!
- Miscellaneous: Cooking utensils, notepad and pencil, dishes, table napkins, silk flowers, old sheets for tablecloth, salt and pepper shakers—whatever you can find!
- Dress-up clothes (optional): White shirt and bow tie, apron, fancy clothes, jewelry and hats for customers, purse or wallet
- MyPlate template printouts (one per “customer”)

Preparation:

Place a sheet or tablecloth on a table, then set place settings for each “customer.” At each place, set a [MyPlate template](#) printout with a fork and napkin on the left and knife and spoon on the right.

Instructions:

Have children take turns playing waiter/waitress, bus boy/girl, and customer. If you have dress-up clothes, let the kids get creative! If you have a range of ages, consider having older preschoolers wait tables, while younger ones bus tables and assist. If you have mainly younger

preschoolers, have them take turns being customers and bus boys/girls while you play the waiter/waitress.

Now take turns playing waiter/waitress. Demonstrate first by going through the steps start to finish. Explain that it is the dinner hour in your restaurant, and that you will be serving a full menu of foods from the 5 food groups. They may repeat the same options that you say below in your demonstration, or they may use different ones in those food group categories.

First, introduce yourself:

Hello, I'm [your name] and I'll be your waiter/waitress this evening.

Then ask:

[start with protein]: *Would you like beef, chicken, fish or beans?*

[then vegetables]: *Would you like carrots or corn?*

[then fruit]: *Would you like applesauce or grapes?*

[then grains]: *Would you like rice or bread?*

[then dairy]: *Would you like milk to drink?*

Next you can prepare, fetch and serve the food; ask the customer if they'd like ketchup or mustard, salt or pepper; clear the table; ask if they'd like dessert ["Our choices are frozen yogurt or fruit!"]; and then bring a check.

This is also a great way to teach grace and courtesy lessons. Model how to say "please" and "thank you" each step of the way.

Paper Plate Pizza

Materials:

- Paper plates (preferably uncoated)
- Red paint and paint brushes
- Tissue paper (different colors: white, yellow, green, red, brown, black)
- Scissors
- Bowls for cut-up tissue paper

Instructions:

- Fold tissue paper into several layers and then cut it up into tiny squares. Do this yourself in advance, or let children do the cutting with child-safe scissors.
- Place tissue squares into bowls, one color per bowl, to represent pizza toppings (yellow for cheese, green for green peppers, white for onions, red for red peppers or cherry tomatoes, brown for mushrooms or meat, black for black olives)

- Take a white paper plate and paint it with red paint. This is your tomato sauce.
- Now sprinkle this with “cheese” (yellow or white tissue paper squares).
- Now choose some toppings like “green peppers” and “brown meat” and “black olives.”
- That’s it! For more fun, you may also play “Pretend Pizza Parlor” and serve your creations to customers (other children or stuffed animals); use a toy phone to take orders; and have a delivery person drive pizzas for extra speedy service!

Extension:

Help children make their mini pizzas for a snack after his activity. Use whole-grain English muffins or pitas and low-fat mozzarella cheese, along with their choice of various toppings.

Rainbow Pops:

In this activity, kids make fruit “lollipops” with a variety of fruits in a variety of colors. They learn about the range of available fruits, the value of eating a balanced variety, and take away an important lesson — that fruit is sweet and tasty.

Talking Points:

It’s good to eat many different types of foods.

When it comes to fruits and vegetables, it’s good to eat many different colors as well!

Fruits and vegetables come in different colors. Which colors? (For simplicity, stick to 5 main color groups: Red, Yellow/Orange, Green, Blue/Purple and White)

It’s good to eat a many different colors of fruits and vegetables—like a rainbow!

Materials and Ingredients:

- Select a range of fruits, as least one of each color:
 - o RED strawberries, watermelon, red apples, red grapes
 - o YELLOW/ORANGE mangoes, papayas, oranges, cantaloupe, peaches, nectarines, pineapple
 - o GREEN kiwifruit, green grapes, green apples, green pears, honeydew
 - o BLUE/PURPLE blackberries, blueberries, purple grapes, plums, raisins
 - o WHITE bananas, white nectarines, white peaches, brown pears
- “Lollipop” Sticks: thin pretzel sticks, popsicle sticks, flat toothpicks, recycled straws or coffee stirrers all work

Instructions:

- Let kids do as much of the hands-on prep work as possible, including washing, peeling and slicing fruits with a blunt knife. Do small things to make it easier for them to do tasks all by themselves, as this is a critical part of the activity. For instance:
- Cut off the tips off of bananas (or make a slip halfway through the tips) to make them easier for kids to peel.
- Open a can of pineapple slices and place slices into a bowl so kids can serve themselves with a fork and then chop them into chunks themselves with a blunt knife.
- To make a “lollipop,” poke a toothpick or other “stick” into a piece of fruit, then pick it up and eat!
- Demonstrate how to use smaller sticks with smaller fruit (like a blueberry on a toothpick) and bigger sticks with bigger fruit (like a melon chunk on a popsicle stick).

Soup’s On!

Let kids help prepare a pot of vegetable soup and then sit down and enjoy a bowl of it all together. It’s often surprising to see all the different vegetables children will try when they make a recipe themselves! There are numerous benefits for preschoolers. Washing, peeling and chopping vegetables develops hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills, and cooking a recipe from start to finish builds confidence in one’s abilities.

This “recipe” is not much of a recipe at all, as the point is for preschool-age cooks to make it up as they go along!

Ingredients:

- 2 quarts of chicken broth (or use stock cubes and water)
- 1 cup dried alphabet pasta or macaroni
- fresh and frozen vegetables
- mini soup crackers

Begin by preparing a variety of vegetables. Allow kids to do as much of the prep work as possible while you demonstrate and supervise. For instance:

- Sweet potatoes: adults peel with vegetable peeler and dice
- Carrots: adults peel with vegetable peeler and cut with blunt kitchen knife
- Green beans: kids wash, then snip off ends with child-size scissors, then cut in half with a blunt knife
- Frozen peas: kids measure in small measuring cups and pour into the pot

Do you have a vegetable from every color group? A can of diced tomatoes and some chopped purple cabbage added to the ingredients above would make a complete rainbow! Let kids

choose which vegetables to add, and how much of each. Put bigger chunks in first, since they will take longer to cook. Simmer soup for 20 minutes and add frozen peas during the last 5 minutes.

Multicultural Variations:

Research ingredients and recipes from other parts of the world and add some multicultural soup recipes to your repertoire. Ideas:

- Asian: chicken broth, ramen noodles (discard seasoning packet), bok choy, napa cabbage, green onions
- African: chicken broth, a can of unsweetened coconut milk, sweet potatoes, and a few tablespoons of peanut butter*
- Mexican: chicken broth, green peppers, tomatoes, corn, canned black beans (let kids mash the beans with a fork instead of pureeing them)

Book---Based Variations:

Read the picture book *Growing Vegetable Soup* by Lois Ehlert and then make a pot of soup, using the same ingredients used in the book: carrots, green beans, peas, tomatoes, zucchini, corn and potatoes. There's even a recipe included at the end of the book.

Read the book *Stone Soup* by Marcia Brown and then act out the story and make a pot of soup, using the same ingredients used in the book. The story adds the benefit of identifying the vegetables by color. You can follow the recipe in the book and then improvise to update it.

"So far we have" . . .

- orange carrots
- purple cabbage
- white potatoes

"What other ingredients can we add? Which colors are we missing? Maybe we could add" . . .

- yellow onions or corn
- green beans or peas
- red peppers or tomatoes

For this cooking activity, you could ask each child to bring in an ingredient or ask them to help you make a shopping list. For a super-quick activity, shop for ingredients and cook them in advance. Then give each child an ingredient to add to the pot of broth. Encourage them to taste a piece of each ingredient before adding it to the soup.

If you don't have the book, you can show a video version before or while eating soup:

Stone Soup, classic 1947 version by Marcia Brown:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=trbHdayluLA>

Stone Soup, contemporary retelling by David Cullen: <https://vimeo.com/8671479>

Afterward, you can get up and dance— just like in the story! Then you can take nap, just like the soldiers in their lofts. The end!

EZ Recipes

Here are some fun recipes, simple enough for preschoolers to make with minimal help from an adult.

Homemade Applesauce

4 apples

1/2 cup apple juice

1/4 teaspoon cinnamon

- Peel and core the apples yourself, then cut them into slices.
- Let children cut the slices into chunks, using a blunt knife.
- Put the apples apple juice into a pan and let each child give the apples a stir with a wooden spoon.
- Cook on medium heat and simmer for 15 minutes.
- Stir in cinnamon and remove from heat.
- Now you can all clean up while the applesauce cools for 10 minutes. Fill a wash pan with warm water and a tiny bit of soap and let the preschoolers wash the blunt knives and the cutting board with sponges; let them wipe off the table or counter.
- Let children give the cooked mixture a stir. How did the apples change when they cooked?
- Serve in small bowls and enjoy warm. Or refrigerate for snack time later in the day.

Cookie-Cutter Sandwiches

- Several slices of soft, whole-grain bread
- Assortment of sandwich fillings: peanut butter*, cream cheese, American cheese slices, deli ham slices
- Condiments like honey, jelly, mayonnaise, mustard
- Cookie cutters
- Blunt knives

This simple activity is a good way to get children accustomed to the taste of whole-grain bread. The focus is more on the process of making one's own sandwich, and the fun of making them into different shapes.

Note: Choose large cookie cutters so kids don't waste too much of their sandwiches! If you have a group of tough customers accustomed to white bread, try a special treat like chocolate-hazelnut spread* on whole-grain bread, or a "fluffernutter" — peanut butter* and marshmallow cream on whole-grain bread.

Go Bananas!

See how many creative recipes you can come up with for this one favorite fruit.

Banana Lollipops

Slice a banana into 1/2 inch rounds and insert a toothpick or thin pretzel stick into each one. Voila!

Pudding Parfait

Make instant vanilla pudding with low-fat milk. Serve a portion to each child in a clear plastic cup (8 oz. or smaller) and let each child make their own parfait with sliced bananas and crumbled whole-grain graham crackers. Whipped cream optional!

Frozen Banana Pops

Cut bananas into 2-inch chunks and insert a toothpick into each chunk. Arrange toothpick side up on a foil or parchment-lined tray and freeze for 2 hours.

Now melt some chocolate chips in a microwave-safe bowl. Heat in microwave for 10–20 seconds at a time, stirring frequently until smooth. Dip each banana chunk in the melted chocolate, and then roll in chopped walnuts or almonds. Eat right away for freeze.

Banana Sandwich

Let kids make their own open-face sandwich, using bananas and a few other ingredients to decorate. Spread whole-grain bread with peanut butter (or sunflower butter or soy nut butter) and make a design. For example:

Clown: a row of banana slices for hair, raisins for eyes, a red strawberry for a nose and an apple slice for a mouth.

Reindeer: make antlers with pretzels, use raisins for eyes and a red grape for a nose

6: Wrap---Up Party!

Why not throw a simple party for your last EZ session? It can be a two-person or a 20-person party, and kids can serve each other or invite stuffed animals as their guests!

Pick a creative theme like:

- Teddy Bear Tea Party or
- Brontosaurus Brunch (Plant---eaters only!)

Or eat in a pretend restaurant like the

- Dinosaur Diner or
- Busy Bee Bakery (serve whole-grain bread and crackers with spreads and honey)
- Rainbow Restaurant (serve fruits and vegetables from all colors of the rainbow)

Party Time

Serve EZ snacks from your favorite recipes and activities from this unit. Ask kids to vote! You can also ask them to vote for their favorite fruits and vegetables, write the names on a whiteboard, and put a star next to each vote. Then serve them in a small tray as an appetizer, along with chunks of cheese.

Have kids help with the cleanup!

Play Time

After cleanup, ask a question:

Now put on some music and have everyone dance! Or you may lead a few rounds of Follow the Leader around the room or outdoor space. If preschoolers are sleepy, keep it short and then lie down and take a nap!

7. Certificate of Achievement

You're the bee's knees! Customize and print this certificate to congratulate your preschoolers when they complete the Enrichment Zone!

[SEE NEXT PAGE]

CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT
Congratulations!

name of student

has successfully completed The Enrichment Zone Program! You have learned all about making healthy decisions for a more active, healthy lifestyle.

Date: _____

Signed: _____

