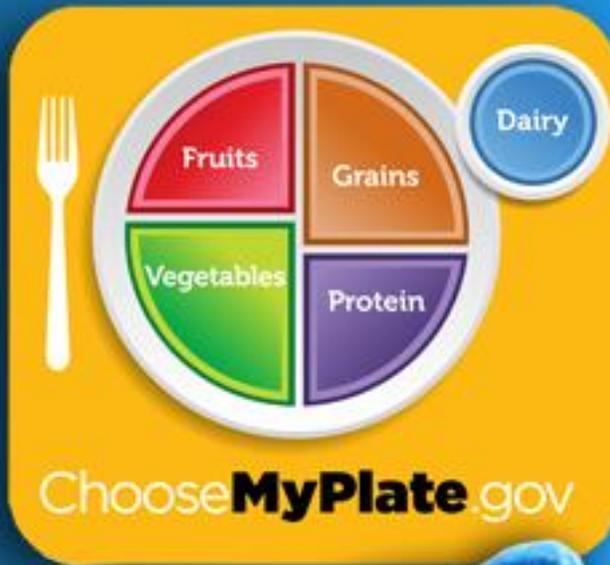


Eat Smart. Play Hard.™

Guidelines for Power Panther™ and His Helper



United States Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service

Power Panther™ and His Helper

Eat Smart. Play Hard.™

United States Department of Agriculture

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)

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Introduction

The Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ Campaign was launched by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to encourage and teach children, parents, and caregivers to eat healthy and be physically active every day. Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ offers resources and tools to convey and reinforce healthy eating and lifestyle behaviors that are consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and the *MyPlate* Food Guidance System. Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ is about making America's children healthier. It's about practical suggestions that will help you motivate children and their caregivers to eat healthy and be active. Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ Campaign messages and materials are fun for children and informative for caregivers. For more information about the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ Power Panther and to download materials, please visit our Web site at: <http://www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/powerpanther.html>.

About Power Panther™

He is powerful, friendly, fun, helpful and popular – all qualities Campaign research showed kids like! Power Panther™, embodies the Campaign. Power Panther™ understands and lives by the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ messages. Power Panther™ is an educator and role model. FNS has developed a Power Panther™ costume and makes the costumes available to program cooperators and partners on loan. Agencies that operate FNS programs are encouraged to use the costume to motivate kids and parents to improve their eating and physical activity behaviors. To make this easier, we have included ways to use the costume to make nutrition education come alive. The Power Panther™ costume is designed to fit a person 5’6 to 5’9, but it could be worn by someone slightly shorter or taller. Power Panther™ is a male in his early twenties.

He has the following characteristics:

- He loves physical activity and is good at it.
- He has a self-assured walk.
- He enjoys jokes and wisecracks.
- He motivates children to make healthy food choices and to be physically active.
- He is entertaining and fun.
- He gives “high 5s” and “thumbs up” signs to encourage kids who have made wise food and physical activity choices. He gives the “thumbs down” when admonishing.
- He is enthusiastic, friendly, and nurturing.
- He models healthy eating and physical activity.

Power Panther™ Makes Nutrition Education Come Alive!

The following are Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ activities Power Panther™ can use to promote healthy lifestyles.

Educational Activities

Have Power Panther™:

- Help deliver interactive, healthy lifestyle presentations to kids and adults.
- Lead physical activity at various events such as health fairs, school assemblies, conferences, or trainings.
- Reinforce nutrition education messages at events, such as programs and health fairs.

- Encourage kids and adults to try new foods at promotional and educational events. Power Panther™ can distribute stickers to reward kids and adults for trying new foods and other healthy behaviors.
- Lead children on a “Power Panther™ Path” created on a floor or sidewalk. Use signs to create fitness stations and healthy snack stations where Power Panther™ can exemplify healthy behaviors.
- Enact a play and Invite Power Panther™ to make an appearance at the performance.

Community/School Events/Activities

Have Power Panther™:

- Cut ribbon to start an event, such as opening an FNS program site.
- Toss out game ball to open a baseball game.
- Start a parade or race.
- Lead home team on to field for an athletic contest.
- Present awards at events, such as HealthierUS School Challenge Award ceremonies, prizes for races, talent contests, or incentive programs.
- Lead a dance routine to one of the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ songs. Kids will have a blast creating their own moves!
- Make an appearance during class or in after-school programs while playing the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ songs.
- Lead exercise routines using Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ songs during schools and community events.

General Activities

Have Power Panther™:

- Meet and greet the audience by shaking hands, giving “high 5s” or “thumbs up,” or nodding his head.
- Do limited physical activities such as kicking or tossing a ball, doing jumping jacks and jogging.
- Make different “powerful” poses like stretching and making muscles.
- Take photographs with children and others. Post these and/or give kids a copy to frame.

Tips for Power Panther™ Actors

You become Power Panther™ as soon as you put the costume on. Be sure to:

- Appear only in full costume. Never allow Power Panther™ to appear or be seen in partial costume. Keep costume out of sight before and after use.
- Appear dignified and friendly.
- Remain anonymous at every appearance.
- Be animated. Express enthusiasm, energy, and interest.
- Before the event, try a few gestures after dressing such as walking, kicking, making muscles, striking different poses, or other planned movements.
- Perform in 30-minute segments with 15-minute breaks in between.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Use signals when you need help like grabbing his helper's arm or giving another previously agreed upon sign.

Gestures

Before you try any gestures or movements, remember your size! Your movements must be in proportion to your body size, so you must exaggerate your gestures. You may feel like you're over doing it, but in reality, everything will seem natural to your audience! It is a good idea to watch yourself performing in front of a mirror prior to performing in front of an audience.

Waves

Hello: A hello wave is a broad, welcoming, side-to-side motion with the head held high and accompanying nods. When greeting a very large crowd or in a procession, or parade, waves in broad sweeping motion are most effective. Good-bye: Good-bye waves at large crowds are much the same as hello waves unless you are directing them at individuals or small children, in which case you might try a slow up and down motion with a sadly bowed head.

Bows

They can be short and polite or low and sweeping. Practice a number of them so you will be ready for any situation.

Beckon

Bend at the knees and slightly at the waist, point at your subject with arms extended and beckon them towards you with short, quick wrist and hand motions.

Head Tilts

Tilts can represent surprise, pose a question, or show disappointment depending on the angle and inflection.

Strength or Power

Ball up each of your hands in a fist and raise the fists, with your elbow bent, up on either side of your head or stand with your feet slightly apart and put your hands on your hips with your chest slightly inflated and your head held high.

Routines

Routines must be performed as a mime and must be simple and straightforward due to bulkiness of the body. The following are movements that can be done as a mime:

Shimmy

This is a quick routine that can be done during any walk. It simply involves bending at the knees and slightly at the waist, sticking your backside out and pivoting back and forth quickly on both feet like Chubby Checker doing the twist.

Shy Guy

Cover your eyes, bend one knee to the center and lean to one side as though you're shy and embarrassed at all this attention. Remember to cover the character's eyes and not your own, otherwise you will be actually covering the character's mouth. This works well with apprehensive small children.

Thumbs Up

A standard Power Panther™ move. Give one or two "thumbs up" to show admiration, encouragement, or approval.

Peek-A-Boo

A guaranteed winner with the little folks! Just play peek-a-boo with the children as you normally would.

Hide and Seek

Play hide and seek by trying to hide behind people in the audience. This is a sure fire hit since you are too big to really hide behind anyone.

As the Power Panther™:

- Do not speak while wearing the Power Panther™ costume. The helper speaks and translates Power Panther's nonverbal communication.
- Be attentive to the body language of children. If children or adults back away, do not pursue them. Do not walk rapidly toward small children as it may frighten them. Be sensitive to shy children who need to familiarize themselves with the figure. Remember, Power Panther™ is big!
- Never try to pick up or hold children or fragile objects while wearing the costume.
- Never smoke, eat, or drink in the costume or appear at events where alcohol is served.
- Never remove any costume component in the presence of other people, except your helper. Do not reveal your true identity. If you must take off any part of the costume, do so in seclusion.
- No drinking alcohol or consumption of anything that would compromise your alertness and performance. Your complete concentration will be needed as a performer.
- Always play the role! Never be out of character while in costume.
- Remember that people are seeing the Power Panther™, not John or Jane Doe.
- Do not play favorites. Do not approach males more than females (or vice versa), children more than adults, etc. Power Panther™ loves all types of people!
- Do not be embarrassed. People only see the costumed character and not the person inside. Be imaginative, outgoing, and energetic! In your costume you will be able to get away with a lot of clowning around without ever offending anyone; however, you may be among many important dignitaries. You must act politely and respectfully at all times, especially in the event you are approached by, or presented to, an important figure. A costume is not an excuse to be disrespectful or ignore the rules of etiquette.

Power Panther's Helper

The role of the helper is to:

- Assist Power Panther™ with dressing and practice session.
- Guide Power Panther™ and help him negotiate physical barriers.
- Protect Power Panther™ from overly playful kids and adults.
- Facilitate interaction with the audience.
- Assure that Power Panther™ takes a 15-minute break to get water after 30 minutes of performing.

Tips for the Helper

- Before the event or activity, agree on the sign Power Panther™ will give the helper when he needs a break.
- The helper and Power Panther™ should rehearse one of the prepared scripts ahead of time: <http://www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/powerpanther.html>

The scripts provide ready-made presentations to facilitate Power Panther's interactions with different types of audiences. If the event is not conducive to performing one of the prepared scripts, suggestions for his interaction include:

- While walking around at an event, the helper can greet people with: "Do you know (or remember) Power Panther™?" or "I'd like you to meet a special friend of mine – Power Panther™!"
- Power Panther™ can wave hello, shake hands with the helper, then turn to display MyPlate on the back of his shirt while the helper says: "Do you know what MyPlate on Power Panther's shirt means?"
- The helper can say: "Power Panther™ has an important message he would like to share: "Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ Do you know what that means?" or "What can you do to Eat Smart. Play Hard.™?"
- The helper can ask: "Can you remember Power Panther's message: Eat Smart. Play Hard.™?" When the audience responds affirmatively, Power Panther™ can respond with a yes nod, an affirmative thumbs up, and/or a high five.
- The helper should stay close to Power Panther™ at all times to protect him from curious kids.
- The helper should keep a watchful eye for the signs that Power Panther™ uses when he needs help and be ready to help him leave the area.

Instructions for Putting on the Costume

Make sure there is a private place to dress Power Panther™ on site at the event. Plan to arrive 45-60 minutes before the appearance. Do not transport the dressed Power Panther™ in an automobile or other vehicle, as any transport time adds to the time the wearer is in full costume. It is suggested that you advance-check to ensure costume components are available.

Keep the costume and costume parts away from heat sources, such as radiators, stoves, candles, or any open flame. The person acting as Power Panther™ will need someone to assist him/her in putting on the costume. Please read all of the instructions before putting on the costume.

Fan Batteries

- The fan inside the head unit requires four AA batteries. New batteries will last up to four hours.

Ready to Dress

1. In order to stay as cool as possible, wear only a T-shirt, shorts, and socks inside of the costume. Long hair should be tied back.
2. Step into the pants, slipping your foot into the stirrup. Pull up the pants to the desired length, and adjust the suspender straps accordingly.



3. Put on the mesh vest with sleeves and hood. The wrists have gloves to prevent the sleeve from riding up your arm during a performance.
4. Put on the padded vest, with the zipper at the back.



5. Wear socks and step into the sneakers, making sure your feet are under the elastic support straps.
6. Put on the shirt making sure that the vest, hood, and neck piece all lay as flat as possible.



7. Remove the fan battery pack from the head unit and switch the fan to the “on” position. Secure battery pack inside the pouch in the head unit.



8. Put on the head unit and gloves.

Once the entire costume is on, have the helper check over the performer to make sure everything is properly in place. Make sure no cords, performer clothing, or flesh is showing. Children become very disappointed when they realize there is a person inside of the character. New batteries should power the fan up to four hours.

Make sure all pieces are together after the performance. If time allows, hang the costume to air-dry between events and before returning.



Soiled or Damaged Costume

If a costume component is soiled, try to spot clean it with soap and water; if it is torn, either patch it up with a few stitches or pin it with a safety pin if time is limited. Do not appear in a costume that is obviously damaged.

Getting Ready

Before you begin a performance, make sure you are prepared. Take a moment beforehand to consider the following questions:

- Who will your audience be?
- Where will you be performing?
- Will your audience be stationary or continually moving?
- How long will your performance last?
- What is your performing purpose?
- What will your audience expect from you?

Plan your performance accordingly and remember that this should be a pleasant experience for children.