

Cooking

The following is a basic guide to running cooking activities in a primary school classroom. Although not exhaustive, it provides a checklist for the main features you need to consider before organising and running cooking activities with primary school children.

Cooking is an interesting and dynamic way to engage children. However, it is important that any cooking session is well prepared in advance to ensure that the learning objectives you wish to convey are delivered as intended. In addition, when cooking it is of vital importance that food hygiene and safety procedures are followed.

Before cooking

	Select recipes to cook that are appropriate for the age/ability of the children you teach. For example, non-cook recipes are suitable for younger children. Think about your learning objectives and select recipes to match, e.g. <i>I want them to learn how to use a knife safely, therefore we are going to make a fruit salad.</i>
	Ensure that you are confident and competent to demonstrate a skill, use equipment safely or make a recipe – you will be the role model. You may wish to practice at home first.
	Ensure that a parent/carer permission letter has been sent home.
	Make sure the teaching assistant understands the learning objectives and what will be happening, along with any support that you may require.
	Create an area to cook. Tables should be cleaned with anti-bacterial spray and covered with a wipe clean surface/tablecloth.
	Decide on the number of children who can cook. This will depend on a number of factors, including the age/ability of children, number of staff available, room size and equipment/facilities available. If some children are cooking, you will need to organise activities for those who are not.
	Ensure that you have all ingredients required and that they are stored correctly. Some foods may need part preparing or pre-measuring before your demonstration, if this is not part of your learning objective, time is tight or it is not appropriate for the ability/age of the children, e.g. cutting a slice of melon, weighing flour.
	Make sure that the equipment is clean and in good working order. Children's hands are smaller – so check that the equipment is of an appropriate size and that is appropriate for the children's age/ability. Check with any policies that the school or local authority may have, e.g. no glass.
	Make sure there is a sink, or washing-up bowl, in which to wash your hands.
	Place all the ingredients and equipment on trays ready for the cooking session – only get out what you need.
	Ensure that you have a bin for food waste, aprons for children to wear and cloths for cleaning.

During cooking

	Make sure that every child washes their hands, ties back long hair, removes jewellery and wears an apron. Get them ready to cook.
	Ensure that children understand what is expected – go through your aims. If there are any new skills, ingredients or equipment, make sure that you talk about these first.
	Place a plate or bowl in the middle of the table for waste. Encourage children to place peelings or food scraps here.
	Monitor the use of knives. The safe use of knives should have been demonstrated before children use them.
	Use a chopping board for cutting, slicing and chopping food.
	The use of electrical equipment should always be supervised. For young children, adults should use the equipment and demonstrate its safe use. You may decide that older children can help, e.g. pour hot water from a kettle, use a whisk.
	If an oven or hob is being used, ensure its use is supervised. For young children, adults should place/remove items from the oven or hob. Do not wear disposable plastic aprons if using an oven or hob.

After cooking

	Cooked food that is not eaten straightway should be cooled quickly (if hot), covered and refrigerated.
	Who will do the washing up? Although it is an important part of preparing and cooking food, it may not be essential for every child to be involved every time. Sometimes you may decide that an adult could take over this responsibility to allow children to write recipes or complete an evaluation activity.
	Tidy up and clean the food preparation area. This might involve cleaning the table cloths and putting the equipment away.