

THE **EDIBLE**  
**SCHOOLYARD**  
PROJECT

## DISCUSSIONS ON ORGANIC

**Summary:** In this lesson, students explore their pre-existing associations with the word organic. This lesson extends on the conversations from the lesson, [What is Organic?](#). Students will map and discuss their thoughts, as well as the various influences that make up their understanding of organic.

**Time:** 45 minutes.

**Teacher Notes:**

- This lesson proposes a set of words to draw out the associations students make between those terms and organic. Alternatively, you could identify common terms that came up in the What is Organic? discussion. If you want your class to generate their own list of words, use the Mapping Associations Worksheet.
- We suggest modeling how to use the worksheet for your students.
- In the “WRITE” section of this lesson, we direct students to use one of the Mapping Associations Worksheets (prefilled or blank). We suggest having students first fill out the sheet themselves, and then leading students through a discussion based on their responses. A great way to begin the discussion is to have students write down 1-2 associations onto post-its that they then stick on chart paper. You can then share what students wrote or invite students to do a [Gallery Walk](#).
- This lesson emphasizes open discussion. For tips, suggestions, and resources on leading open discussions please see our resources: [Facilitating Open Discussions](#) and [Mindsets for Open Discussions](#).
- The “READ” and “DISCUSS” sections of this lesson plan can be used as talking points or as a script to introduce activities.
- This lesson is part of Edible Schoolyard Project’s [Understanding Organic](#) curriculum and is the fifth lesson in the “core lessons” of the curriculum.



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### Materials

- Something to write with
- Post-it notes
- Chart paper and markers to record student responses
- Mapping Associations Worksheet [pre-filled] Or Mapping Associations Worksheet [blank]. See teacher notes for details.
- Mapping Influences [pre-filled] or Mapping Influences [blank]. See teacher notes for details.

**READ:** Each of us has a unique experience with organic food, so it makes sense that we might have unique feelings and thoughts about it as well. This lesson is designed to get you to think about what comes to mind when you hear the word “organic” in combination with words like “health,” “flavor/taste,” etc.

**WRITE:** Create a word association map using the Mapping Associations worksheet (attached below). Write down the FIRST thoughts and feelings that come to your mind. For example, when you see the word “organic” next to the word “taste,” what is the first thought, image, idea, or memory that jumps to your mind? There are no right or wrong answers for this activity. You don’t have to agree with, or believe, a thought or association in order to add it on your map. Whatever comes to mind is what you should write!

**DISCUSS:** Write down your thoughts to the following questions or discuss with a peer, family member, or with your class.

- What do you notice about your answers?
- Compare your associations to those of your peers:
  - What were some of the similar words you wrote down?
  - What associations were different?
- Was there anything that surprised you?
- Elaborate on one of the words you wrote down. Why did you write what you wrote?
- Can you see any patterns in what you wrote down? What do the words you wrote down tell us about your feelings, thoughts, and understandings of “organic”?
- How many of your associations did you agree or disagree with? How many of the associations of your peers do you agree or disagree with?
- Did you have any positive associations? If so, which categories brought up positive associations?
- Did you have any negative associations? If so, which categories brought up negative associations?



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**READ:** Often, how we think about something is strongly influenced by our experiences, our peers and family, the media, and other factors. In the lesson, [What Is Organic?](#) you wrote down what came to mind when you thought about the term “organic”. Now, consider what factors might have influenced your pre-existing associations with organic. Where did you hear, read, or learn to think about organic in that way? Did someone tell you? Did you have a personal experience that impacted you? Was it a clear message or something you learned from subtle, or hidden, clues?

**FILL OUT:** Get out your completed Mapping Associations worksheet (from the lesson, “What Is Organic”). In this activity, you will think about where you hear different messages and ideas about organic. Fill out the Mapping Influences worksheet (attached) by following the instructions below.

**DISCUSS:** Write down your thoughts to the following questions or discuss with a peer, family member, or with your class:

- Where do you get your information about organic?
- Generally, what does your family tell you about organic?
- What are your personal experiences with organic? How might they have impacted your associations with organic?
- What do your peers say and think about organic? Compare your associations to those of your peers:
  - What were some of the similar words you wrote down?
  - What associations were different?
  - How might you explain those similarities and differences?

**READ:** This lesson had us look at our associations with organic. You explored where you hear different messages about organic and examined how they influence your associations. Then, you discussed *where* or *who* you hear about organic. You compared your own associations with those of your classmates, and heard how their families, the media they consume, and their communities talk about organic.

What we associate or where we get our information on organic can have an impact on what we think about organic food. For instance, if we associate organic food with being expensive, that might stop us from buying organic food or seeing it as accessible. By discussing our assumptions and associations, we are better able to use our critical thinking skills to make sense of the world around us.