

Reading with children can improve their language, literacy, and social-emotional skills, increasing their knowledge of the world around them. With the right book choices, reading can introduce children to healthy eating habits too!

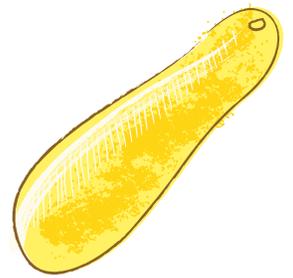


THE VEGETABLES WE EAT

by Gail Gibbons

What It's All About

This book takes readers on an adventure through different groups of vegetables. Readers learn how vegetables are categorized and how vegetables are grown. The pages are filled with exciting new words and vibrant illustrations of vegetable varieties.



Discover a World of Words

Throughout the story introduce new vocabulary words using gestures, tone of voice, pointing to illustrations, or providing brief explanations. This will be easy because so many words are called out with special definitions and diagrams! Some examples of other words to explain to children are:

- *Beneath*: under
- *Edible*: fit to eat
- *Haul*: to move or carry with effort

Dig into the Story

Develop children's comprehension of the story by discussing higher-level information (e.g., link characters' feelings to their actions and /or events in the story, predict what might happen, summarize chunks of text). Use prompts throughout the story, such as:

- Talk about the parts of vegetable plants that are eaten. Why don't we eat the other parts?
- What are some of the different ways people can grow their own vegetables?
- This book has a lot of text! Make it interesting for squirmy readers by choosing some words to read and others to skip.

Make Connections Beyond the Book

After reading the story, make connections to an aspect of the child's real-life by:

- Pretending that you want to grow some vegetables at home and writing a list of steps to follow.
- Going to the store or farmers' market and discussing which vegetables are leaves, bulbs, roots, or even fruits!
- Visiting a farm and looking for clues about the tasks farmers must do in order to grow delicious vegetables for us to eat!

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Some definitions taken from Biemiller, A. (2010). *Words worth teaching: Closing the vocabulary gap.*

Jumpstart

Jumpstart is a national early education organization working toward the day every child in America enters kindergarten prepared to succeed. Learn more at jstart.org.

Together Time Activity

FRUIT & VEGGIE IDENTIFICATION GAME

What kinds of produce does your family like to eat: roots, bulbs, flowers, fruits, etc? Identify which category each of your favorite fruits and veggies belongs in and chart the results.



- 1 Invite your child to make a list of all the fruits and vegetables the family eats on a regular basis.
- 2 Draw a simple chart with 7 columns labeled: bulb, root, stem, tuber, leaf, flower, fruit and seed. White paper or poster board that is 8.5" x 11" or larger works best.
- 3 Investigate each of your family's favorite fruits and veggies to determine what part of the plant they are. Refer to *The Vegetables We Eat*, visit the library or search online to find photos, diagrams and other information about each one.
- 4 Write the name or draw a picture of each fruit or vegetable on your chart in the column where it belongs. Gather up some art supplies to decorate the chart if you wish, then display it in the kitchen so the rest of the family can learn how their favorite foods grow.

Talking Points:

- Start a family discussion about each fruit and vegetable on the chart. What nutrients does it provide? How often should you eat it? How much is a serving size?
- Notice the colors of the foods on the chart. Is your family eating all the colors of the rainbow?
- What nutrients or colors are missing from your chart or underrepresented? Talk about some other foods your family could try to fill in any nutrient gaps you have noticed.
- Now that you know more about individual fruits and vegetables, hit the aisles and apply this knowledge to your grocery shopping tip. Invite children to try to guess which other foods in the produce department are bulbs, roots, stems, tubers, leaves, flowers, fruits, or seeds. Then look up the answers and see if they're correct. Also buy a new fruit or vegetable from each category to taste.
- Which of these foods grow well in your climate? Try to grow some of them at home.