Low Vision Conference:

Increasing Low Vision Skills for Students at the Practical Academic Level

Kitchen Techniques for Basic Food Preparation: Our Bag of Tricks

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Kitchen Techniques for Basic Food Preparation: Our bag of tricks

Kitchen Organization

1. Identify the three major work centers.

   **Refrigerator center:**
   The starting point of food preparation for fresh and frozen foods.

   **Range Center:**
   For the cooking of foods. Cookware, small appliances, cooking spoons, pancake turners, tongs, ladles, and pot holders stored in this area. Potholders should always be close to the stove.

   **Sink center:**
   For food cleaning and preparation and clean up. Peelers, knives, cutting boards, and colanders are stored here. For convenience dinnerware, glassware, and flatware may be stored near the sink so they can be easily stored after cleaning.

2. Group equipment, supplies, and tools needed for each activity together, if possible.

3. Store equipment close to where you use them first.

4. Store the most-used items within easy reach and the least-used items the farthest away.

5. Place items so that they are easy to see and reach. Allow enough space so they can be easily grasped and replaced.

6. Return equipment to its correct location.

7. Keep countertops free of clutter.

8. Label/mark cabinets and drawers with Braille and large print cards so everyone knows where things should be stored. Put things away in their proper place. This helps students because things are where they were the last time they were in the kitchen. Be consistent. (Show how to label inside the drawer so kitchen doesn’t look institutional)

9. Consider students with physical impairments: may have to use lower shelves for storing plates, glasses. Set up your kitchen with them in mind.

10. Think of each Center as a training area: keep the Range Center clear of unneeded traffic- so if you have a student setting the table they won’t be getting in the space of the student being instructed at the range. It is already stressful enough at the stove without having to move around so someone can get flatware or plates.
Planning a Grocery List


2. Write down general lunch ideas. Soup, sandwiches, Ramen noodles, etc…

3. Do the same for breakfast and snacks.

4. If you have food from prior shopping trips or bought items on sale, check your pantry or cabinets to see what you still have on hand.

5. Check recipes for other ingredients listed, or item you don’t want in the recipe if it is optional. Add these to list.

6. While shopping, be sure to check the back of boxed products to see if you need to buy: eggs, oil, tomatoes, tomato sauce, milk, etc… Be sure you purchase those items.

Organizing your Grocery list

1. Get a piece of paper and put headings of the following categories:
   a) Produce
   b) Breads
   c) Boxed products
   d) Canned goods
   e) Meats
   f) Dairy
   g) Non-food items
   h) Frozen

2. Based on your menu and ideas for snacks, lunch and breakfast, place the needed items under the categories above. Put only one item on a line as it makes it easier to not overlook something. It is also easier to scratch out each item as you place it in your shopping cart.

3. When making out your list, don’t forget to put the size container you want. Example: you can buy eggs in half dozen, dozen, 18 eggs to a carton or 2 1/2 dozen. This is especially important if you are using a shopper’s assistant at the store.

4. If there is a particular brand you prefer, be sure to let your assistant know.

5. Grouping foods under categories helps keep you or your shopper’s assistant from walking from one end of the store to the other.

6. When you run out of foods you eat frequently, such as bread, maintaining a list as those items are used will help prevent you forgetting to pick them up when you are doing your shopping.

7. Some people prefer to organize their shopping list based on the layout of the store. This is fine, but requires adjustments when moving to a different store.

Shopping Tips

1. The more prepared a food is when you buy it; the more expensive it will be.

2. If you keep some menus flexible, it allows you to take advantage of unknown specials. Ask your assistant to tell you of any good deals. Use the newspaper to look for specials. They come out in the Thursday paper.
3. Buying fruits and vegetables during their growing season gives you the largest selection and they are generally cheaper as they are more abundant.

4. Keep your basic food supplies on hand. Items you may use frequently: bread, milk, eggs, peanut butter (makes an easy emergency meal), or some frozen foods.

5. Always check your pantry, refrigerator, freezer and vegetable bin prior to making your list. If you have produce, make sure it is still fresh before you decide you can use it at a later date.

The following sample pages can be used as a model.
Grocery Shopping

1. **Have an idea of your particular student’s abilities** before you ever begin planning your menus. Help them plan their meals with that in mind. Locate recipes that may challenge them without completely frustrating both them and you!

2. **Shopping should be instructional and the teaching begins as soon as your meal planning happens.** It hurts the students to be haphazard and they lose precious training time.

3. **The student needs to learn to communicate very specific information** such as Brand, size of the can or box they want, how prepared the product is, frozen versus canned products and fresh from cooking times the appliance it will be prepared on/in.

4. **Plan meals before shopping.** A week’s worth of food. Students aren’t going to have the luxury of running to the store at the drop of a hat unless they live next door or within walking distance.

5. **Make out a shopping list in student’s medium.** Teach the student’s to check pantries and refrigerators for food already on hand. The shopping list needs to be one in categories (meats, diary, frozen, canned. This helps their shopping assistant not have to walk from one end of the store back to the other.

6. **When buying a boxed or package item—remember to have them check** or have their shopping assistant look to see if they need something else (eggs, oil, tomato paste, etc.)

7. **Find out about the student’s hometown** and teach them with that information in mind.

8. If at all possible **don’t shop at 5:00 or peak times.** Besides being extremely crowded it’s difficult to have quality instruction.

9. As soon as possible, **the students should be learning to communicate what they want with the adult** assuming the role as an assistant. Don’t lose the opportunity to give the students feedback on their directions. Show them the benefits of being organized.

10. **They can and should ask to check some items: food with expiration dates, fresh vegetables.** If they aren’t sure of the sizes, help them see/feel the difference and explain how many servings each size makes.

11. **Index cards can be made after one writes out the shopping list so** the student can take them to the store to mark their food as they shop or to mark the food after returning from shopping. In classrooms where there are mixed readers, the cards should be in Braille and large print.

12. **Regarding price estimates, students should become aware of the approximate costs of food items so they can learn to make informed purchases.** Staff can either take a trip to the store to try and come up with some generalized price lists or get the Thursday paper and look in the food sections. Teach the students about sales and buying things in season (they are cheaper). Try to teach about budgeting. If a meal is more expensive on one trip, have them shop for a cheaper one the next time.
13. **Plan a trip-activity to the grocery store prior to the beginning of a cooking program.** This is especially preferable at the beginning of school when everyone is working on assessment books and prior to the yearly ARD.

**Book List**
- Beyond TV Dinners
- 365 Easy One Meal Deals
- 365 Quick and Easy Microwave Recipes
- TSBVI Activity Routines
- A Guide to Independent Living

**Catalogs**
- Maxi Aids: [www.maxiaids.com](http://www.maxiaids.com)

**Resources**
- Each other/teachers
- School Media Center
- Parents
Food Storage

When you return from shopping, storing your food properly is important. Sort your food into groups: frozen foods go directly into the freezer; fruits and vegetables, separate those for refrigeration and those to be stored elsewhere; dairy products either to the freezer or refrigerator; store other foods where they are easily accessed and in groups for easy identification such as canned goods and boxed products.

Store foods that need to be frozen or refrigerated first. Remember foods tend to lose moisture or take on other flavors in the refrigerator. Wrap food to be stored in plastic bags or put in containers that seal.

Store vegetables in closed containers or in the crisper drawers. The temperature of the refrigerator should be between 38 and 42 degrees F.

**Needs to be Frozen**

- Ice cream
- Frozen dinners/meals
- Frozen juices
- Food found in frozen section at grocery store

**Can be Frozen**

- Meat, seafood, poultry
- Bread
- Milk
- Cookies
- Butter
- Flour
- Nuts

NOTE: Meats should not be thawed then refrozen. Loaves of bread thaw better when standing up on end.

**Not Recommended to Freeze**

- Sodas
- Condiments (pickles, salad dressings, mayonnaise, mustard)
- Oil
- Fresh produce (unless prepared to be frozen follow specific freezing directions)
- Cheese (it dries out)
- Crackers
- Canned goods
- Eggs
- Packaged dry goods (noodles, rice, cereal)
- Canned biscuits/crescent rolls- always check the label. If you purchase it out of the refrigerator section or dairy case; store in the refrigerator.
Cool, Dry Place
- Spices
- Boxed products
- Canned goods

Away from Food
- Cleaning supplies
- Chemicals
Measuring Techniques

1. Use pouring techniques described in measuring liquids, or dip from wide-mouthed jar.
2. Pour as near to the work area as possible.
3. Place container into or over a larger receptacle to catch possible spills or overflow.
4. Pouring liquid into a larger container after measuring makes carrying easier.
5. To measure liquids such as vanilla extract, almond extract, etc.:
   a) Place a handled measuring cup on a flat surface
   b) Place the required measuring spoon on top of it, so that both handles are together and the bowl of the spoon rests on the top of the cup (this helps the spoon in a balanced position).
   c) Pour the extract into the spoon
   d) Any dropped extract will fall into the bowl of the cup and can be returned to the bottle with a funnel
Measurement-Equivalents

**Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tsp.</td>
<td>teaspoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tbsp.</td>
<td>tablespoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pkg.</td>
<td>package</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oz.</td>
<td>ounce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lb.</td>
<td>pound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pt.</td>
<td>pint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qt.</td>
<td>quart</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Equivalent Measurements**

- 3 tsp. = 1 Tbsp.
- 4 Tbsp. = ¼ cup
- 5 Tbsp. + 1 tsp. = 1/3 cup
- 8 Tbsp. = ½ cup
- 16 Tbsp. = 1 cup
- 8 oz. = 1 cup
- 1 oz. = 2 Tbsp.
- 16 oz. = 1 lb.
- 1 lb. = 2 cups
- 2 cups = 1 pt.
- 4 cups = 1 qt.
- 4 qts. = 1 gallon
- 1 stick butter = ½ cup

**Food Equivalents**:

- 8-oz. Cheddar cheese = 2 cups grated
- 5lbs. flour = 17 ½ cups
- Juice of 1 lemon = 2-3 Tbsp.
- 1 lb. brown sugar = 2 ¼ cups packed
- 1 lb. powdered sugar = 4 cups
- 1 lb. granulated sugar = 2 cups
Measuring Dry Ingredients

1. Place container to be measured from in a safe position on the counter.
2. Place a plate or tray next to it.
3. Place a bowl on top of the plate (the plate is placed under the bowl in order to collect any spills when transferring the ingredient from the container to the bowl, making cleanup easier).
4. Bring the appropriate measuring spoon/cup and a spatula to the container.
5. Remove the lid from the container.
6. Set the lid in a clean area and memorize the position.
7. Grasp the spoon/cup by the tip of the handle.
8. Dip it into the dry ingredient, using a scooping motion.
9. Observe the change in weight.
10. Hold the spoon/cup in a horizontal position above the container with the little finger resting on the rim of the container to maintain the spoon/cup in a fixed position.
11. Locate the spatula and hold it in a spreading position using the tip of the knife to locate the spoon/cup.
12. Turn the spatula to a slicing position and move it across the top of the spoon/cup, "shaving" away the excess ingredient.
13. Place the spatula on the plate.
14. Bring the measuring spoon/cup toward the bowl or the bowl to the measuring spoon/cup, keeping it in a horizontal position.
15. Tip the contents of the spoon/cup into the bowl.
16. Check with index finger to make sure all has been removed from the spoon/cup.
17. Replace the lid on the container.
18. Clean the counter and utensils.
Measuring Liquids

1. The cup or container into which the liquid is to be poured should be placed on a flat surface, over a plate or in the sink to catch any spills.

2. Position the spout of the pouring container at the rim of the receptacle before the liquid flows out.

3. Hold the pouring container in one hand and place the spout between the thumb and forefinger of the other hand, resting on the rim of the receptacle.

4. Pour slowly.

5. If pouring container is full, adjustment will need to be made in the angle to which it may be tipped. Also, if liquids or oils are kept in wide-necked containers, they may be dipped with a long-handled spoon, bent so the bowl forms a right angle with the handle.

6. If liquids or oils are kept in wide necked containers, they may be dipped with a long handled spoon bent so the bowl forms a right angle with the handle.

7. Note the fullness of the receptacle in one, or a combination of, these tips:
   a) Place the finger over the rim of the container
   b) Notice the difference in the sound of the liquid as it nears the top
   c) Note the weight of the container
Spreading Techniques

1. Radial Method: Place the substance on the center of the food and spread to the edges. A spreader, dinner knife or spoon can be used. Soft to semi-soft substances work best for this method.

2. Edge-to-Edge Method: Place substance at the edge of the food. Spread to the opposite edge. A spreader, dinner knife or spoon can be used. Soft to semi-soft substances work best for this method.

3. Clock Method: Place a small amount of the substance in each corner and in the center and spread using one of the above methods. A spreader or dinner knife can be used. This method does not work effectively with a spoon. Hard substances like cold stick butter or margarine are best applied using this method.

To determine complete coverage of a substance onto the surface of a selected food, use sound and tactual cues.

Heating peanut butter slightly will make spreading easier.
Knife Safety Tips

1. Always cut with the blade of the knife angled away from you. Never try to open a can or bottle with a knife or use a knife as a screwdriver. Don't use a knife to cut string, bones, metal, or paper.

2. Always use a cutting board and keep it firmly in place by planting a damp towel or paper towel underneath to keep it from moving around the countertop. Never cut anything that is placed in your hand. Use the board and make sure it has ample space for the task.

3. Use the right knife for the job: paring knives for paring, a chef's knife for chopping or mincing, a slicing knife for slicing, and so forth.

4. Hand-wash your knives and dry thoroughly. Never put knives into the dishwasher or drop them into a sink filled with sudsy water. Always hold a knife by its handle, never the blade.

5. Store knives properly: a knife block or knife rack is best. If you are storing knives in a drawer, make sure to keep them in a separate compartment, away from other utensils.

6. If you should happen to drop a knife, don't try to catch it. Step back alertly and wait until the knife comes to a complete rest before picking it up. Keep your mind focused on the job when using a knife.
Slicing Tips

1. **DO NOT HOLD ITEM TO BE SLICED IN YOUR HAND**
2. Locate cutting board, food, and knife.
3. Hold knife in preferred hand.
4. Place food on cutting board and hold securely with opposite hand.
5. Have index finger outstretched and placed on back of knife blade.
6. With opposite hand using that index finger to estimate portion of food to be sliced then tuck under away from knife blade.
7. Using index finger on the knife as a guide, apply gentle pressure, carefully use a sawing motion to slice and penetrate food completely until the knife reaches the cutting board.
8. Repeat this process until desired amount of food is sliced.
9. Clean work area.
10. Magna Wonder knives can be used and come with a slicing guide.
Notes:
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Figure 1 TSBVI logo.

This project is supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Special Education Program (OSEP). Opinions expressed here are the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the Department of Education.

Figure 2 IDEAs that Work logo and OSEP disclaimer.