

National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Quick Guide

Age/Grade Groups: K-5, 6-8, K-8 and 9-12

Components

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

- Reference: USDA Memo SP 30-2012 Updated Exhibit A: Whole Grain-Rich Ounce Equivalency (Oz Eq) Requirements For School Meal Programs
- All grains credited toward the meal pattern must be whole grain-rich.

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/legumes, starchy, and other).
- 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

- At least two types of low-fat or fat-free milk must be offered.
- The minimum serving size is 8 ounces.
- Milk may be flavored or unflavored. If flavored milk is offered, unflavored must also be available.

Dietary Specifications

Weekly Calorie Ranges:

K-5: 550 - 650 kcal
 K-8: 600 - 650 kcal
 6-8: 600 - 700 kcal
 9-12: 750 - 850 kcal

Weekly Target 1 Sodium Limit:

K-5: ≤ 1,230 mg
 K-8: ≤ 1,230 mg
 6-8: ≤ 1,360 mg
 9-12: ≤ 1,420 mg

- ✓ Weekly Saturated Fat Limit: < 10% of total calories.
- ✓ Trans-fat: 0 grams/serving (excludes naturally-occurring trans-fat).

Menu Planning

- All meals must offer the daily and weekly minimum amounts for all 5 required food components (grains, meat/meat alternate, fruit, vegetables and milk).
- Each meal offering 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 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, vegetable, or a combination of fruits and vegetables.
- OVS is required at high schools and is optional for elementary and middle schools.

Other Requirements

- Potable water must be available at no charge to students during lunch service. Often this requirement is met by allowing student 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.

