Organic Food

Is organic food more nutritious than conventional food? Does organic food taste better? In this lesson, you will learn 5 Facts About Organic Food. These facts will help you make informed decisions at the grocery store or farmers’ market.

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What are the main differences between organic and conventional food?
2. How do you know if a type of food is organic or not?
3. Are you personally concerned about chemicals in your food?
4. What is a “health nut”? Do you think this word has negative or positive connotations?

B. Quote

Discuss the following quote:

“As for butter vs. margarine, I trust cows more than chemists.”
—Joan Gussow, food policy expert

C. Chemicals

Review the following definitions.

**Pesticides**
A pesticide is a type of chemical that keeps pests such as insects away from a crop.

**Fertilizers**
A fertilizer is a type of chemical that helps plants or animals grow and reproduce.
Reading

5 Truths about Organic Food

1. Organic food standards differ by country.
   Each country has its own requirements for organic certification. In countries where organic laws exist, the government oversees certification. Farmers themselves can pay a fee to have their farms certified.

2. Organic food benefits differ by product.
   Some people say that organic food is healthier than conventional food. Others feel that organic food tastes better. There is little scientific proof that organic food in general has a higher nutritional value, though some studies show that organic milk and organic tomatoes do have more nutrients. Some conventional produce like potatoes, apples, and strawberries contain more chemicals than organic varieties, though organic produce with a thick skin (e.g., avocados, onions, and pineapples) have no known health benefits.

3. Organic food prices differ from conventional food prices.
   Organic food comes with a higher price tag. This is because it costs farmers much more money to produce organic food. Organic certification and organic farming methods are expensive. As a result, the consumer pays about 20–100% more for organic food at the market or grocery store.

4. Organic food differs from natural food.
   To avoid paying for certification, some producers use other terms besides “organic” on their labeling. If you see “natural” or “authentic” on a food product, it is not certified organic. The food may still be organic, but the producer is not legally allowed to label it this way because a fee has not been paid to a certification body, such as the USDA Certified Organic program.

5. Organic food production differs from conventional food production.
   In the US and some other countries, food that is legally organic is produced without the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. This is better for the earth and air and helps reduce the impact of global warming. Those who feel strongly about animal welfare also choose organic food. Livestock on organic farms are fed, housed, and bred in a humane way. Growth hormones aren’t used, and animals have access to outdoor spaces.

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Did you know?

The Environmental Protection Agency has not discovered any serious health risks associated with ingesting small amounts of pesticides found on conventional food. Scientists, however, believe that future studies will link health problems with long-term exposure to pesticides.
Comprehension

Read the statements below.
If the statement is true, write T beside the sentence.
If it is false, write F and correct the information on the line.

_____ 1. Organic tomatoes have no known health benefits compared to conventional tomatoes.

_____ 2. Consumers pay approximately 20-100% more for conventional food than organic food.

_____ 3. Livestock on organic farms have access to outdoor spaces.

_____ 4. By choosing organic food, consumers can help reduce the impact of global warming.

_____ 5. Other than the cost, natural food is the same thing as organic food.

Role-Play

ASK THE FARMER

Do you buy produce from a farmers’ market or local food stand? Here are some questions you may want to ask about the food you are buying. Practice asking and answering these questions with a partner. One of you will be the farmer and the other will be a health nut who has many questions about the produce.

Questions:
• Are these certified organic?
• Is this all locally grown?
• Are these in season?
• Are these ripe?
• Do you use pesticides?
• How do you manage pests?
• What are the animals fed?
• Has the lettuce been washed?
• Is the corn genetically modified?
Vocabulary Review

A. Odd One Out

Choose the word or phrase that does NOT belong in each group.

1. a) pesticide  b) fertilizer  c) vinegar  d) herbicide
   3. a) healthy  b) conventional  c) good for you  d) nutritious
   5. a) kind  b) humane  c) authentic  d) considerate

2. a) eat  b) ingest  c) consume  d) nutrient
   4. a) monitor  b) oversee  c) regulate  d) exposure
   6. a) certified  b) guaranteed  c) authentic  d) costly

B. Complete the Sentences

Complete the sentence with a word from the word list to the right. You may need to change the word form or ending.

1. There is no ________________ value in candy.

2. ________________ use contributes to global warming.

3. The ________________ process for organic farms is costly.

4. It is ________________ to keep so many chickens in this small space.

5. The USDA ________________ food safety in America.

6. Organic fruit and ________________ fruit need to be washed thoroughly.

7. ________________ is an environmental problem that increases our ________________ to UV rays.

8. Wash the lettuce so that you don’t ________________ any bacteria or pesticides.
# Grammar Practice

## A. Prefer Vs. Rather

The words *prefer* and *rather* have similar functions. These words help you identify which you like better out of two or more options. Let’s review how to use both options correctly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefer</th>
<th>Rather</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meaning</strong></td>
<td><strong>Prefer</strong> is a verb that means “to like better.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Rather</strong> is an adverb that means “preferably.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uses</strong></td>
<td><strong>Prefer</strong> can be used with a <em>gerund</em> or <em>infinitive</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I prefer to eat organic food.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I prefer paying less money for conventional food.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I prefer going to the farmers’ market.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Prefer</strong> can also be used before a <em>noun</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I prefer organic food to conventional food.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• I prefer beef to chicken.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I prefer organic milk.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Prefer</strong> can also be used in a <em>question</em>.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Which do you prefer?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• What would you prefer?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Why do you prefer organic tomatoes to conventional tomatoes?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Rather</strong> is usually used after the modal <em>would</em>, followed by a verb.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• I would rather buy organic eggs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• I would rather pay less for groceries.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Would you rather eat in or go out for dinner?</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>In informal English, you may hear <em>would rather</em> followed by a noun. This means that the speaker has omitted the verb <em>have</em>.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mike: Do you want salad for dinner?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jesse: I would rather have a hamburger.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Common Errors

Here are some common errors with *prefer / rather*. Be careful that you don’t use *rather* as a verb.

- I would rather **to** eat organic food.  
- I **rather** eat organic food. (prefer)
Grammar Practice cont.

B. Practice

Choose which option belongs in the blank, *rather* or *prefer*.

1. I _____________ homegrown tomatoes to store-bought tomatoes.
   (rather / prefer)

2. Would you _____________ use chemicals or not?
   (rather / prefer)

3. Which do you _____________, cow’s milk or goat’s milk?
   (rather / prefer)

4. Why do you _____________ buying organic food?
   (rather / prefer)

5. She would _____________ pay five extra dollars for the organic oranges.
   (rather / prefer)

Writing

Use what you learned in this lesson and do a little research of your own. Then write your own list. Use the title below, or change it to *5 Reasons NOT to Buy Organic Food*.

5 Reasons to Buy Organic Food

1. ____________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________

3. ____________________________________________

4. ____________________________________________

5. ____________________________________________
Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:
In this lesson, students read some interesting facts about organic food. They practice asking a farmer questions and come up with their own reasons about why to buy organic food or conventional food. They also review how to express preferences using rather and prefer.

LEVEL: Int
TIME: 1.5–2 hours
TAGS: health, food, organic, organic food, farm, produce, fruit, vegetables, global warming, environment, animal welfare, preferences, prefer, rather

Pre-Reading

A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS
Discuss the questions as a class or in small groups. If your students don’t know the answer to question 1, explain that organic food is produced without chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Your students will learn more information about certified organics in the reading.

B. QUOTE
Discuss the quote and find out if your students prefer butter or margarine. They will review how to use prefer / rather later in the lesson.

C. CHEMICALS
Review the definitions of pesticide and fertilizer before moving on to the reading.

Reading

Have students read the article together or silently. Ask them to highlight any words that they are unfamiliar with. Give students time to look up words in a dictionary after they read the article.

Comprehension

1. F – Some studies show that organic tomatoes do have nutritional value over conventional tomatoes.
2. F – Consumers pay approximately 20–100% more for organic food.
3. T
4. T
5. F – Any farmer or manufacturer can use the word natural food. It is not certified organic, though it may be organic.

Role-Play

Place students in pairs for this activity. Invite your students to perform their skits. You can decide whether or not you want to see a written dialogue. Encourage your students to use some of the vocabulary that they learned in the reading.

(continued on the next page...)
Answer Key cont.

Vocabulary

A. ODD ONE OUT
1. c  2. d  3. b  4. d  5. c  6. d

B. COMPLETE THE SENTENCES
1. nutritional  5. oversees
2. Pesticide  6. conventional
3. certification  7. Global warming, exposure
4. inhumane  8. ingest

Grammar Practice

A. RATHER VS. PREFER
Review the grammar guidelines for using prefer and rather. You can find more information on our blog:

B. PRACTICE
1. prefer  3. prefer  5. rather
2. rather  4. prefer

Writing

Have students do a little of their own research. Then have them write a list using one of the topics provided. Alternatively, have them choose a related topic using prefer or rather, such as 5 Reasons I Prefer Organic Food to Conventional Food or 5 Reasons Why I Would Rather Shop at a Farmers’ Market. They can use the space provided or their notebooks if more room is needed.

SPELLING NOTE:
This lesson shows the American spelling of the words Labeling and Practice. Other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: Labelling and Practise (when used as a verb; Practice when used as a noun). Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.