

Nutrition: value in everyday lunchbox foods

Lesson at a glance

Open with a show of hands about what usually goes in a school lunchbox and whether those foods do the same job. Teach the six food-group names, then groups sort twelve lunchbox cards under the header cards and record the sort on the Investigation Journal page. Run the lunchbox-builder interactive on the IWB so the class packs a mixed lunch and spots where most energy sits, then each pupil designs their own balanced lunch on the same journal page. Close with a display-only talk on group mix, fuel and water.

Learning objectives

- Sort everyday Irish lunchbox foods into the main food groups
- Design a balanced lunch and explain where most of its energy comes from

Before the bell – prep

Print one set of food-group header cards and the twelve food cards per group, plus the Investigation Journal page, the day before. Optionally gather a few clean sealed lunch packs to hold up; check class allergy notes first. Have the lunchbox-builder interactive ready on the IWB.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
food sorting cards (apple, banana, carrot sticks, cherry tomatoes, wholemeal sandwich, brown soda bread roll, plain yogurt, cheese stick, boiled egg, ham slice, hummus pot, cereal bar, crisps, water, milk carton)	1	group	provided printable	write the same food names on sticky notes or scrap card
food-group header cards (Fruit & veg; Bread, cereal & potato; Milk, yogurt & cheese; Meat, fish, eggs, beans & nuts; Treats; Drinks)	1	group	provided printable	six labelled sheets of scrap paper as pile headers
clean sealed lunchbox packaging samples (optional real examples)	6	class	brought from home	use the printed food cards only
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	provided printable	one sheet of plain paper for recording the sort and the lunch design



Safety watch-point

No tasting. Cards alone are fine; if real sealed packs are handled, keep them sealed, prefer peanut-free hummus packaging, and have pupils wash hands afterwards.

Teaching moves

- **Food groups that fuel us:** Put the six group names on the board before any sorting question so the class shares one language. Model aloud with the apple card: predict fruit and veg, check the header, place it. Name hummus or tuna under the protein header and brown soda bread under bread so Irish everyday foods are visible.
- **Sort the lunchbox:** Clear desk space for six piles per group and hand out one full card set. Circulate asking 'What job does this food do?' Fold watchers in with 'Do you agree with that pile?' When groups notice the empty Drinks header, ask what they normally drink; accept milk as drink or dairy if they can explain.
- **Record your sort:** Pupils draw or list foods under each group on the Investigation Journal page now and note one tricky card. Keep the page open for the lunch design later. If groups differ on milk or hummus, celebrate the reasoning and agree a class convention before packing.
- **Pack a balanced lunch:** You drive the lunchbox-builder on the IWB; pupils call foods, no devices. Frame energy as fuel and vitamins as what fruit and veg bring, then model sandwich, apple, yogurt, egg and water. Protect a full 10 minutes so every pupil designs their own lunch on the journal page, naming groups and the main fuel food—not exact numbers.
- **What makes a lunch balanced?:** Draw evidence from the sort, the interactive build and journal designs. Prompt: which lunch covered more groups, and why water still belongs even at zero energy. Keep talk on mix plus sensible fuel—never ranking home lunchboxes as good or bad.

What it should show

Sort key: fruit & veg — apple, banana, carrot sticks, cherry tomatoes; bread — wholemeal sandwich, brown soda bread roll; dairy — plain yogurt, cheese stick; protein — boiled egg, ham slice, hummus pot; treats — cereal bar; drinks header empty. A balanced design covers several main groups with water and a clear main fuel food (usually the sandwich). Odd placements often come from colour-sorting or treating hummus as a dip only—redirect to the main ingredient job.



Misconceptions & interventions

- **All drinks are the same, or treats are 'bad' and banned.** — Frame treats as a small group we enjoy sometimes, not forbidden. Water is the everyday school drink; milk can sit as drink or dairy if the group explains why.
- **Highest energy automatically means the best lunch.** — Point at the interactive meters: group spread matters as well as fuel. Swap sandwich for crisps and ask what groups disappear even if energy stays high.
- **Hummus belongs with dips or veg because of how it is eaten.** — Ask what the main ingredient is—beans—and place it under meat, fish, eggs, beans and nuts. Affirm the reasoning, not just the pile.

Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Start with fruit & veg against treats only, then add the other four headers once those two piles are stable. • Pair at the teacher table to place two cards with a spoken job reason before joining the full set.	• After the sort, justify every placement in one sentence aloud to a partner. • On the journal design, name the main fuel food and one group still missing.	• Critique the class interactive build: swap one item and say which meter and the energy bar change. • Argue both sides for milk as drink versus dairy, then state a class convention for the design step.

Cross-curricular hook

Link to SPHE healthy living and the HSE Healthy Food for Life pyramid language pupils may already meet at home.