

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				
Sugar Content	Starting July 1, 2025: flavored milk limited to 10 grams of sugar per 8 ounces.	No restrictions	No restrictions	Starting July 1, 2025: flavored milk limited to 10 grams of sugar per 8 ounces.
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 	<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 	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

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetables and fruits are two separate components at lunch 	of vegetables and/or fruits must be served.		components at lunch and snack
Vegetable Subgroups	NSLP: Must offer grade group-specific amounts of each vegetable subgroup (dark green, red-orange, beans/peas (legumes), starchy, and other) for lunch over the course of a week. Breakfast requires subgroup variety, if offering vegetables 2 or more times per week.	No requirements	No requirements	No requirements
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 	<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

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tomato paste and puree credit based on the Food Buying Guide yields 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 must be assessed independently.	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 be whole grain, enriched, or fortified	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 whole grain, enriched, or fortified.	Must serve at least one whole grain-rich food per day
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	24-25 SY – No sugar limit Starting July 1, 2025 No more than 6 g sugar per ounce.	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

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Meat/Meat Alternates				
Yogurt	24-25 SY -No sugar limit Starting July 1, 2025, no more than 12g of added sugar per 6 ounces.	No sugar limit	No sugar limit	24-25SY No more than 23 g of sugar per 6 ounces. Starting July 1, 2025 No more than 12g of added sugar per 6 ounces.
Meat/Meat alternates at breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meat/Meat alternates and/or grains are one component. May be served as an extra, if within the dietary specifications 	<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
Dietary Specifications				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meals must, on average, meet weekly limits for calories, saturated fat and sodium Starting July 1, 2027, meals must meet new sodium and added sugar dietary specifications. 	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 	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 	<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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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 		comingled during snack service	

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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](#)