



The relationship between Design & Technology and Food

The National Curriculum is clear that Cooking & Nutrition is a discrete part of the Design & Technology curriculum. In one strand of D&T, the aims of the curriculum are to:

- develop the creative, technical and practical expertise needed to perform everyday tasks confidently and to participate successfully in an increasingly technological world
- build and apply a repertoire of knowledge, understanding and skills in order to design and make high-quality prototypes and products for a wide range of users
- critique, evaluate and test their ideas and products and the work of others.

But the aim of Cooking & Nutrition is distinct:

- Understand and apply the principles of nutrition and learn how to cook.

The purpose of the Food strand within Design & Technology is not to design dishes. While this is ultimately the skill of a chef, there is a huge amount of prerequisite knowledge that needs to be mastered before new dishes can be designed. Chefs need to know about nutrition and dietary requirements; equipment and techniques; source and characteristics of ingredients; an awareness of the principles of cooking (which Ashbee in *Curriculum: Theory, Culture and Subject Specialisms* (2021), describes as bases, thickening, reduction, seasoning, layering, topping, balance, contrast etc.); and a growing knowledge of tried-and-tested recipes. The knowledge that pupils are taught in Primary school should therefore focus more on this prerequisite knowledge – the basics of cooking and nutrition – and less on the design elements of the subject.

For this reason, we have a separate set of principles for Design & Technology and Food, and a separate set of sequencing documents to show how pupils will progress in each discipline.

The right balance of Design & Technology and Food

Historically, schools have tended to teach Food much less frequently than the rest of D&T and, when it is taught, Food has tended to include ‘design’ skills such as surveys, designing dishes. This limits the time available to explicitly teach aspects of Cooking & Nutrition.

The aim of the United Curriculum for Food is to ensure that all pupils leave primary school with the ability to cook a selection of healthy dishes using a variety of techniques, and to be able to make choices about what they eat based on values like source, seasonality, and nutritional value. These life skills are even more important in the context of rising obesity and climate change.

But the practical and conceptual knowledge of Food needs to be explicitly taught and practised, and so sufficient time needs to be allocated to it. Therefore, there is one Food unit per year, and two D&T units per year. This allows sufficient time for pupils to master the important Cooking & Nutrition skills, while ensuring there is still time to deliver all the required D&T.





The United Curriculum for Design & Technology provides all children, regardless of their background, with:

Substantive knowledge:

- Ensuring pupils **master** core content through the development of **conceptual knowledge** of structures, mechanisms, materials and programming in small steps, and the timely revisiting of this key knowledge.
- Ensuring that pupils are explicitly taught and have time to master **procedural knowledge**, including craftsmanship of cutting, shaping, joining and finishing as well as engineering in focused practical tasks.
- Making explicit and deliberate links to other curriculum subjects – particularly science – to ensure that pupils use and apply scientific concepts in a Design & Technology setting at the appropriate time. Pupils also draw on and further develop knowledge and skills first taught in Mathematics, History, Computing and Art & Design, due to the multi-disciplinary nature of Design & Technology.

Disciplinary knowledge:

- Reinforcing the **iterative design process** in the heart of every unit, and allowing pupils to build their understanding and ability to apply design values gradually from EYFS to Key Stage 2 and beyond.
- Ensuring that pupils know **they are designers and engineers**, who design a solution to fit a specific user and need; they are not led by outcomes. Pupils should be encouraged to design products using all of the knowledge they have developed across the curriculum.
- **Explicitly teaching** ways of designing, ways of generating ideas and ways of identifying user needs, to give pupils the tools they need to thrive as designers of the future.

Curiosity and excitement about the possibilities offered by Design & Technology:

- Ensuring that all pupils **can see themselves reflected** in the Design & Technology curriculum, by exploring the contributions made by a wide range of designers, past and present.
- Opportunities to **develop character** by understanding the difficulties faced by those designers and seeing how characteristics such as resilience and risk taking contributed towards success.
- Understanding the contribution that design and technology makes to creativity, culture, wealth and the well-being of a nation and that **more opportunities exist** than ever before due to technological advances.





The United Curriculum for Food provides all children, regardless of their background, with:

Substantive knowledge:

- Ensuring pupils **master** core content through the development of **conceptual knowledge** of food sources, safety, hygiene and nutrition in small steps, and the timely revisiting of this key knowledge.
- Ensuring that pupils are explicitly taught and have time to master **procedural knowledge**, including cooking skills of chopping, preparing, combining and heating in focused practical tasks.
- Making explicit and deliberate links to other curriculum subjects – particularly science – to ensure that pupils use and apply scientific concepts, such as nutrition and food chains, in a Food setting at the appropriate time.

Disciplinary knowledge:

- Ensuring that pupils are taught how to make **food choices** based on qualities like nutritional value; dietary requirements; cost; seasonality; food miles and carbon footprint of production; time to prepare; and quantities. These qualities are introduced in small steps but applied cumulatively so that by Year 6, pupils are able to make decisions based on a selection of them.

The ability, and desire, to cook balanced, sustainable meals for themselves and their family:

- Ensuring that the recipes and foods chosen reflect relevant cuisines from the local context, the UK and around the world.
- Providing recipes that are balanced and sustainable, which can be cooked after school in a family context.

