

# LESSON PLAN

Use this lesson plan to reinforce the concepts learned in TOP Star.

## Restaurants and Menus ECE

**Purpose:** Children will recognize healthy and less healthy menu options.

**Materials Needed:**

1. Pictures of restaurant menu items (cut out from magazines or other online materials)
2. Printed and cut out red and green circles (provided). Tape circles back to back on a popsicle stick (so it is in the middle) and the popsicle stick can be used as a handle.

**Instructions:**

1. Start by telling the children that you will be talking about the different kinds of foods people eat at restaurants.
2. Hold up the green circle and explain that some foods we can get at restaurants are healthy. Today, we will call those foods “green light” foods, because they help us grow and “go” places.
3. Tell the children that “green light” options are foods like fruits, vegetables, milk, yogurt, and certain meats and grains. They are less-greasy and sugary than other foods. Explain that these foods help our bodies stay healthy and strong.
4. Hold up the red circle and explain that some foods are okay to eat every once in a while, but not all of the time. Today, we will call these “red light” foods, because we should stop and think before eating these foods.
5. Tell the children that “red light” options have lots of added sugar or are fried and greasy. If we eat them too often, our bodies will not feel well.
6. Now play the red-light, green-light game. Invite the children to line up on one side of the room. Stand on the other side of the room and hold up one of the pictures of a menu item you cut out from a magazine or online resource (examples of foods you can use as green or red light foods are provided in this lesson plan). Display the corresponding green or red circle with the picture. (Example: if you hold up french fries, also hold up the red circle.) If you hold up a “red light” food with the red circle, the children should not move. Say, “That’s right, we stop and think about this food!” If you hold up a “green light” food with the green circle, the children will take a step forward toward the other side of the classroom. If a child takes a step forward when you hold up a red-light food and the red circle, they must take a step back toward the start line. Play until the children have reached your side of the room.
7. Suggest that next time they eat at a restaurant with their family, they could ask their parents to help them find a healthy “green light” option.

**Take Home:** Handout – 10 tips eating away from home

**Resource for staff & caretakers:** <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/ten-tips-snack-tips-for-parents>





**10 tips**  
Nutrition  
Education Series



**MyPlate**  
**MyWins**

Based on the  
**Dietary  
Guidelines  
for Americans**

# Eating foods away from home

**Full-service and fast-food restaurants, convenience stores, and grocery stores offer a variety of meal options.** Typically, these meals are higher in calories, saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars than the food you prepare at home. Think about ways to make healthier choices when eating food away from home.

## 1 Consider your drink

Choose water, unsweetened tea, and other drinks without added sugars to complement your meal. If you drink alcohol, choose drinks lower in added sugars and be aware of the alcohol content of your beverage. Keep in mind that many coffee drinks may be high in saturated fat and added sugar.

## 2 Savor a salad

Start your meal with a salad packed with vegetables to help you feel satisfied sooner. Ask for dressing on the side and use a small amount of it.



## 3 Share a dish

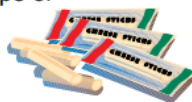
Share a dish with a friend or family member. Or, ask the server to pack up half of your entree before it comes to the table to control the amount you eat.

## 4 Customize your meal

Order a side dish or an appetizer-sized portion instead of a regular entree. They're usually served on smaller plates and in smaller amounts.

## 5 Pack your snack

Pack fruit, sliced vegetables, low-fat string cheese, or unsalted nuts to eat during road trips or long commutes. No need to stop for other food when these snacks are ready-to-eat.



## 6 Fill your plate with vegetables and fruit

Stir-fries, kabobs, or vegetarian menu items usually have more vegetables. Select fruits as a side dish or dessert.

## 7 Compare the calories, fat, and sodium

Many menus now include nutrition information. Look for items that are lower in calories, saturated fat, and sodium. Check with your server if you don't see them on the menu. For more information, check [www.FDA.gov](http://www.FDA.gov).

## 8 Pass on the buffet

Have an item from the menu and avoid the "all-you-can-eat" buffet. Steamed, grilled, or broiled dishes have fewer calories than foods that are fried in oil or cooked in butter.

## 9 Get your whole grains

Request 100% whole-wheat breads, rolls, and pasta when choosing sandwiches, burgers, or main dishes.



## 10 Quit the "clean your plate club"

You don't have to eat everything on your plate. Take leftovers home and refrigerate within 2 hours. Leftovers in the refrigerator are safe to eat for about 3 to 4 days.

## Examples of “red light” menu options:

- Soda
- French fries
- Chicken nuggets
- Chicken tenders
- Ice cream cone
- Pizza
- Hamburger
- Hot dog
- Chips
- Cookies

## Examples of “green light” menu options:

- Milk
- Water
- Apple slices
- Fruit bowl
- Applesauce
- Yogurt
- Vegetables
- Pasta
- Grilled chicken or fish
- Vegetable sandwich
- Rice and beans
- Soup
- Salads

