

Print-and-Play Games in Education

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Educators are constantly looking for new tools they can use to improve the learning process and make students more engaged. Games in general may not be the first choice for many, but they are without a doubt the most engaging teaching method.

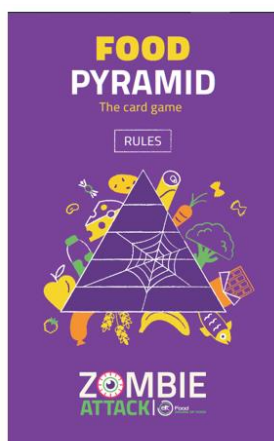


The problem that many teachers face is the availability of suitable games which are not only attractive in terms of gameplay, but that also fit the curriculum. One of the main reasons for this is the characteristics of the market of training games – the majority of good and proven games cost a significant amount of money and the designers as well as the companies guard their know-how by not making their games widely available.

There is of course a huge number of mass market games which can be used in teaching process but to pick the right title requires a certain level of knowledge about the games themselves. And this is where educational *print-and-play games* come in handy. They are usually designed with a specific learning purpose in mind, well-tested and – above all – easily available. All you need to do is to just download files, print them and teach the game to the group.

One of the products of the EIT Food funded *Food Games of Food* research project is a game about the food pyramid and healthy eating habits – *Food Pyramid – The Card Game*. The premise for the game is simple – to teach players in a simple and attractive form the composition of the food pyramid and allow them to get familiarized with a balanced diet in their everyday life.

The components are simple: apart from the rule manual, there are two decks of cards and a poster with a food pyramid.



Rule manual (left) and card decks and food pyramid (right) of the Food Pyramid – The Card Game



The game is played in a series of rounds when players choose one of just two options – either to reveal the top card and place it on the table or to take one group of previously revealed cards and place them into their own food pyramid. If some cards cannot be placed (e.g. a certain level of the pyramid is already full), they are put aside and count negatively towards the final score.

Playing card deck and groups of food cards mid-game

After one of the players finishes their food pyramid, the game ends and final score is calculated. The person that has composed their food pyramid in the best way wins the game.

The game sounds simple and when it comes to the rules it is in fact simple. But thanks to *press-your-luck* mechanic there is a constant tension due to the dilemma whether to flip a card or not wait any longer and take the group of cards. And, to win one must remember what foods fit which level of the pyramid – any mistake is costly and unnecessary cards pile up at the end of the game.



The winning player's food pyramid at different stages during the game

The benefit of using this game is simple – in a fun and engaging way players learn how to shape their daily food intake and what the official recommendations are. The scientific background behind the food pyramid ensures that the game fits the local recommendation. So far, the Israeli and Finnish food pyramids are included in the game and any other variant can easily be accommodated.

The game can also be used as a tool to compare the efficiency of different teaching methods and thanks to the good scalability and modularity of the game new versions can easily be designed. However, *Food Pyramid – The Card Game* is not yet available for free download. If you are interested in trying out the game please contact the partners through the contact section of the project website (GamesofFood.com).