

**CiCN**

CULINARY  
INSTITUTE OF  
CHILD NUTRITION

# CULINARY QUICK BITES

KNIFE SKILLS: KNIFE GRIPS  
& FOOD GRIPS



# **CULINARY QUICK BITES**

## **KNIFE SKILLS: KNIFE GRIPS & FOOD GRIPS**

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Key Area: 2 – Operations

**USDA Professional Standards Code**  
Food Production – 2100

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# TRAINING OVERVIEW

The Culinary Quick Bites training series is a tool to help child nutrition professionals develop and refine their culinary skills. Each lesson is designed to last approximately fifteen minutes. Each lesson should be facilitated (led) by the person responsible for overseeing food production at a meal site, service area, or the district level.

Training facilitators should review the training, in its entirety, prior to conducting the training.

This training has been developed to address a variety of learning styles. The training includes an overview of the topic presented by the facilitator, an infographic to reinforce the training topic visually, a video to demonstrate the topic, and an activity to reinforce learning.

Please contact the Institute of Child Nutrition Help Desk at 1-800-321-3054 or [helpdesk@theicn.org](mailto:helpdesk@theicn.org) if you have any questions about how best to facilitate this training.

## KEY AREA

Key Area: 2 – Operations

## PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

### FOOD PRODUCTION – 2100

Employee will be able to effectively utilize food preparation principles, production records, kitchen equipment, and food crediting to prepare foods from standardized recipes, including those for special diets.

2130 – Develop culinary skills necessary for school meal preparation.

## FACILITATOR'S NOTES

This training counts for 15 minutes of training credit under USDA Professional Standards learning objective 2130 – Develop culinary skills necessary for school meal preparation.

The activity at the end of the lesson will allow participants to practice the way to grip the knives and food items safely. This activity helps reinforce knowledge and skills learned during this lesson.

Before the training, prepare for the lesson activity and set up the kitchen workstation as described on page 11.

Deliver the lesson/training to participants:

- Read the lesson overview to the participants.
- Discuss the infographic and how it relates to the training topic.
- View the instruction video with participants.
- Answer any questions participants may have on the lesson, infographic, and video.

Complete the activity as instructed on pg. 11.



## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Anti-slip Mat – 1 per person
- Cutting Board – 1 per person
- Chef Knife – 1 per person
- Infographic: Knife Grips and Food Grips – 1 per person
- Worksheet: Knife Skills Review Checklist - 1 per person
- Access to a screen to show the training video. Possible options include:
  - Site computer monitor with sound
  - Projector with sound
  - Tablets and smartphones
    - A QR code has been provided for quick access to the video on handheld devices.

# LESSON OVERVIEW

## OBJECTIVE:

At the end of this lesson, participants will be able to identify the proper way to grip knives and food items to ensure user safety.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON KNIFE GRIPS AND FOOD GRIPS

The proper way to hold a chef knife is by gripping the top of the blade (near the heel) with the forefinger and thumb, placing your middle finger just behind the heel.

- The grip provides more control of the knife, increasing safety and reducing the likelihood of fatigue.
- The motion of cutting is all about the power of motion beginning in the shoulder and working down through the arm. The wrist should have minimal movement. Show a rocking motion, pushing the knife through the food, with the tip of the blade rarely leaving the cutting board.

## TYPES OF FOOD GRIPS:

- Claw Grip: Start by shaping your hand as if you are about to pinch, resting the tips of your fingers on the food and your thumb behind your fingers. Hold down the food with your little finger and thumb; your other fingers should act as stability and control while you cut.
- Tunnel Grip: Create a tunnel shape using your index finger, middle finger, and thumb, placing your fingertips on the sides of the food you're chopping. Arch the palm of your hand up to get the tunnel shape. Guide the knife into the 'tunnel' and place the point of the knife on the chopping board. Bring the knife down and push forward to slice the food. The fingers holding the food will act as a clamp to secure the food as it is cut in two.

Follow the acronym **SAFETY** whenever using a knife:

**S**

Securely hold the knife

**A**

Anchor cutting boards

**F**

Fingertips curled back, like a claw

**E**

Eyes on the knife

**T**

Take your time

**Y**

Yield to falling knives

# LESSON OVERVIEW

## KEY MESSAGES

- Proper knife grips prevent cuts and reduce overall fatigue.
- Proper food grips and guide hand grips prevent injury.
- Using proper grips may feel foreign at first. As you get used to the grip and work with it more, it will become second nature.

## KNIFE GRIPS AND FOOD GRIPS

- Utilizing the infographic, review the proper knife grips and food grips.
- Review the embedded training video.

***After we review the infographic and video, there will be an activity to reinforce skills learned.***



Culinary Quick Bites  
KNIFE SKILLS

KNIFE GRIPS



Securely hold the knife



Anchor cutting boards



Fingertips curled back like a claw



Eyes on the knife



Take your time



Yield to falling knives



**How to Hold the Knife**

The proper way to hold a chef's knife is by gripping the top of the blade (near the heel) with the forefinger and thumb, placing your middle finger just behind the heel.



**Claw Grip**

Shape your hand like a claw to grip the food. Hold down the food with your little finger and thumb; your other fingers should act as stability and control while you cut.



**How to Cut Using the "Tunnel Grip"**

Place your index finger, middle finger and thumb on the sides of the food and arch your palm up to form a "tunnel". Guide the knife into the tunnel, then cut the food item.



# CULINARY QUICK BITES

## Knife Skills: Knife Grips and Food Grips

[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

<https://vimeo.com/695264363/749234f7b1>

### QR CODE

Utilize the QR code embedded to the right to share the video with staff utilizing handheld devices such as smartphones and tablets. Use the photo app on the smart device to scan the code to be directed to the video.

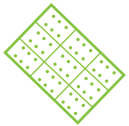


# ACTIVITY

Each participant will set up a cutting station.

## SETUP

### MATERIALS:



Anti-slip Mat  
– 1 per person



Chef Knife  
– 1 per person



Worksheet: Knife Skills  
Review Checklist  
– 1 per person



Cutting Board  
– 1 per person



Infographic: Knife  
Skills Safety & Cutting  
Workstation  
– 1 per person

**NOTE:** If your site does not have enough materials for all participants to complete the activity simultaneously, divide participants into groups based on your materials. Allow enough time for each participant to complete the activity.

## SETUP INSTRUCTIONS FOR FACILITATOR

- 1** Prior to the training, gather all of the materials needed for the activity. Pre-wash the produce that will be used for the training. Set up a workstation for each participant with an anti-slip mat, cutting board, chef knife, and vegetables.
- 2** During the activity, remember to monitor and observe staff as they practice their culinary skills.
- 3** If needed, divide participants into pairs to complete the activity.

# ACTIVITY

## ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- 1** Refer the participants to the infographic. Then read the instructions for the activity. Ask the participants if there are any questions before beginning the activity.
- 2** Instruct all participants to wash their hands and put on single-use gloves before starting the activity.
- 3** Practice knife grips. During this activity, one partner will demonstrate proper cutting stance and posture, knife grip, and guide hand grip while the other partner uses the checklist to review and provide constructive feedback. The partners will then switch roles and complete the activity.
  - A** The demonstrating partner will complete the following tasks:
    - Find an athletic stance (feet shoulder-width apart and knees slightly bent) at your cutting board.
    - Practice knife grip by picking the knife up with the correct hold three times.
    - Practice using a claw grip by forming a claw and placing it on the cutting board five times.
    - Practice the slicing motion by rocking the knife on the cutting board, using major muscle groups. Complete the motion five times.
    - Put it all together by practicing the slicing motion while moving the knife along the knuckles of the guide hand. Complete the motion five times.
  - B** The reviewing partner will use the Knife Skills Review Checklist to observe and provide constructive feedback to the demonstrating partner focusing on the following key areas:
    - Posture
    - Knife grip
    - Guide hand grip
    - Use of major muscles groups versus wrist
    - Clean rocking motion keeping knife on the cutting board
    - Follows the S.A.F.E.T.Y. guidelines for using knives

# WORKSHEET: KNIFE SKILLS REVIEW CHECKLIST

The demonstrating partner will complete the following tasks:

- Find an athletic stance at your cutting board.
- Practice knife grip by picking the knife up with the correct hold three times.
- Practice using a claw grip by forming a claw and placing it on the cutting board five times.
- Practice the slicing motion by rocking the knife on the cutting board, using major muscle groups. Complete the motion five times.
- Put it all together by practicing the slicing motion while moving the knife along the knuckles of the guide hand. Complete the motion five times.

The reviewing partner will observe and provide constructive feedback to the demonstrating partner focusing on the following key areas:

## Posture

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## Knife grip

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## Guide hand grip

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## Use of major muscles groups versus wrist

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## Clean rocking motion keeping knife on the cutting board

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## Follows the S.A.F.E.T.Y. guidelines for using knives

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## POST ACTIVITY

- After completing the hands-on activity, recap the lesson with the participants. Offer an opportunity for participants to share their learning experience during the training and highlight any tips or takeaways they want to share with the group.
- If time allows, facilitate a discussion with the participants. Suggested discussion topics include:
  - Ask participants to recall the various knife grips.
  - Ask participants to describe how they will use the knife grips moving forward.
  - Ask the types of foods they would use a claw grip to hold and/or a tunnel grip to hold the food.
- Ask if the participants feel more comfortable with knife grips or want more time to develop the skill further if time allows.
- Plan the next training session based on the needs of your staff.



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