

National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

School Year 2027 Quick Guide



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

1. Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA)

- Credit by weight (ounce equivalents)
- Daily and weekly minimums vary by grade groups.
- Crediting is based on the ounce equivalents of meat/meat alternate in a product. Child Nutrition (CN) labels and/or product formulation statements are required for processed MMA products.

	K-5	6-8	K-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

- Credit by weight (ounce equivalents)
- At least 80% of grains offered must be whole grain-rich.
- Daily and weekly minimums vary by grade groups.
- Crediting is determined by comparing the weight of the food product to those listed in [Exhibit A](#) or calculating grams of creditable grains in a recipe. Refer to the USDA [Food Buying Guide](#) for information.

	K-5	6-8	K-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

3. Vegetables

- Credit by volume (cups)
- Creditable forms of vegetables include fresh, frozen, and canned.
- Vegetable subgroup requirements must be met weekly: dark green, red/orange, beans/peas/lentils, starchy, and other.
 - Beans/peas/lentils may be offered as meat/meat alternate or vegetable but not both components in the same meal.
 - 'Other' vegetable subgroup requirements may be met with any additional amounts from the remaining sub-groups
- Leafy vegetables credit as half of the volume served (e.g. 1 cup credits as ½ cup).

4. Fruit

- Credit by volume (cups)
- Creditable forms of fruit include fresh, frozen without sugar, canned in water, light syrup or juice, dried, and pasteurized, 100% juice.
- Dried fruit credits as twice the volume served (e.g. ¼ cup credits as ½ cup of fruit).
- No more than half of weekly fruit offerings can be in the form of juice.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

5. Milk

- The minimum serving size is 8 ounces.
- At least two types of milk must be offered (non-fat, low-fat, reduced-fat or whole; flavored or unflavored; lactose reduced or lactose-free)
- Flavored and/or unflavored may be offered.
- Water and juice may not be substituted for milk.
- Non-dairy milk may not be substituted without proper documentation.

Other Specifications: Daily Amounts Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week

	K-5	6-8	K-8	9-12
Min-Max Calories	550-650	600-700	600-650	750-850
Saturated Fat (% of total calories)	<10	<10	<10	<10
Sodium Target 1A	≤1,110	≤1,225	≤1,110	≤1,280
Added Sugar	Breakfast cereals: ≤6 grams of added sugar per dry ounce Yogurt: ≤12 grams added sugar per 6 ounces Flavored milk: ≤10 grams of added sugar per 8 fluid ounces			

Menu Planning

- All meal choices must offer the daily and weekly minimum requirements for the 5 food components (grains, meat/meat alternate, fruit, vegetables and milk).
- 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