

Implementing the Gold Standards: A Resource for Volunteers

Cooking Matters has developed a list of key behaviors and actions, or “gold standards,” that should take place within each class in order to make the experience as meaningful as possible for participants. Below you will find a complete list of gold standards that you can apply as a volunteer, along with examples of how you might fulfill each standard. We hope that you will review this list and look for ways to achieve these standards throughout the course.

Gold Standard	Examples
<i>Interacting with Participants</i>	
Build a welcoming atmosphere.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be friendly and polite. • Welcome participants as they enter and try to make a personal connection with them. • Encourage sharing among participants and redirect when someone discredits, chastises, or bad-mouths their peer as they share ideas.
Demonstrate respect and cultural sensitivity for participants and their life experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage participants to share their impressions and life experiences. • Remind participants about respect for other’s opinions and life experiences. • Ensure that participants’ dietary restrictions and/or cultural or special needs backgrounds are respected and considered during recipe/activity selection and discussion.
Manage inappropriate classroom behaviors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set ground rules with participants and refer to them when behaviors are inappropriate or disruptive. • Bring off-topic discussions back on track.
<i>Demonstrating Subject Expertise and Classroom Leadership</i>	
Demonstrate knowledge of subject matter being taught.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw on knowledge and past professional experience to answer questions and manage classroom discussion. • When in doubt, admit not knowing the answer but use available resources to find out and provide an answer the following week.

Demonstrate preparation and organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with co-instructors prior to class to discuss lesson implementation and transitions within the lesson. • Set up needed materials appropriately prior to class. • Outline lesson objectives for participants at the beginning of class.
Keep class on schedule.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start and end class on time, demonstrating respect for participants' time. • Stay within suggested time for each lesson plan component.
<i>Delivering Course Content</i>	
Present, practice, and encourage use of information and skills regarding healthy eating.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach and reinforce MyPlate, nutrition labels, and ingredient lists as tools for making healthy choices. • Ask participants about their application of skills to make foods healthier. • Help participants discuss strategies for balanced eating and ideas to incorporate fruit, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and lean protein.
Present, practice, and encourage use of information and skills regarding food resource management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest affordable forms of healthy foods, as well as techniques to make food last longer. • Help participants practice and discuss strategies for preparing meals from scratch rather than purchasing pre-packaged foods or going out to eat. • Discuss and practice strategies, where appropriate, such as comparing unit prices or making a shopping list.
Present, practice, and encourage use of information and skills regarding cooking and meal preparation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate basic cooking techniques and give feedback to participants as they practice. • Explain how fundamental cooking techniques can be applied to different recipes and situations. • Encourage participants to use their take-home groceries to prepare meals at home, ask participants what Cooking Matters recipes they plan to make, and ask them to share their experiences making Cooking Matters recipes at home.
Present, practice, and encourage use of information and skills regarding food and kitchen safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure participants wash their hands with soap, and handle knives and other tools safely. • Explain and reinforce key sanitation and cross-contamination content each week during cooking. • Maintain a safe environment in the classroom and kitchen.
Discuss course materials with participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to handouts, recipes, incentives, and/or posters during class discussion, and use the information presented to elaborate on a topic. • Point out times when participants might refer back to the handout information in their everyday life.

Distribute appropriate materials to participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute take-home groceries, manuals, and incentives at appropriate times during the course.
<i>Using Appropriate Delivery Methods</i>	
Have participants cook and eat together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have participants work together to prep ingredients, put recipes together, cook, and clean up. • Have everyone sit together, ideally around a table, and eat at the same time. • Eat with the group, continuing to engage participants in discussion while they eat.
Ask participants open-ended questions to encourage discussion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve an appropriate mix of presenting information and asking open-ended questions to assess participants' comprehension and ability to apply the information to their lives. • Ask participants for their impression of the information, how they might or might not use it, and what reservations they have. • Ask participants to share their own strategies and have their classmates comment on whether those strategies would work for them or not.
"Team-teach", or work collaboratively with your co-instructor to guide discussion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to what your co-instructors have said or taught. • Ask for your co-instructors to contribute to the discussion based on their knowledge and expertise. • Invite your co-instructors to share in the elaboration of specific concepts or ideas.
Build on content from the previous weeks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer back to key content throughout the class, and recall content from previous classes to reinforce the learning process. • Make connections between new information and topics previously discussed. • Reinforce key skills related to cooking, food safety, and healthy decision-making.