

5 Beginning Grammar Activities With Food Packages

By Elena Shvidko

Level: Beginning-level students

Do you get rid of food packages once they become empty? You most likely do—but these packages can be recycled as very effective teaching materials. Technically, any package will do: a cereal box, a cookies package, a can, or a chips bag. With these items, you can create many purposeful, engaging, and fun activities for your classes; here are five grammar activities to get you started.

1. Practicing Quantifiers (Activity 1)

Quantifiers present a great deal of challenge for English language learners, but food packages can be an excellent tool for practicing these linguistic items.

Give each student a food package (use different types of packages that you have collected).

Pair students up and have them ask each other the following questions:

- Is there **a lot of** fat in your food?
- Does your food have **few/many** calories?
- Is there **any** saturated fat in your food?
- **How much** cholesterol is in your food?
- Does your food have **little** fat?

Alternatively, you can ask similar questions to the whole class:

- Whose food has **only a little** fat?
- Whose food doesn't have **any** cholesterol?

2. Practicing Quantifiers (Activity 2)

For this activity, students once again work with a partner. Each student has a package with a recipe on the back of it (works best with packages from cookies or cakes mixes). The students will write down a list of the ingredients from that recipe without the quantity and give this list to their partner. The partner has to ask questions in order to find out the quantity of the ingredients for that particular recipe. Then, the students switch roles and repeat this activity.

Example

Student 1: How many eggs do I need to make these cookies?

Student 2: You need three eggs.

Student 1: How much jam should I put?

Student 2: You should only add a little jam, perhaps 3 tablespoons.

3. Practicing Descriptions and Quantifiers

Pair your students up. One student will describe nutrition facts of the product on his or her package and the other student will evaluate it and estimate its healthiness. They have to use the

words *fat, calories, cholesterol, vitamins, protein* and the quantifiers *few, a few, much, a lot, little, many*, etc.

4. Practicing Verb Tenses and Imperatives

Using the recipe on the package, students can practice the past and future tenses and the imperative form of verbs. Ask students to read the instructions on their recipes and underline all the verbs in the imperative form. Then, in groups, they will describe the cooking process to each other, by using either the future or past tense. For example, *I took.... I mixed....* or *I will take.... I will mix...*

5. Practicing Comparative Degrees of Adjectives

Students can also practice comparative degrees of adjectives (in small groups or in pairs) by comparing their products. For example, “This product is healthier (more delicious, more nutritious) because _____.” Or, “This meal is easier (more difficult to prepare) because _____.”

Nowadays, there are lots of excellent resources for language teachers. However, we must not forget the “old-school” materials that are easily accessible and most of the times free of charge. I hope that some of the suggestions presented here will generate more ideas for your own classes. Let your imagination guide you!

***Elena Shvidko** is a PhD student in SLS/ESL at Purdue University where she also teaches freshmen composition courses. Her academic interests include sociocultural aspects in SLA, intercultural rhetoric, and WAP.*