

LESSON 25



Veggiemania

Background

The four most popular vegetables in the United States are potatoes, tomatoes, iceberg lettuce, and onions. These vegetables, unfortunately, often end up as french fries, onion rings, or potato chips, and as ketchup, lettuce, and onions on fast-food hamburgers.

Although there is no such thing as a bad vegetable, some vegetables are more nutrient dense than others, meaning that they contain more nutrients such as vitamins and minerals. The question, then, is which vegetables are more nutrient dense than others? All vegetables are good, but in this lesson, students learn which vegetables contain the most nutrients.

Components that can be used to rate the nutrient density of vegetables include vitamins such as vitamin C and folate; minerals such as potassium, calcium, and iron; carotenoids (which act as antioxidants); and fiber.

- The top vegetables (based on nutrient density) are broccoli, cabbage, carrots, chard, collard greens, winter squash, sweet potatoes, kale, spinach, and tomatoes.
- Good vegetables (all the rest) are asparagus, avocado, cauliflower, celery, romaine lettuce, parsley, squash, green beans, beets, corn (fresh or frozen), eggplant, mushrooms, onions, radishes, and turnips.

The basic message is that all vegetables are good to eat, but some are better than others in terms of the nutrients and benefits they provide the body. Of the four most popular vegetables in the United States (potatoes, tomatoes, iceberg lettuce, and onions), only tomatoes could be categorized as a top vegetable. Potatoes, even though they contain vitamins and minerals, are digested quickly and are similar to refined grains in their effects on blood sugar. Students (as well as everyone else) should be encouraged to eat more vegetables from the top category.

Estimated Teaching Time and Related Subject Areas

Estimated teaching time: 1 hour

Related subject areas: math, science

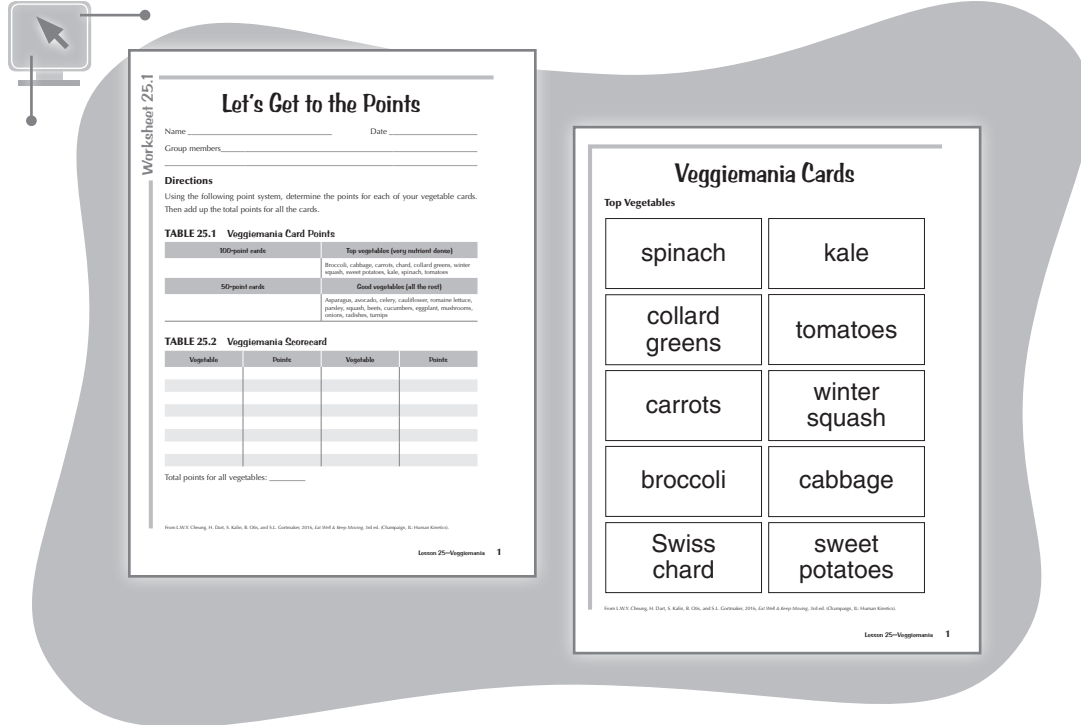
Objectives

- Understand that all vegetables are good, but some are more nutrient dense (and therefore more nutritious) than others.
- Identify the vegetables that are very nutrient dense.
- Demonstrate the parts of a safe workout while learning about nutrient density.

Materials

- Five containers (such as bags or boxes)
- Worksheet 25.1, Let's Get to the Points
- Veggiemanía cards (cards displaying the names of vegetables)

Make two copies of each card so that you have 50 to 60 cards to spread out, faceup, at the opposite end of the room.



Procedure

Part I

1. Ask the students to raise their hands if they have ever eaten any of the following vegetables: broccoli, cabbage, carrots, chard, collard greens, winter squash, sweet potatoes, kale, spinach, or tomatoes.
2. Explain to the students that if they have eaten any of those vegetables, then they have eaten some of the best, the healthiest, and the most nutrient-dense vegetables available.
3. Explain that a nutrient-dense vegetable contains a lot of the vitamins and minerals our bodies need to grow, to be healthy, and to work right.
4. Discuss additional benefits of eating vegetables that are nutrient dense. Such vegetables contain a lot of nutrients, especially vitamins A and C and fiber, which can help protect the body against heart disease and other diseases.

Part II

As in previous lessons, this lesson should follow the format of the safe workout.

1. Lead the students through a warm-up and stretch.
Warm-up—The first part of the safe workout, in which slow movements get the body ready for stretching and the fitness activity.
2. Explain to the students that they are going to participate in a fitness activity focusing on nutrient-dense vegetables.
Fitness activity—The part of the safe workout in which strength and endurance fitness exercises are performed.

3. Have the students form five groups and line up one behind the other on one side of the classroom.
4. All students in each group will be moving nonstop in their line. Remind the students that eating right is only half the story—they must also be active!
5. Place a container next to each group line. Students will put their Veggiemania cards into this container. (This and the next step can be done beforehand.)
6. On the opposite side of the classroom, spread out the Veggiemania cards on the floor, with the vegetable names facing up (see figure 25.1).
7. Explain that when you say “Go,” the first person in each line should jog or walk to the other side of the room, choose a Veggiemania card that shows the most nutrient-dense vegetable he can find (without taking too much time), return (jogging or walking) to the line, put the card into the container, and then go to the end of the line, where he should continue pacing (marching or jogging in place). The next student in line should take a turn as soon as the card is in the container.
8. Conclude the game once all the cards have been picked up or when time is up (the length of time is up to you).
9. Lead the students in a cool-down and a stretch.

Cool-down—The part of the safe workout in which your body slows down and recovers from the fitness activity.

Stretch—The last part of the safe workout, in which you do exercises that improve flexibility fitness (see the Stretch and Strength Fitness Diagrams on the web resource).

10. Have the students in each group sit around their container and remove the Veggiemania cards.
11. Distribute Worksheet 25.1, Let’s Get to the Points, to each group. Explain the vegetable point system, and have each group add up the points on their cards and share their answers with the other groups.
12. Have each group share its 100-point (Top Vegetables) cards, and write these on the board. Encourage students to eat more of these nutrient-dense vegetables.

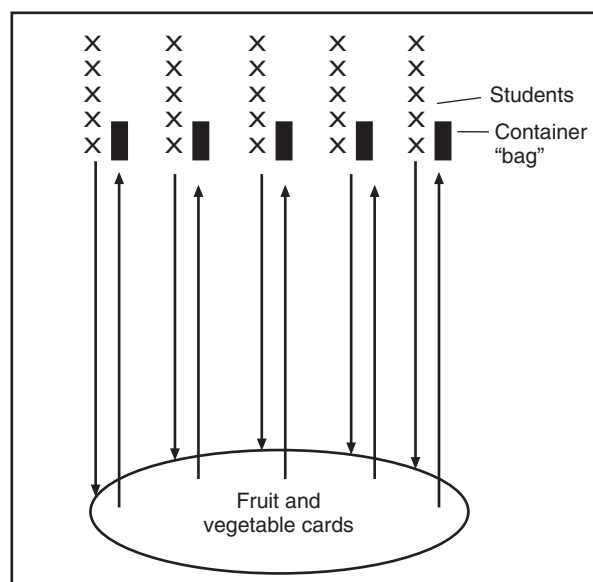


Figure 25.1 Line diagram for Veggiemania.