



# The big debate

## Is it OK to put ketchup on a hot dog?

People disagree on the best condiment for this classic American food.

### What you need to know

- Hot dogs were brought to the US in the 1800s by European immigrants from Germany and Austria. They soon grew popular across the nation.
- Americans now eat about 20 billion hot dogs every year. That number includes about 150 million of them on the Fourth of July.
- A poll conducted in 2025 found that 53% of Americans prefer ketchup on their frankfurters, but the National Hot Dog and Sausage Council advises against it.



**BIG IDEA**  
Legend has it that the idea for hot dogs started with the Roman emperor Nero.

Hot dogs are such an iconic American food that in 1939, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt served them to the king and queen of the UK (who reportedly loved them, by the way). Although it's clear that many Americans share a love of hot dogs, they definitely don't always agree on what should go on them. And there is no topping that divides people more than ketchup. Hot dog purists say it should never be allowed near their beloved food, and one Chicago, Illinois, hot dog restaurant makes customers who ask for ketchup ring a "bell of shame." But plenty of people reach for the ketchup first. What do you think? Is it OK to put ketchup on a hot dog?

### Yes—it's a timeless topper

Ketchup is a classic for a reason. It's sweet and savory, mixes well with other toppings, and perfectly complements the salty bite of a hot dog. Toppings are a personal preference anyway, often based on where people live. In Chicago they eat hot dogs with mustard, relish, onions, pickles, peppers, and tomatoes. In Michigan they like them with chili on top, and New Yorkers prefer them with sauerkraut or onions. With all that going on, what difference does a little ketchup make? Besides, millions of people wouldn't put ketchup on their dogs if it was so awful. Let people eat them however they want to.

### No—frankly, it's gross

Ketchup is so sweet that it ends up overpowering the hot dog and making it impossible to taste the spices and other flavors. Even the experts say no way! Although the National Hot Dog and Sausage Council said it's fine for kids to put ketchup on dogs, they also said no one over age 18 should ever add it. Instead, the council recommends mustard, relish, onions, cheese, and chili. Plus, ketchup is used all the time on hamburgers and fries, so why not change it up? There's a world of flavors out there. Try topping hot dogs with pickled peppers or spicy mustard for an adventurous change of pace.

### YES Three reasons it's OK to put ketchup on a hot dog

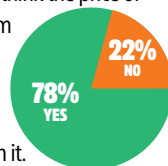
- 1 It's a classic condiment that combines well with other flavors and makes a tasty food even better.
- 2 There are already so many variations on hot dog toppings that there's no reason to single out ketchup.
- 3 How could it be bad if so many people like it? Don't yuck their yum.

### NO Three reasons it's not OK to put ketchup on a hot dog

- 1 Ketchup is too sweet, and the flavor overpowers the rest of the hot dog.
- 2 Even the National Hot Dog and Sausage Council gives a thumbs down to ketchup and recommends different toppings.
- 3 Skipping the ketchup gives you a chance to expose your taste buds to other, more exciting flavors.

### LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked if sports jerseys are too expensive. Most of you (78%) think the price of showing team pride is too high, but some (22%) said it's worth it.



### What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit [kids.theweekjunior.com/polls](https://kids.theweekjunior.com/polls) so you can vote in our debate. Vote **YES** if you think it's OK to put ketchup on a hot dog or **NO** if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.