

Food Smarts: Understanding Food Labels

<http://pbskids.org/itsmylife>

Look before you lunch! Scan before you snack! Get in the habit of checking out a food's Nutrition Facts box.

Food companies are required by law to give you the plain facts about what you're about to eat. But since no food company will ever say something like, "This food is bad for you! Choose something healthier!", it takes some practice to read these labels and know what you're looking at. So, this assignment should teach you how to select a "healthier" snack or make some healthy modifications in consuming your favorite snack.

- It is important to note that "good" foods are high in fiber, vitamins, and minerals and low in sugar, sodium, cholesterol, and fats (especially saturated and trans fat). You must also consider the ingredients
 - In any list, the biggest ingredients must be listed at the top. Beware of foods that start out with sugars (like sugar, corn syrup, and sucrose), fats and oils (vegetable oil, soybean oil), and salt. If these ingredients appear early in the ingredient list, **the food is probably not a good choice**.
 - **Shorter is better:** In many cases, the longer an ingredient list is, the less natural and good for you the food is. Look for foods that have a short ingredient list with natural-sounding ingredients. If the ingredients are nothing but chemical names a hundred letters long, **the food might be one to skip**.

Key: = equal to; < = less than; > = greater than

CATEGORY	"GOOD"	"BAD"	YOUR SNACK
Serving Size	-	-	
Servings Per Container	the size of the bag equals the total servings per container (i.e. serving size = 1oz, servings per container = 2, and total size of product = 2 oz)	the size of the bag is greater than the total servings per container (i.e. serving size = 1oz, servings per container = 2, and total size of product > 2 oz)	
Calories per serving (calorie = unit of energy; avg person needs ~ 2,000 calories to have enough energy for the day; anything > 2,000	Calories provided by the snack is less than 10% of total [2000/ (total calories per product)]* 100	>10%	

is stored as fat)			
Calories from Fat	Less than 30% of your daily calories from fat [2000/ (total calories from fat)] *100	>30%	
Total Fat Some fats are important for our skin and organs and a good source of energy. Too much fat can lead to weight gain and health problems associated with being overweight.	10-20% of your daily recommended amount of a nutrient	<5% or >20%	
Sodium Sodium = salt	10-20% of your daily recommended amount of a nutrient	<5% or >20%	
Total Carbohydrates Some carbs are a good source of energy.	10-20% of your daily recommended amount of a nutrient	<5% or >20%	
Sugars Too much sugar will provide too many calories, so it must be eaten in small amounts. The best snack has low sodium and sugar	10-20% of your daily recommended amount of a nutrient	<5% or >20%	
Protein Protein is very important for the body especially muscles. It is important for providing energy.	10-20% of your daily recommended amount of a nutrient	<5% or >20%	
Vitamins and Minerals	10-20% of your daily recommended amount of a nutrient	<5% or >20%	

Questions:

1. How do you classify your snack? Please circle. **GOOD** **BAD**

Please feel free to use this space to provide any additional information that supports your classification.

2. If your snack is classified as a "bad" snack, please identify an alternative "good" snack and state why you chose this snack. (Adhere the label of the alternative snack)
3. If your snack is classified as a "good" snack, please make 2 suggestions on how you can make it "healthier."
- a.
- b.