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### **Contributors**

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Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
E [library@wellcomecollection.org](mailto:library@wellcomecollection.org)  
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

# THE EGG STORY

## 2

### HOW MANY EGGS DO WE EAT EACH YEAR?

On average we eat 225 eggs each every year in this country (that's between 4 and 5 each per week). That's over 12 thousand million eggs eaten in the UK each year.

### HOW DO EGGS GET TO THE SHOPS?

In the free-range system, eggs are collected each day by hand from the barn or field where the hens have laid them and taken by hand to a packing area.

In the battery system, eggs are collected several times a day. The eggs roll down from the hen's cage on to a moving conveyor belt so that they don't get dirty or damaged. They are then taken directly to the packing area.

In both systems the eggs are then checked for cracks and imperfections. Using a special light, the egg checkers are able to see the inside of the egg through the shell – this is called candling because people used to use a candle although now an electric light is used. In this way the egg checkers are able to tell if the egg shell has any small cracks or imperfections and can make sure that the inside of the egg is clean and good to eat.

The eggs are then packed into egg boxes or trays and transported to the shops.

### EGG COLOUR

Hens' eggs vary in colour, from white to brown because of the breed of hen. The content of the egg is exactly the same whether it is white or brown. People used to think that a brown egg was better for you and this is why there are not many white eggs in the shops today.

The farmer can control the colour of the egg yolk by feeding his hens with different foods like grass meal or maize. This is done because some people prefer eggs with a deeper yolk colour and think that these eggs are better for them.

### EGG SIZES

When eggs are checked for cracks and imperfections at the packing station, they are also separated into different sizes. There are seven different egg sizes sold in the shops, from Size 1 (the biggest) to Size 7 (the smallest). Most people eat size 3 eggs.

### FRESHNESS

Eggs will stay fresh for up to three weeks after they are bought from the shop. Eggs should always be stored in a cool place with the pointed end downwards and the rounded end, with its air sac, upwards. As the egg is stored the yolk rises. If correctly stored the yolk is cushioned against the air sac and protected from the shell which stops the yolk from sticking to the shell.

### FURTHER TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

Do research on class or school consumption of eggs per week, per year. Does it correspond with average country-wide consumption? Plot results on a bar graph.



### How to tell if an egg is fresh

Here are two experiments to tell if an egg is fresh.

Do them with your teacher and then write about one of them.  
Draw a picture to show the fresh and stale egg.

#### Experiment 1

Take one fresh egg and one stale egg (preferably more than three weeks old).

Make a brine solution (1 pint of water to 2 tablespoons of salt).

Carefully drop each egg into the water – the stale egg will float and the fresh egg will sink to the bottom.

#### Experiment 2

Break a fresh egg on to a flat surface. The yolk will be upstanding in the centre of a thick layer of white, surrounded by thin white.

Break a stale egg in the same way. The yolk will be flat and off-centre and the white will be thinner than in a fresh egg.



If the egg looks like this it is fresh.



If the egg looks like this it is fairly fresh.



If it looks like this it is stale.

