

Meal Pattern Comparison Chart



Meal Pattern Components and Requirements	School Meal Programs (NSLP and SBP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO)	Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)	K-12 Afterschool Snack Program (under NSLP)	Pre-K Meal Pattern (under NSLP and SBP)
Milk				
Fat Content	Low-fat or fat-free flavored or unflavored	No restrictions	Low-fat or fat-free flavored or unflavored	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 year old: unflavored whole milk • 2 years old and older: low-fat or fat-free unflavored milk
Non-dairy beverages (fluid milk substitutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-dairy beverages that are nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk¹ may be served • Non-dairy beverages that are not nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk must be accompanied by a signed medical statement to be served as part of a reimbursable meal 	Same as NSLP, SBP and SSO	Same as NSLP, SBP and SSO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as NSLP, SBP and SSO • Breastmilk may be served in lieu of fluid milk; written request is not required
Vegetables/Fruits				
Components	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only the fruit component is required at breakfast; vegetables may be offered in place of fruits • Vegetables and fruits are two separate components at lunch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetables and fruits are one component at all meals and snacks. • At lunch or supper, two or more different kinds of vegetables and/or fruits must be served. 	Vegetables and fruits are one component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetables and fruits are one component at breakfast • Vegetables and fruits are two separate components at lunch and snack
Vegetable Subgroups	NSLP: Must offer grade group-specific amounts of	No requirements	No requirements	No requirements

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	each vegetable subgroup (dark green, red-orange, beans/peas (legumes), starchy, and other) over the course of a week			
Full-strength juice (100% juice)	May count towards no more than half of the vegetables or fruits offered per week, per meal type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May count towards no more than half of the daily vegetable/fruit requirement at lunch/supper • Juice may not be served at snack when milk is served as the only other component 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May count towards the entire vegetable/fruit component • Juice may not be served at snack when milk is served as the only other component 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May count towards the entire vegetable/fruit component no more than once per day • Juice may not be served at snack when milk is served as the only other component
Crediting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dried fruit credits as twice the amount offered • Raw leafy greens credit for half the amount offered • Tomato paste and puree credit based on the Food Buying Guide yields 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All fruits and vegetables credit based on the volume served • Tomato paste and puree credit based on the Food Buying Guide yields 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All fruits and vegetables credit based on the volume served • Tomato paste and puree credit based on the Food Buying Guide yields 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dried fruit credits as twice the amount offered • Raw leafy greens credit for half the amount offered • Tomato paste and puree credit based on the Food Buying Guide yields
Grains				
Whole grain-rich	At least 80% of grains offered per week must be whole grain-rich ² and the remainder must be enriched. Each serving line	Grains/Breads must be whole grain or enriched, or made from whole grain or enriched flour or meal that may include bran and/or germ. Cereal must	Grains must be whole grain or enriched, or made from whole grain or enriched flour or meal that may include bran and/or germ. Cereal must be	Must serve at least one whole grain-rich food per day

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	must be assessed independently.	be whole grain, enriched, or fortified	whole grain, enriched, or fortified.	
Grain-based desserts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 2 ounce equivalents of grain-based desserts may be offered per week • No quantity restrictions at breakfast • Allowable grain-based desserts for NSLP and SBP are noted on Exhibit A using superscripts 	Allowable grain-based desserts are noted on Exhibit A using superscripts	Only two grain-based desserts per week are permitted, providing the item meets grain requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grain-based desserts cannot count toward the grain requirement • Foods considered grain-based desserts are noted on Exhibit A using superscripts
Breakfast cereals	No sugar limit	No sugar limit	No sugar limit	Must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce ³
Crediting	Based on ounce equivalents	Based on serving sizes	Based on ounce equivalents	Based on ounce equivalents
Meat/Meat Alternates				
Yogurt	No sugar limit	No sugar limit	No sugar limit	Must contain no more than 23 grams of sugar per 6 ounces ⁴
Meat/Meat alternates at breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May substitute 1 ounce equivalent of meat/meat alternate for 1 ounce equivalent grains after the minimum daily grains requirements is met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be served as an extra • May be offered as the fourth food item when using Offer versus Serve at breakfast 	Not applicable	May substitute meat/meat alternate for the entire grain component no more than 3 times per week

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be served as an extra, if within the dietary specifications 			
Dietary Specifications				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meals must, on average, meet weekly limits for calories, saturated fat and sodium • Foods served must contain zero grams of trans fat 	No dietary specifications	No dietary specifications	Sugar limits on breakfast cereals and yogurt
Age/Grade Groups				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowable NSLP grade groups: K-5, 6-8, K-8 and 9-12 • Allowable SBP grade groups: K-5, 6-8, K-8, 9-12 and K-12 • Pre-K students may be served the K-5 meal patterns when comingled during meals • Meals must meet all daily and weekly requirements for respective grade groups 	One meal pattern for all youth ages 1-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 3-5 and grades K-12 • Pre-K students may be served the K-12 snack meal pattern when comingled during snack service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 1-2 and ages 3-5 (and not yet in K5 kindergarten) • Must be enrolled in the district to be eligible

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Meal Service Options				
Offer Versus Serve (OVS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At lunch, students must select at least 3 food components out of the 5 components offered • At breakfast, 4 food items must be offered, and students must select at least 3 food items • Students must select at least ½ cup fruit and/or vegetable at breakfast and lunch • Required at high school; optional for middle and elementary schools • State agencies may approve exceptions for high schools not able to implement OVS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowed at all SFSP sites • At lunch/supper, children must select at least 3 food components out of the 4 components offered • At breakfast, at least 4 food items must be offered and children must select at least 3 food items • Not allowed at snack 	Not allowed	Not allowed

¹ Defined by [regulation](#)

² Whole grain-rich products must contain at least 50-percent whole-grains and the remaining grain, if any, must be enriched.

³ Use the [Choose Breakfast Cereals That Are Lower in Added Sugar](#) handout to determine if a cereal is below the sugar limit

⁴ Use the [Calculating Sugar Limit for Yogurt](#) handout to determine if a yogurt is below the sugar limit

Additional Resources:

- [NSLP and SBP menu planning and meal patterns](#)
- [SFSP menu planning and meal patterns](#)
- [Afterschool Snack Program](#)
- [Pre-K Meal Patterns](#)