

The history of the tuck shop

From the sweeties.net wiki

A tuck shop is a small shop in or near a school, and sometimes a hospital, camp or other institution. In traditional British usage it means the school shop that sells sweets, crisps and snacks, and it is especially associated with fee paying schools. On a school campus, the tuck shop is often the only place where pupils can spend money, so it may sell stationery and other school items too.

Where the word comes from

Tuck is slang for food, and it probably comes from phrases such as tucking into a meal. It is closely related to the Australian word tucker, which also means food.

There is also a family story. One theory ties the word to popular shops run in England by members of the Tuck family between 1780 and 1850. The earliest found is Thomas Tuck's coffee house in Norwich, which was popular with the city's literary circles in the late 18th century and had a library for its customers. Another Tuck store, shown in a painting with TUCK over the door, had opened by 1842. In 1852 two brothers from the family sailed to Victoria, in Australia, where both opened similar shops, one as a confectioner in Melbourne and the other at the goldfields.

Around the world

The tuck shop travelled with the word. In Australia, at schools, youth clubs and campsites, tuck shops are often run by volunteers, parents and pupils, and because they may be the only place to buy food at school, their menus are more like school dinners. Summer camps in Canada have tuck shops, and the word is used at boarding schools in India too.

No more sweets at school

In England, the rules have changed what a state school tuck shop can sell. The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014 set out what schools may provide, whether at lunch or otherwise, and they say plainly that confectionery must not be provided. Snacks are limited to nuts, seeds, vegetables and fruit with no added salt, sugar or fat. The school food standards apply to local authority maintained schools, pupil referral units, academies and free schools, and non maintained special schools.

It is part of a wider push towards healthier food for children, which has also moved sweets away from supermarket checkouts: see [why sweets were moved away from the checkout](#) and [sweets and teeth](#)

A place in memory

Advertisers and shops still use the name and the image of the tuck shop to evoke a sense of nostalgia, and some sweet shops simply call themselves The Tuck Shop. For the wider story of British sweet shops, see

[the history of the sweet shop](#)

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