

Why Do Food Labels Matter?

Every time you pick up a snack or a drink, you're making a decision, not just about taste, but also about:

- Nutrition
- Ingredients
- Price
- Convenience
- And how that item is *presented* to you

That small rectangle on the back of your favorite snack? That's your **Nutrition Facts Label**, a powerful tool that tells you what's really inside. But just as powerful is the **front of the package**, where companies use bold claims, eye-catching images, and buzzwords like:

- "All Natural"
- "High Protein"
- "Whole Grain"
- "Fat-Free"
- "No Added Sugar"

Are these claims always accurate? Do they match what's on the back label?

Think About This:

1. Why might a product say "low sugar" on the front... but list 5 kinds of sweeteners on the back?

2. Have you ever chosen a food because it *looked* healthy? Explain:

3. Do you think kids and teens are targeted differently than adults when it comes to food marketing? Explain.

Did You Know?

- The average grocery store contains over 40,000 products.
- Food companies spend billions every year marketing to kids, teens, and families.
- Studies show that packaging can influence your *taste perception*, meaning the way food looks can make it seem to taste better.

Your Job in This Project:

You're going to become a **Label Detective**, digging into real food packages to uncover:

- What's actually in the food?
- Are the marketing claims true?
- What influences YOUR food choices?

Label Detective Assignment: Bring in 3 Food or Drink Items

Directions:

To complete your food label research project, you will need to **gather information about 3 different packaged food or drink products.**

You have **two options** for collecting your items:

Option 1: Bring Items to Class

- Choose **3 packaged food or drink items** from your home (examples: cereal box, granola bar wrapper, juice bottle, frozen meal).
- Each item must have a **Nutrition Facts label** and an **ingredients list**.
- Place them in a bag and **bring them to class by _____**.
- Please ensure the packaging is clean and empty (if opened) or unopened if you're okay with classmates handling it.

Option 2: Find Labels Online

- Search for products on official brand websites, grocery sites (like Target, Walmart, or Kroger), or nutrition databases (like MyFitnessPal or Fooducate).
- Take **screenshots** of the front of the package, the Nutrition Facts label, and the ingredients list.
- Save these to your Google Drive or print them to bring to class.

Product Guidelines:

- Choose **3 different types of products** (not 3 flavors of the same thing).
- At least **one product should be marketed as "healthy," "natural," "low sugar," or similar.**
- Try to pick products you or your family actually eat or drink.
- Complete the chart on the next page based on your products.

Category	Product 1	Product 2	Product 3
Product Name			
Type of Product			
Brand			
Serving Size			
Calories per Serving			
Total Sugar			
Added Sugar			
Sodium			
Number of Ingredients			
Any ingredients you don't recognize?			
Front of Package Claims? (ex. Low-Fat, Heart Healthy)			
Target Audience			
Does the marketing match the nutrition label?			

Reflection Questions: What Did You Discover?

Answer the following questions based on the chart.

1. Which product surprised you the most? Why?
(Was there more sugar, sodium, or fat than you expected?)

2. Which product had the healthiest nutrition label overall? How did you decide?

3. Did the product that looked the healthiest actually have the best label?
Explain. (Think about marketing versus reality.)

4. How do food companies use marketing to influence your food choices?
(Give an example from one of your items.)

5. How might your future food choices change after doing this project?
(Be honest—will you read labels more often?)

6. If you had to recommend one of your products to a friend, which would it be and why?

