

Topic:
The Five
Food Groups



Lesson 1

Meet the Five Food Group Friends

This first lesson will focus on identifying various foods, classifying them by their food group, and understanding that eating from all five food groups helps keep us healthy. Students will be introduced to the **Food Group Friends** through a variety of hands-on learning activities, from engaging in dramatic play and “checking out” groceries, to becoming part of a food group themselves while they learn to classify foods.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to...

- Name the five **MyPlate** food groups and be able to identify food choices within each group.
- Describe the importance of eating foods from all five food groups.
- Demonstrate proper handwashing techniques and identify the importance of washing hands before and after preparing food and eating.

Essential Questions

- What are the names of the five food groups?
- Which foods belong in each group?



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Supplies and Preparation

Discover MyPlate Components*

- *The Five Food Groups* poster
- *Reach for the Sky* song
- Food Cards
- **Friendship Pocket Look and Cook Recipe**
(A copy for each student and to display.
Teacher recipe instructions and supplies on pp. 77-79)
- **Emergent Readers: *Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Protein Foods, Dairy,* and *Where Food Comes From***
(Teacher and student versions)
- **Food Group Friends Profile Cards**
- **Student Workbook** [WB; Activities 1-5, pp. 5-9, 11, 12]
- **STAR Chart**
- **Parent Handout: *Welcome to School Lunch!***

Additional Supplies

- Suggested books** for **Book Club**:
 - *Bread and Jam for Frances* by Russell Hoban
 - *I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato* by Lauren Child
 - *Delicious! A Pumpkin Soup Story* by Helen Cooper
- School food menu
- Crayons, scissors, glue, construction paper, paper plates, pipe cleaners, tissue paper, cardboard pieces/centers of paper towel rolls, glue, large poster boards (if available), star stickers, markers

* Order or download at TeamNutrition.USDA.gov.

** Mention of these materials is not an endorsement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture over other materials that may be available on this subject.



Lesson 1

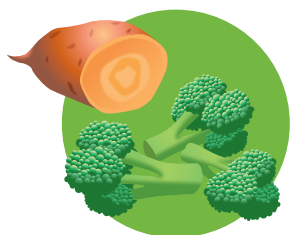
Whole Group Activities

The following activities help students meet the lesson's learning objectives, but you may incorporate them into your class time in any order.



Warm Up (Whole Group; 20 minutes)

1. Display the poster, *The Five Food Groups*, where students can see it. Gather children on the carpet in a circle. Place two hoops or a sorting mat in the center of the circle, then empty a large container of buttons or another manipulative in front of you. Demonstrate how the objects can be sorted into the hoops by attribute (such as color, size, or shape). Give children a few minutes to sort the remaining objects. Use the Activity Area on the poster to chart the sorted objects together with the class. Have students put the sorting objects back into the bin, then return to their seats on the floor.
2. Explain that, just like sorting objects (e.g., buttons) by color, shape, or size, we also sort foods into food groups. Foods in the same food group are similar in some way.
3. Use the poster as a visual reference as you introduce the five food groups: Fruit Group, Vegetable Group, Grains Group, Protein Foods Group, and Dairy Group. Ask students to think about what group(s) their favorite foods or meal belongs to. Use the Activity Area of the poster to chart a class tally. *Why do you think your favorite foods belong in those food groups?* Have students jump as they say, "Five Food Group Friends." Ask students: *How many words did you say?* Next, have students say, "Five Food Friends". *What is the first sound in each word? What letter matches that sound?* Now have them say their name: *What is the first sound in your name? Do you know a food that has the same first sound as your name?* (For example: Britney—broccoli.)
4. Spread out the **Food Cards** in the center of the circle. Ask students to name a food that they ate this week and choose it from the cards. Tape their cards on the board or to a flip chart.
5. Select two foods students chose from the Fruit Group—for example, an apple and an orange—and ask: *You named an apple and an orange. What food group do apples and oranges belong to?* Explain that fruits come from plants and can be many colors. They often taste sweet and are eaten as a snack or even for dessert. Fruits help our bodies stay healthy and grow. Ask students to name other fruits students mentioned. Review any that students missed. See the *Five Food Groups* handout for a list of foods found in each food group, available in **Appendix C: Five Food Groups** (pp. 103-105) or at: fns.usda.gov/tn/discover-myplate-nutrition-education-kindergarten.



Try this for fun! Ask students to smile and point to their teeth and gums. Some fruits help our bodies heal cuts and scratches and help keep our teeth and gums healthy.

6. Continue to ask students what food groups their **Food Cards** belong to:
 - Ask: *What food group do broccoli and sweet potatoes belong to?* (Vegetable) As with fruits, there are many different colors of vegetables, such as green, orange, and red. Some vegetables, like carrots and broccoli, can be fun to crunch when they are raw. Ask: *Who likes to eat baby carrots, jicama, or cherry tomatoes with low-fat ranch dip for snack?*



Lesson 1

Whole Group Activities (continued)

Try this for fun! Ask students to put on their “night-vision goggles” (put hands in the shape of glasses) and identify what other foods from the Vegetable Group they recognize either on the **Food Cards** or the poster. Use the Activity Area on the poster to write a list. Remind students that just like fruits, some vegetables provide our bodies with what we need (vitamins) to heal cuts and scratches. Some vegetables also have a vitamin that helps us have healthy eyes and skin and to see better in the dark!

- Ask: *What food group do chicken and peanut butter belong to?* (Protein Foods) Foods in the Protein Foods Group all have protein. Protein Foods can come from animals. (Some sound familiar, like fish comes from fish. Others have different names, like beef comes from cows, and ham comes from pigs). Some Protein Foods also come from plants, like beans, sunflower seeds, veggie burgers, tofu, and nuts. Share some of the other foods students named from this group. Protein Foods help us build strong muscles. Muscles help our bodies move.



Try this for fun! Have students move parts of their bodies; for example, taking a deep breath, blinking their eyes, smiling, snapping their fingers, tapping their toes, marching in place, or flexing their biceps. Explain that all movements, small and large, require muscles.

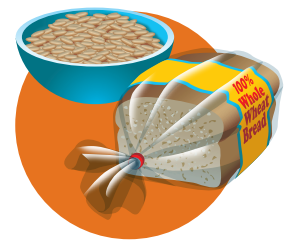
- Ask: *What food group do milk and yogurt belong to?* (Dairy) Most dairy foods are made from milk—like cheese and yogurt. Usually milk comes from cows, but milk can come from sheep and goats, too. Some fortified soy beverages (soy milk) are also in the Dairy Group. Foods in the Dairy Group help us have strong bones and teeth. Inside our body is a skeleton, which is made up of all the bones in the body. It helps us stand up and protects our brain, lungs, heart, and other parts of our insides.



Try this for fun! Sing the “Dry Bones”* song, starting with the toes and moving up the body to the head. For example, “The toe bone’s connected to the foot bone; the foot bone’s connected to the leg bone; the leg bone’s connected to the knee bone...”; and so on. Have students point to the corresponding bones as you sing.

**Dem Bones* by Bob Barner (*Chronicle Books, 1996*)

- Ask: *What food group do bread and rice belong to?* (Grains) Grains come from plants like rice, wheat, and oats. Wheat and some other grains are made into flour and used to make breads, tortillas, crackers, and noodles. Foods in the Grains Group give the body many things it needs to be healthy. They provide our bodies with the energy we need to move and play!



Try this for fun! Have students check their pulse by placing their first and second fingers on the inside of their wrists and pressing gently. Explain that their pulse is a measure of how fast their heart is beating. Next, have them do 10 jumping jacks, then measure their pulse again. What do they notice? Is it faster? Explain that their heart is beating faster because their body uses more energy to do the jumping jacks than it does to sit still. The body needs more energy to move muscles. The more active you are, the more energy your body needs from food.





“Sometimes” Foods

Some foods do not belong to any of the five food groups, such as: candy, jelly, cream cheese, soda, butter, sugar, honey, and fruit punch. They have extra sugar or saturated fat, but don't have what we need to be healthy. There are also some foods such as cookies and ice cream that belong to a food group (Grains Group and Dairy Group, respectively), but are less healthy choices because they are high in saturated fat and/or added sugars.

All of those are called “sometimes foods” because we should only eat them sometimes.

- Ask students: *We've talked about ways different foods help us stay healthy. What are some ways we mentioned?* (Helping our body have strong bones and teeth, building strong muscles, having energy to move and play, healing cuts and scratches.) Show students Nate and Kate on the poster. Explain to the students that throughout **Discover MyPlate**, Nate and Kate will be reminding us to choose healthy foods whenever possible. They eat foods from all the food groups so that they can be their best! Then explain that different foods provide our bodies with different things we need to stay healthy.

- Use the **Food Group Friends Profile Cards** to introduce students to **Farrah Fruit**, **Reggie Veggie**, **Jane Grain**, **Dean Protein**, and **Mary Dairy**.
- Show each **Food Group Friend** and talk about how they are made up of foods from a particular food group. Talk about how the **Food Group Friends** can help us remember which foods belong to which food group:

- Farrah Fruit** – apple, blackberries, bananas, watermelon, strawberry, kiwi, grapes, orange, cherries
- Reggie Veggie** – carrot, broccoli, snap peas, spinach, beans
- Jane Grain** – whole-wheat bread, whole-grain pasta (spaghetti and bow-tie), whole-grain cereal, brown rice, popcorn, graham crackers
- Dean Protein** – chicken, ham, egg, beans, peanuts
- Mary Dairy** – yogurt, milk, cheese, fortified soy alternatives (like soy yogurt and milk)

Display all of the **Food Group Friends Profile Cards** on the board or flip chart. Give each student a **Food Card**. Invite students to come up one at a time and “give” their card to the **Food Group Friend** that is made up of the same types of foods as their food card.

Then, review and discuss with the class which food group each **Food Card** belongs to. For example, beans could be given to **Dean Protein**. Look at **Dean Protein's** hair. It is made of beans. Beans are in the Protein Foods Group. Beans could also be given to **Reggie Veggie**. Look at **Reggie Veggie's** nose. It is a type of bean. Beans belong to both the Protein Foods Group and Vegetable Group!



Reach for the Sky Song (Whole Group; 10 minutes)

- Review the lyrics to the song *Reach for the Sky* (p. 106) with students. Have students focus on remembering the chorus. Go over new vocabulary and movements incorporated into the song.
- Have students stand where they have room to move, then play the song. (You can find a video of the song at fns.usda.gov/tn/discover-myplate-nutrition-education-kindergarten.) Encourage them to sing and dance. It's okay if they don't get the movements right, as long as they are moving!
- The second time around, give each student a **Food Card**. Stop the song after each verse. Have five students share what food group their card belongs to in the following manner: "An apple is a fruit. Broccoli is a vegetable." Give all a chance to participate.

**Book Club** (Whole Group; time will vary)

- **The children's books and discussion questions listed in Appendix A: Book Club (pp. 92–93) can be used to talk about the importance of eating a variety of foods from the five food groups**—which, for many students, means trying new foods. Such discussions can also be a useful way to encourage children to taste foods in the **Food Club** activity. They are suggested books, but you may find others in your library that can generate a similar discussion.

**Food Club**

(Whole Group, Two 60-minute sessions: 1. Handwashing Experiments, 2. Look and Cook Recipe)

Handwashing Experiments

- Explain that germs are tiny living things that are everywhere—on hands, doorknobs, backpacks, etc. We cannot see them, but they can make us sick. When we wash our hands, we get rid of the germs so they do not get into our bodies.
- Remind students when it is important to wash hands:
 - Before and after handling food or eating
 - After using the bathroom
 - After coughing, sneezing, or blowing their nose
 - After playing with pets or visiting a petting zoo
 - After playing outside
 - Whenever they are dirty
- Review proper handwashing routines with students. They should wash their hands with running water and soap for 20 seconds. Singing the ABCs while washing is a good way to ensure they are washing long enough. Remind students to scrub their palms, tops of their hands, under their fingernails, and between their fingers. They should rinse hands well under running water. Students should dry their hands with a clean towel or a paper towel.

★Teacher Tip★

Post reminders for students about proper handwashing techniques at your classroom sink and in school bathrooms.

Check out the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's free handwashing resources including posters, social media graphics, fact sheets, videos, and more: [cdc.gov/healthyschools/bam/child-development/how-to-wash-hands.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/bam/child-development/how-to-wash-hands.htm)



★Teacher Tip★

For an at-home activity: Ask students to demonstrate to their parents or caregivers how to wash their hands while singing the ABCs.

- Show **Wash Your Hands**, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s 30-second video: [cdc.gov/cdctv/healthyliving/hygiene/wash-your-hands.html](https://www.cdc.gov/cdctv/healthyliving/hygiene/wash-your-hands.html).
- There are several fun experiments your class can do to “test” handwashing methods and show how easily germs spread. Choose the option that works best for your class:

Option 1: Oil and Cinnamon Method

Divide students into groups of three. Have students rub one tablespoon of vegetable oil on their hands (like they would apply lotion). Sprinkle ½ tablespoon of ground cinnamon on each child’s hands—this represents the germs we pick up on our hands during the day. Have group members wash their hands in one of three ways:

- **Student 1:** Running water only
- **Student 2:** Running water and soap for 10 seconds
- **Student 3:** Running water and soap for 20 seconds while singing the ABCs

After everyone has washed in one of the three ways, have students look at each others’ hands, then ask: *What does it take to get all the germs off?* (Remind students that cinnamon is not really a germ; we just used it for practice.) We cannot see germs. So we need to follow the handwashing steps to make sure we get rid of germs.

Follow-up Activity: Have students color or shade in paper hand cutouts showing “dirty spots” that remained after each washing treatment.

Option 2: Paint Method

Ask students to line up in two to three lines of at least six students per line. Put a teaspoon of non-toxic, washable finger paint in the palm of a student’s hand at the beginning of the line. Spread it evenly over both hands, including the backs. Have the first student shake hands with the next student in line. Go down the line and have students shake hands with the child behind them, symbolizing how germs on hands can spread. Have students look at the last person in line to see what is on their hands. (Remind students that the paint is not really a germ; we just used it for practice.) Allow hands to dry completely (for a minute or two). Have students go to the sink in pairs and wash their hands using the proper handwashing steps. After one student washes, have a partner look for any remaining paint that was missed. We cannot see germs like we can see paint. So we need to follow the handwashing steps to make sure we get rid of germs.

Follow-up Activity: Have students draw a picture reminding everyone to wash all parts of their hands correctly. For example, if a student still had paint between their fingers after washing, have them create a sign reminding students to wash between their fingers.

- To review the importance of washing hands, read the books ***Germs Are Not for Sharing*** by Elizabeth Verdick and ***Wash Your Hands!*** by Margaret McNamara.

Discover MyPlate Food Club Rules

Explain to students that they are now going to be part of a food club, where they will get to prepare and taste foods (including some new foods) from all of the food groups.

Food Safety

Participants must follow these steps:



- **Handwashing:** Wash hands using soap and water, scrub and lather for 20 seconds, rinse under running water, and dry using a clean paper towel.
- **Surfaces:** Wash all tables, utensils, cutting boards, etc. with hot, soapy water. Wipe up spills immediately.
- **Fruits and Vegetables:** Rinse produce thoroughly under running water before eating. Pre-cut items labeled “prewashed” and “ready-to-eat,” like lettuce or baby carrots, can be eaten without further rinsing.



Whole Group Activities (continued)

Just like school, the **Discover MyPlate Food Club** has some rules. Ask students to share what rules they think the Food Club should have. Write them on **The Five Food Groups** poster or display them (with pictures) in the classroom. Some rules to consider are:

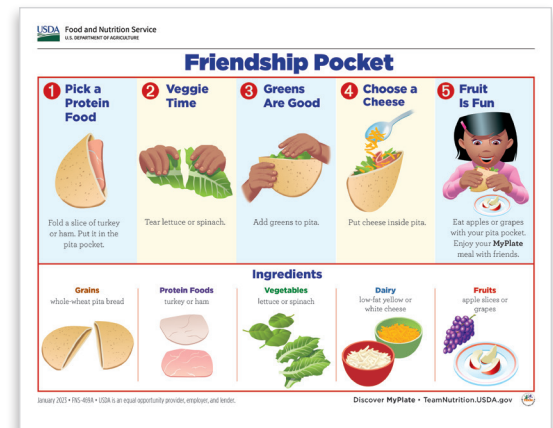
- Wash your hands before you touch food.
- Give others a chance to taste before you share your opinion.
- Use your senses—how does the food look, smell, feel, taste, sound?
- Help clean up when you are done.
- For polite food taster tips, see “Before the Taste Test” in **Appendix E: Taste Testing Activities** (p. 107).

Friendship Pocket Look and Cook Activity

(See pp. 77–79 for recipe ingredients, supplies, and step-by-step instructions.)

In this food preparation activity, students will choose foods from each of the five food groups to create a delicious sandwich pocket. Offering children a choice between two ingredients inspires them to try the snack by “making it their own.” This activity also reinforces the theme of friendship; all five of the **Food Group Friends** will be reflected on their plate, plus students get to sit and share a snack with their friends. Everything tastes better when friends come together!

1. Review the recipe and directions for making the **Friendship Pocket** on pp. 77–79. The recipe serves 20, so adjust the recipe amounts to suit the size of your class. As you can see, there are two choices for most food groups.
2. Talk with parent volunteers or school nutrition services and decide how you will obtain food for the activity, who will do any advance preparation of foods (such as rinsing and cutting), and where foods will be stored until ready for use.
3. Decide if the food preparation activity will be done in the classroom or the cafeteria. Depending on your class size, the number of adult assistants, and your schedule, you may decide to do the activity as a type of learning center, with small groups of students preparing food while the remainder of the class works on other activities, such as the **Student Workbook** pages. Or you may want to set up multiple tables where groups of four–six students can all assemble their pockets at the same time.
4. Clean all surfaces and follow the safe food-handling procedures discussed on p. 22. Have everyone participating in the food preparation wash their hands according to the directions in the sidebar.
5. Provide copies of the **Look and Cook Recipe** for each student. Review the steps of how they will make their **Friendship Pocket**. Tell students that they will create a tasty snack that includes a food from each food group. They can decide what interesting combinations their sandwich will have—but they should try to include something from each food group. Then they will get to eat what they created. Discuss the tasty options from each food group.



Important Food Allergy and Disability Reminder

Remember to:

- Work with parents/caregivers, the school nurse, the Section 504 Coordinator, and/or Nutrition Services Director to make reasonable modifications to any recipes or food items suggested in these activities to accommodate requests related to food allergies or a disability in your classroom or school.
- Always follow your school and individual student's food allergy plan and individualized education program or 508 plan that includes information about a necessary meal modification due to a disability.

Taste Testing Activity

If you don't have enough time or resources to make the **Friendship Pocket**, introduce the students to just the whole wheat pita bread (or another grain) in a taste testing activity.

- Display the **Jane Grain Food Group Friend Profile Card** on the board or flip chart. Tell the students whole wheat pita bread is part of the Grains food group. Talk about other foods that are part of the Grains food group.
- Conduct the taste testing activity. See p. 107 for ideas on how to conduct the activity.



6. Display the **Look and Cook Recipe Card** (p. 77) where students can clearly see it as they make their **Friendship Pockets**.
7. Show students the food choices in each bowl. Talk about which foods belong to which food groups. Use the **Food Group Friends Profile Cards** to help with the discussion. Remind them to use the serving utensils, not fingers, to select foods. Encourage students to follow the instructions on the recipe. Assist students as needed.
8. Don't forget to make your own! It's important for students to see adults model healthy eating and a willingness to try new foods. After the tasting activity, ask students to talk about other times they might want to eat a **Friendship Pocket**. Invite students to share other vegetables they could put in their **Friendship Pocket**. What other Protein Foods, Grains, or Dairy? What other fruits could they eat with this snack? Encourage students to make a **Friendship Pocket** with their family. Put a copy of the **Look and Cook Recipe** in their weekly folder to take home.

Food Cards (Whole Group; 10 minutes)

Our Group Rocks!

1. Label a designated space in the room for each food group. Have students pick a **Food Card** at random, and then gather in the appropriate spot with other students who have picked cards from the same food group.
2. Review what cards students in each group have. If everyone in the group has chosen the right food group, invite the class to do a wiggly dance, take a bow, or do a victory jump for five seconds.



Cafeteria Connections (Whole Group; each activity 20 minutes)

Meet School Nutrition Professionals (do around lunchtime)

Contact your school's Nutrition Services Director and invite them to visit your class as a guest speaker. Prepare interview questions with your students based on what they wonder about the cafeteria and what they want to learn about meals at school. Combine the visit with an "orientation" field trip to the cafeteria. Meet and get to know your school's Cafeteria Manager and school nutrition services staff. Ask them to show your class where they prepare the food, and guide students through the cafeteria process and lunch line.

The School Cafeteria and MyPlate (do around lunchtime)

Have school nutrition services show students foods on **The Five Food Groups** poster. Using the poster as a guide, divide the class into "Food Groups." Ask each Food Group to pretend to serve one food item from their group, and tell the "student" about the food. The "student" should guess the name of the Food Group and the groups can confirm the answers or give more "hints" as needed. Then, have the class participate in role-play with a "Take my Job" Challenge: the cafeteria staff member pretends to be a student and students pretend to be the worker, using food cards or pretend foods as props.

Literacy Center (Small Group; time will vary)

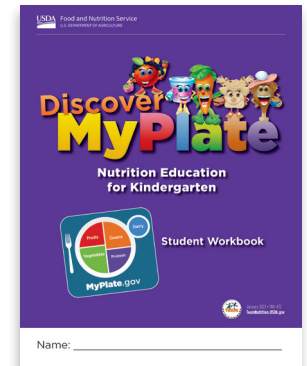
Use the **Emergent Readers** (Teacher and student versions) for listening, guided reading, or read-aloud exercises with students. Review sight words and new vocabulary learned in this lesson to build fluency and phonemic awareness, teach spelling patterns, practice writing, and promote key literacy concepts.



Student Workbook (Small Group; time will vary)

Have students complete Student Workbook pages individually or in small groups. These can be done during Center Time or while students wait to participate in the **Food Club Look and Cook** activity. See the answer key for all workbook activities on pp. 108–110.

- **Food Group Sorting** [WB, pp. 5–9] In these three pages, students identify and sort foods into their proper food groups. Each page has distracters that do not belong in the food group highlighted.
- **Wash Your Hands!** [WB, p. 11] Students put handwashing steps in correct sequence in this activity, while isolating pictures that begin with the /s/ sound.
- **Foods I Like** [WB, p. 12] Reinforcing the high-frequency sight words “I,” “like,” and “eat,” this activity calls for students to read rebus sentences and then complete one of their own.



Dramatic Play (Small Group; 15 minutes)

Grocery Store Grouping

Encourage students to play “grocery store” using pretend food or the **Food Cards**. They should go shopping for at least one choice from each food group to make a meal. In order to “check out” after they’ve selected their items, they must tell the “clerk” which food group each item belongs to. Grocery store “employees” can use baskets and shelves in the classrooms to sort, stock, and set up food displays.



★ Teacher Tips ★

- Make sure any play foods in your dramatic play area reflect healthful food choices from each of the five food groups.
- Older elementary students also learning about nutrition would make great clerks.



**(Whole Group; 10 minutes)**

To conclude this lesson and assess understanding, ask the class as a group to share what they learned. Reward students with a star or sticker for their efforts and ability to meet achievement markers (see box below).

Students may add their stars or stickers to the **STAR (Student Achievement Recognition) Chart** found on the first three pages of their **Student Workbooks**.

Explain that they will have the opportunity to earn stars for their participation and cooperation in each lesson.

STAR Charts may be kept in the **Student Workbook**, or you may cut out the pages and have students create a cover using construction paper. At the conclusion of the unit, **STAR Charts** may be sent home and shared with families as part of a progress report.

If you have time, check in with individual students and review information with those who need more assistance. Remember to send home the **Welcome to School Lunch! Parent Handout** and **Friendship Pocket Look and Cook Recipe**.

Lesson 1 Achievement Markers

- Named the five food groups
 - Named a food that belongs to each food group
 - Demonstrated proper handwashing
 - Named a time when it is important to wash hands
- ★ **Award a star or sticker for each achievement!**

Extra Helpings

"A" Is for Apple (Small Group; 20 minutes)

Play an alphabet game where the class tries to name at least one food for each letter of the alphabet.



Triangle Cheese! (Small Group; 20 minutes)

Supply students with stencils in geometric shapes (e.g., square, circle, triangle) or stamps of shapes. Students should use and combine shapes to create drawings of various foods from the five food groups. Examples could include: a square sandwich, rectangular carrot sticks, triangle cheese wedge or watermelon slice, oval eggs, circle cucumber slices, and a rhombus or hexagon cracker.

