



Potatoes in school!

A guide to presenting to children, in and out of the classroom

**GROW YOUR
OWN POTATOES**

www.potatoesforschools.org.uk



GROW YOUR OWN POTATOES

Imagine the scene...

You walk in. There is a sudden flurry of activity as teachers silence a sea of young faces and draw their attention towards their special visitor; from shuffling and distraction the children settle, giving you their full attention to see what this stranger is about.

Presenting to children can be a tremendously rewarding experience. But not everyone is comfortable with speaking to large groups of people – even if they are only youngsters! So we've created this booklet to help you prepare for your talk on potatoes; making the experience easy and enjoyable and to leave a lasting impression on the pupils.

It is through the continued support from external visitors that teachers are able to really bring the 'Grow Your Own Potatoes' project to life for children. Potato Council hopes that this guide helps to facilitate that process.

We hope you enjoy it as much as they do!



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About 'Grow Your Own Potatoes'

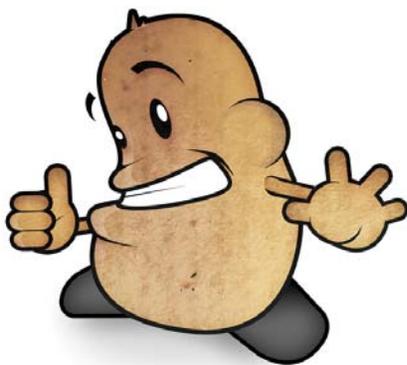


'Grow Your Own Potatoes' gives children the chance to experience growing their own food and to find out where potatoes come from. It is a simple activity, which can be undertaken in the classroom. The project can also help children to learn more about healthy eating, and the role that the potato plays in a healthy balanced diet. Schools can also look at the many products that are made from potatoes.

How does the project work?

- Each participating school is supplied with seed potatoes and a growing kit
- The project starts in March and the crop is harvested in June
- Schools can grow their potatoes in the classroom or outside
- The project is curricular-based for children aged 5–11 years
- There is the opportunity for schools to win prizes for growing the heaviest crop
- The project is supported by resources linked to the formal curriculum which are available on Potato Council's educational website, www.potatoesforschools.org.uk.
- There are also video clips which schools can download and a 'Potato Cam' for schools to monitor the progress of their potato plants against the Potato Council's

GROW YOUR OWN POTATOES



Remember, schools can register to take part in the project, which runs annually, by visiting the website www.potatoesforschools.org.uk



Recruit your local school!

Educating the next generation

Where do potatoes come from? Up until just a few years ago, unbelievably, six out of ten children thought they grew on trees! Thankfully, these attitudes have changed quite dramatically following the Potato Council's hugely successful 'Grow Your Own Potatoes' project.

With the knowledge that children had difficulty understanding how the food they eat is grown and produced and how it ends up on the shelves of their local supermarket, 'Grow Your Own Potatoes' was launched in 2005, supported by its own dedicated website www.potatoesforschools.org.uk. This unique project helps children get to grips with potato production – and that of food in general – through a combination of fun, hands-on activity and theory.

In addition to delivering these key messages, the project also provides an ideal platform to educate children about healthy eating and the essential role that the potato plays in a balanced diet. By making a difference to the way they view food at a young age, we can help shape healthy eating habits that will stay with them as they grow, influencing their diet and purchasing habits in the future.

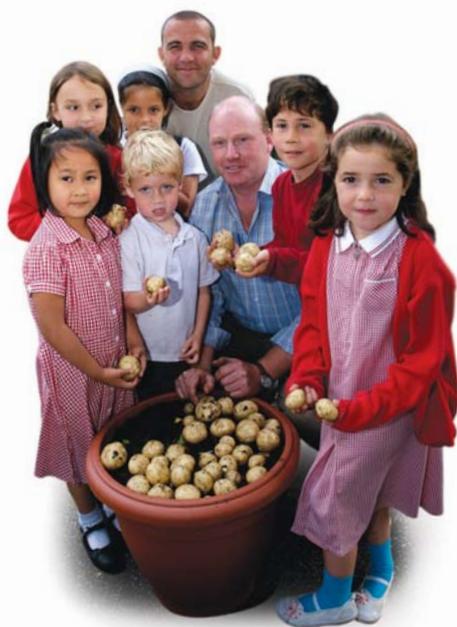


How you can help

Talking to the children about potatoes; how they grow, as well as your role, can really help bring the 'Grow Your Own Potatoes' and similar projects to life – and leave a lasting impression on the pupils.

This guide is designed to help you prepare for your talk either in or out of the classroom and to ensure that the experience is enjoyable, both for you and the children!

Getting started



Know your audience

Children's ability to concentrate varies: some can cope with a longer talk; others may struggle after even a few minutes. Using visual aids and actively

involving the children in the talk can lengthen this time but it is worth asking the teacher for how long they can concentrate.

As a general rule, a 15-20 minute talk or presentation should be manageable by most primary aged children provided you have plenty of interaction in your talk.

Become a school buddy

Between planting and harvesting, you could also become a school buddy and answer any queries they may have while their plants are

growing, for example, how much water does it need?

Feedback from teachers suggests that they are always looking to find new and interesting opportunities for children to learn about the countryside and farming; and your involvement can help the children understand more about how potatoes are grown and how they reach the shops. Tie your visit in with the school's involvement in the 'Grow Your Own Potatoes' project and help them with planting in March and harvesting in June.

Pitching your talk

Firstly, it is important to get a clear understanding of what the teacher hopes the children will gain from your visit, for example, you and your life in the sector might be as interesting to the children as the science behind how plants grow or the skills and machinery required to grow potatoes.

Make a list of the areas you will need to cover, such as:

- What you do
- Where do potatoes come from
- How plants – and potatoes – grow
- The food chain: from field to fork
- Healthy eating and the importance of potatoes
- Issues affecting the countryside

Find out the age of the class you will be visiting, as this will have a bearing on their understanding and abilities. It is also useful to know how many children you will be addressing; will you be in a classroom or a hall? Consider the following:

Avoid – or explain – jargon

Use words that are in everyday use with simple sentence constructions and watch out for technical words. Children like new words, but take time to explain them or check they understand.

Keep an eye on time

Make sure you find out exactly how long you are expected to talk. Time your talk carefully, leaving plenty of time at the end for questions. It is better to finish a few minutes early than to go over the time given.

Work within school guidelines

All schools have set guidelines for visitors which you should ask to read.



Preparing your presentation

Your talk or presentation needs to capture the children's attention and a good clear beginning will hook them in from the outset. The middle should be filled out with lots of interesting facts, questions and activity to involve the children. Finish your talk/presentation with a clear conclusion and allow some time for questions from the children and the teacher.

Take along some props that can be passed around the classroom, allowing the children to handle and examine each item. Some good ideas for props include:

- Chitted seed potatoes
- A freshly dug plant, leaves, haulms, flower heads if possible
- Potato product packaging, e.g. crisp and chip packets or a bag of fresh potatoes (instantly recognisable packaging is good)
- A soil sample

Use pictures to illustrate different elements of your talk, for example:

- Chitted potato – showing the 'chit'
- A lifted potato plant, with its tubers attached
- Different varieties of potato
- Machinery planting potatoes
- Machinery lifting potatoes
- Potatoes growing in a field
- Potato products (chips, crisps, mash, baked, roast etc.)

Contact Potato Council for stock images available.

Make it fun!

Having fun is probably what the children will remember most and hopefully they will leave with a positive view of potatoes. Visual aids, props and interaction not only make a presentation interesting, they are also more likely to make your visit more memorable.



Add interest through interaction



Allowing the children to participate is an important part of any school activity. Getting children to ask and answer questions is a great way to get them more involved in your presentation, as well as developing their understanding of the subject matter.

Have some questions planned in your talk ready to ask but remind children to put their hand up to answer, not to shout out!

Aim for a balance between giving information by telling and asking questions

Rather than saying: "This is a chitted potato", try: "This is a potato. Can you see anything growing on it?"

Vary the type of question you ask

Use a mixture of questions, ranging from simple closed questions that only require recall or simple comprehension and observation questions (asking pupils to describe what they see), to more demanding questions which require pupils to use the information you have already given them and then to reason, e.g. "What would happen if...?"

You can also ask pupils to think about alternatives or give the advantages and disadvantages of different courses of action.

Why? How?

To create some thought-provoking questions, just add 'why' or 'how' in front of a statement to change it into a question. "What would happen if...?" is also a useful phrase for the start of a question.

Questioning skills

- Ask questions which make pupils think but can be answered successfully
- Don't direct questions to individuals but address the whole group
- Give pupils time to think and do not answer your own question!
- Use your body language (eye contact, smiling, nodding) to encourage responses
- Praise or acknowledge correct responses
- If no answer comes, ask the question in a simpler way
- Make questions short and clear using straightforward language



Ice breakers & warm-up activity



It is good to have a range of ideas and activities prepared that you can use as part of your visit and presentation. These will help you interact with the children and make your visit both fun and educational.

Potato balance

Introduce a competitive edge: put the children into two teams, e.g. one side of the room versus the other. Ask questions in turn to each side. Volunteers for each 'team' could come out to do a task, for example, who can balance a potato on their head and stand on one leg? Keeping score on a chart can keep children's interest. You could get a child to do the scoring too.

Open and reveal

Adding some theatrics to your talk will engage the children. Have objects and pictures to show to enliven their interest and have an envelope with an image or key words in it. Also, having envelopes distributed around the classroom for the children to open and read out can be a good way to remind you of the things you want to say, e.g.

Envelope A: A Potato

Envelope B: Getting the soil ready

Envelope C: Chitting potatoes, and so on.

Hide & reveal

Can you guess what's in my box/bag? Reveal things one at a time having described them and asked for guesses from the children. This

can also help to structure your talk. Have a 'feelie box' containing things for the children to touch and describe to the others, e.g. potatoes, soil, chips etc.



Write on!

Put a large photo, picture or object on each table and give the children a sheet of paper and marker. Give them a set time (two minutes is about right) to write/describe what their picture is with as many adjectives (describing words) or phrases (dependent on age) as they can think of, e.g. potato: 'brown', 'dirty', 'round', 'hard', 'yummy', 'grows in ground'.

Additional classroom activities



Mr Potato Face

Make a drawing on a flip chart or whiteboard of a big potato, have some different sets of eyes, ears etc. drawn on card with a bit of Blue Tack on the back. Ask the children to choose which facial feature to put on the potato to make 'Mr Potato FACE'! This is an especially popular game for younger children.

Survey

Have pictures of a number of potato-based foodstuffs. Reveal these slowly, one at a time, asking children to put their hands up, if they like that meal/food: crisps, chips, jacket potato, waffles, bangers and mash, etc.

Count the number of children with hands up and sketch out, or have a child sketch out, a simple bar graph to show results. You could have a shopping bag with these things in and you could vary the survey, e.g. "Hands up if you have ever eaten...", or "Hands up if you think you know what this is."

For more movement, you could ask the children to stand up, instead of putting their hands up, or you could start with all the children standing and get them to sit down to 'vote'.

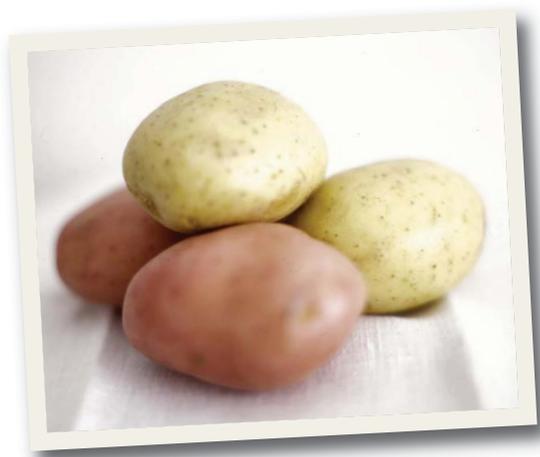
Weighing task

Take a sack of potatoes into school. Get the children to put the potatoes out onto a table and stop when they think they have 3.2kg – the weight of the heaviest ever single potato. Use scales to see which group or individual was closest. You can do this as a competition in table groups, or with a few 'contestants' at the front of the group.

Make them grow

If children have already set up their 'Grow Your Own Potatoes' project or planted potatoes in their vegetable garden, start with the question: "What do you need to grow potatoes?" Reveal pictures of sun, water, soil, as children answer this question. Then you can ask: "What other things do you think I need on the farm?" Look out for answers of tractor, planter, storage, and harvester. Briefly explain what each does and how – but not too technical!

'True or False' health quiz



Healthy
or
unhealthy?

Establish potatoes as an important part of a healthy diet – use some health facts to back this up. Also explain that there are really no healthy and

unhealthy foods, only healthy and unhealthy diets. Stress the importance of the 'Balance of Good Health, Eat Well Plate' i.e. carbohydrate should make up one-third of a balanced diet.

More information on the nutrient content of potatoes is available from the 'Potatoes: The Facts' booklet. Copies can be requested from Potato Council marketing by emailing gyop@potato.org.uk.

Ask the children to stand up if they think a statement is true or sit down if they think it is false. Refer to the potato facts for some true facts about healthy potatoes, or you could use some of the following:

- 1 Potatoes are low in fat. (True)
- 2 Exercise is important to good health. (True)
- 3 We should eat three portions of fruit and vegetables a day. (False – it should be five)
- 4 Potatoes contain vitamins. (True – they contain Vitamins C and B6)

An easier 'True or False' quiz, and more subjective!

- 1 Potatoes grow on trees. (False)
- 2 A jacket potato can be eaten with lots of toppings. (True)
- 3 Potatoes give you lots of energy. (True)
- 4 Farmers like growing potatoes. (True)

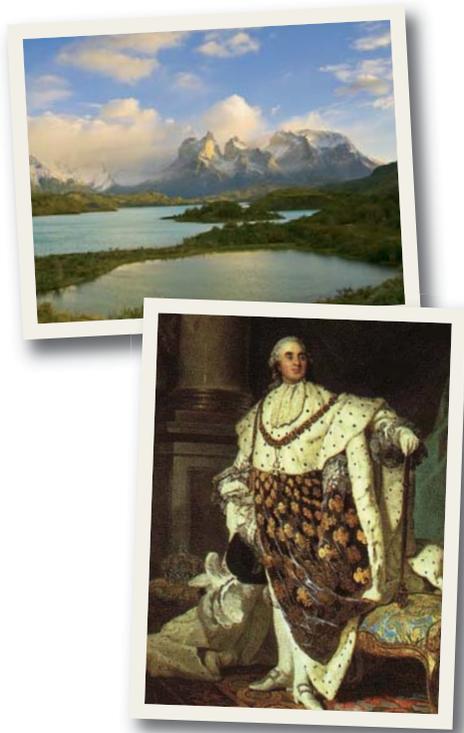
Some of the answers are debatable and children may wish to justify why they chose True or False.



For more information visit www.lovepotatoes.co.uk

Fascinating potato facts

Children love learning new things so add in some interesting potato facts to your presentation...



- If you laid all the potatoes produced by Great Britain end to end they would reach to the moon and back three times!
- Potatoes were first discovered by the South Americans, who found them in the soil high in the Andes Mountains of Peru, more than 6,000 years ago
- Why is a potato called a spud? A 'spud' is actually a small narrow flat spade used for digging and in the past was used for digging potatoes, that's how potatoes got their nickname 'spud'
- How many potatoes do you eat in a year? Nationwide statistics show that on average each person will have tucked into around 96kg – that's approximately 500 medium-sized spuds
- The world's biggest potato was grown in Germany in 1997 weighing in at a massive 3.2kg
- In 1995 potatoes were taken into space on board the shuttle Columbia; this is the first time food had ever been grown in space!
- An exclusive fashion accessory! Louis XVI of France wore flowers from the potato plant (blossoms) in his buttonhole
- How many potatoes are there in a packet of crisps? Each packet of crisps contains approximately one medium-sized potato



What's in a potato?



Did you know?

Carbohydrate is your main source of energy – you need this in order to grow and be active.

Protein helps your body to grow and repair itself.

B vitamins are needed to help your body get energy from carbohydrate. They also help your nervous system, heart and skin.

Vitamin C is important to keep your skin healthy, help your body heal any cuts or grazes and fight off colds.

Iron helps your blood carry oxygen around your body.

Fibre is important because it helps your body get rid of waste it does not need.

Potatoes are low in fat and are a good source of energy. They are also rich in many vitamins and minerals needed for growth and development and are a good source of fibre. Potatoes are known as starchy food. Starchy foods are those that mainly provide carbohydrate and should make up one-third of a balanced diet.

An average 175g serving of new potatoes, boiled in their skins, provides the following nutrients:

	per 175g	% daily value
Calories	115.5kcal	6.0%
Fat	0.5g	0.7%
Vitamin C	26.3mg	44%
Vitamin B6	0.6mg	30%
Potassium	753mg	22%
Iron	2.8g	20%
Folate	31.5mcg	16%
Fibre	2.6g	14%
Vitamin B1	0.2mg	14%
Magnesium	31.5mg	11%

Potatoes in our diet

It is important to eat a varied and balanced diet to be healthy. We all need to eat more fruit and vegetables, and more starchy foods. There are lots of different ways that potatoes can help add variety to the diet. Potatoes can be combined with different foods to create healthy, balanced meals, for example:

- Leek and potato soup
- Wedges with chilli
- Jacket potato with beans
- Shepherd's pie
- Potato and rosemary bread rolls
- Potato salad
- Lancashire hotpot
- Fish pie
- Stuffed spud
- Gnocchi with a tomato sauce

For full details and many more recipe ideas visit www.lovepotatoes.co.uk

Practice makes perfect

Once you are happy with the content of your talk or presentation have a practice run through. This will help to make sure that the sequence and balance of information is correct, as well ensuring that you have all of the supporting material to hand.

More importantly, this will also allow you to check that the length of your presentation fits within the time slot you have been allocated.

Top tips when talking to children...

- Always begin with introductions; explain who you are and why you've come along
- Make your voice sound lively and pause between different ideas
- Children also respond well to eye contact and body language
- Use straightforward words in short sentences
- Use humour and human interest
- Appeal to the pupils' curiosity with your style of language
- Stand reasonably close to the pupils and move around occasionally
- Make sure you talk reasonably loudly but also slowly and clearly

Above all, remember that the talk/presentation is meant to be fun – for you too! It is also a very rewarding experience, so thank you for taking part and good luck!



Other resources for schools

If your local school has enjoyed the 'Grow Your Own Potatoes' project, there are many other resources and potato-based activities for schools available from the Potato Council, including a 'Guide to Holding a Potato Day', 'Field to Fork' posters and much more.

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www.potatoesforschools.org.uk
www.lovepotatoes.co.uk
www.potatoesforcaterers.co.uk

Sources of further information are also available from:

Food – a fact of life

www.foodfactoflife.org.uk

Farming and Countryside Education

www.face-online.org.uk/

Year of Food and Farming

www.yearoffoodandfarming.org.uk/

Countryside Foundation for Education

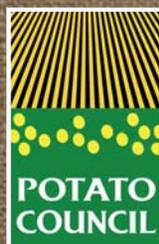
www.countrysidefoundation.org.uk

Farms for Schools

www.farmsforschools.org.uk

Open Farm Sunday

www.farmsunday.org



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