

National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Quick Guide



Age/Grade Groups:

K-5, 6-8, K-8 and 9-12

Components: The following 5 components must be offered with every lunch meal.

1. Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA)

- Daily and weekly minimums must be met.

	K-5	K-8	6-8	9-12
Daily minimums	1 oz eq	1 oz eq	1 oz eq	2 oz eq
Weekly minimums	8 oz eq	9 oz eq	9 oz eq	10 oz eq

2. Grains

- Daily and weekly minimums must be met.

	K-5	K-8	6-8	9-12
Daily minimums	1 oz eq	1 oz eq	1 oz eq	2 oz eq
Weekly minimums	8 oz eq	8 oz eq	8 oz eq	10 oz eq

- At least 80% of the weekly grains offered must be whole grain-rich, based on ounce equivalents.
 - Whole grain-rich is the term means that the grain content of a product is between 50-100% whole grain with any remaining grains being enriched

3. Vegetables

- Uncooked leafy vegetables credit as half of the volume served (e.g. 1 cup served = ½ cup creditable vegetable).
- Minimum weekly requirements must be met from all subgroups (dark green, red/orange, beans/peas/lentils, starchy, and other). These must be offered with all meal choices.
- No more than half of weekly vegetable offerings can be in the form of juice.

4. Fruit

- Creditable forms of fruit include fresh, frozen, canned in water, light syrup or juice, dried, and pasteurized, 100% juice.
 - Dried fruit credits as twice the volume served (e.g. ¼ cup of raisins credits as ½ cup of fruit).
 - No more than half of weekly fruit offerings can be in the form of juice.

5. Milk

- The minimum serving size is 8 ounces.
- At least two varieties of low-fat or fat-free milk must be offered.
- Flavored and/or unflavored may be offered provided that unflavored is offered at each meal service.
- Water and juice may not be substituted for milk.

Dietary Specifications for School Year 2025

Weekly Calorie Ranges:

K-5: 550 - 650 kcal

K-8: 600 - 650 kcal

6-8: 600 - 700 kcal

9-12: 750 - 850 kcal

Weekly Average Sodium Limit:

K-5: ≤ 1,110 mg

K-8: ≤ 1,110 mg

6-8: ≤ 1,225 mg

9-12: ≤ 1,280 mg

✓ Weekly Saturated Fat Limit: < 10% of total calories.

Menu Planning

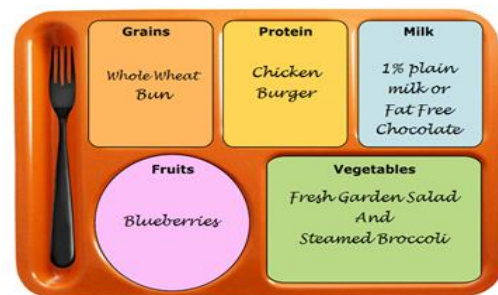
- All meals must offer the daily and weekly minimum amounts for the 5 required food components (grains, meat/meat alternate, fruit, vegetables and milk).
- Each meal choice must meet the daily and weekly requirements, including vegetable subgroups.
- All foods and condiments that students have access to as part of a reimbursable meal must be included in the weekly averages for dietary specifications.
- The menu planner must be able to document compliance with the meal pattern using standardized recipes, the Food Buying Guide and/or Child Nutrition (CN) labels (if available), and/or manufacturer's product formulation statements.

Offer versus Serve (OVS)

- Students must be offered all 5 food components in portions planned to meet the minimum daily & weekly quantities for each age/grade group.
- Under OVS, all students must be allowed to decline up to 2 components.
- All students must select at least a ½ cup fruit or vegetable, or a combination of fruits and vegetables.
- OVS is required at high schools and is optional for elementary and middle schools.

Other Requirements

- Plain potable water must be available at no charge to students during lunch service. Often this requirement is met by allowing students access to a nearby water fountain or cups and a portable container of water is put in the cafeteria during meal service.
- Meal Signage – Schools must identify all foods that are part of a reimbursable meal near or at the beginning of all serving lines.
- Lunch must be offered between the hours of 10:00 am – 2:00 pm



Make sure to take at least ½ fruit or vegetable!