

Grades 3–5

What are processed foods?

Food Charades

Writing step-by-step directions

Write on the board “Processed Foods.” Then ask students to brainstorm what they think processed foods are and write their responses on the board. Tell students that processed foods aren’t the same as “junk food”; processed foods range from precut fruits and vegetables to frozen prepared meals. Foods are processed to make them ready to eat, to preserve freshness, and to improve safety, taste, and appeal. Ask students to think about the last processed food that they ate (for example, a breakfast of frozen pancakes with syrup, toast with butter and jam, or cereal with low-fat milk). Then challenge them to write the steps for preparing the food and the steps for preparing it from scratch. (With pancakes, for example, remind students that pancake mix is also a processed food.) Ask volunteers to act out the steps for preparing frozen pancakes versus making them from scratch. Then invite volunteers to act out other food-preparation steps, such as

- eating applesauce from a can or jar/making it from scratch
- eating baby carrots/picking and peeling carrots
- eating a frozen cherry pie/baking a pie from scratch
- eating sliced turkey from the deli/roasting and carving a turkey
- drinking orange juice from a carton/squeezing oranges

Students will see that while cooking from scratch can be fun and healthy, processed foods also offer healthful choices and are big timesavers for busy families!

Define it!

What is a processed food? A processed food is any food that is deliberately changed before we eat it. Processing can be as simple as freezing or drying a food or as complex as enriching or fortifying a food.



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