



IN A NUTSHELL

National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

Nutrition Standards & Meal Pattern Requirements

Age/Grade Groups

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

Components

Milk

- Milk credits by volume (fluid ounces)
- 1 cup milk must be offered daily for all age/grade groups
- Offer at least two milk varieties. Allowable milk types include low-fat (1% milk fat or less, flavored or unflavored) and fat-free (flavored or unflavored)

Fruits

- Fruits credit by volume (cups)
 - A minimum of $\frac{1}{8}$ cup fruit per serving is needed to credit
- Creditable forms of fruit include fresh, frozen (with or without added sugar), canned in water, light syrup or juice, dried, and pasteurized, full-strength juice
 - Dried fruit credits as twice the volume served (e.g. $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of raisins credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit)
- Snack-type fruit products such as 100% fruit strips, leathers or drops are not creditable

Vegetables

- Vegetables credit by volume (cups)
 - A minimum of $\frac{1}{8}$ cup vegetable per serving is needed to credit
- Creditable forms of vegetables include fresh, frozen, canned, and pasteurized, full-strength juice
 - Raw, uncooked leafy vegetables credit as half of the volume served (e.g. 1 cup served = $\frac{1}{2}$ cup creditable vegetable)
 - No more than half of weekly vegetable offerings can be in the form of juice
- Vegetable subgroup requirements must be met on a weekly basis
 - There are five required subgroups: dark green, red/orange, beans/peas/legumes, starchy, and other
 - Mixed vegetable dishes with unknown quantities per serving or mixed vegetable dishes that include starchy vegetables credit toward total vegetables and are categorized as additional

Grains

- Grains credit by weight (ounce equivalents [oz eq])
 - A minimum of 0.25 oz eq per serving is needed to credit
- Daily and weekly minimums must be offered and vary by age/grade group
 - Daily minimums: K-5, K-8, 6-8: **1.0 oz eq**, 9-12: **2.0 oz eq**
 - Weekly minimums: K-5, K-8, 6-8: **8.0 oz eq**, 9-12: **10 oz eq**
- 80% of grains credited towards the meal pattern must be whole grain-rich
- Determine crediting by comparing the weight of the food product to those listed in [Exhibit A](#) or by calculating the grams of creditable grains in a recipe. Refer to the [USDA Food Buying Guide](#) for more information.

Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA)

- M/MA credit by weight (ounce equivalents [oz eq])
 - A minimum of 0.25 oz eq per serving is needed to credit
- Daily and weekly minimums must be offered and vary by age/grade group
 - Daily minimums: K-5, K-8, 6-8: **1.0 oz eq**, 9-12: **2.0 oz eq**
 - Weekly minimums: K-5: **8.0 oz eq**, K-8, 6-8: **9.0 oz eq**, 9-12: **10 oz eq**
- Foods with creditable amounts of M/MA offered on salad bars and/or as condiments in amounts greater than 0.25 oz eq per serving contribute to weekly M/MA offerings
- Tofu and soy yogurt are creditable as M/MA
 - Tofu requirements: A 2.2 oz serving by weight of commercially prepared tofu containing at least 5.0 gm of protein will credit as 1.0 oz eq M/MA

Dietary Specifications

The dietary specifications set forth limits for calories, saturated fat, sodium and trans fat. These are assessed as a daily average over the course of one five-day week, except for trans fat which is a daily limit. The calculated daily average must be within the range listed in the table (at least the minimum and no more than the maximum values). Food products and ingredients must contain zero grams of trans fat (less than 0.5 grams) per serving.

Grade Groups	Calories (kcal)	Sodium Limits Target 1A (mg)	Saturated Fat (% of total calories)	Trans Fat (grams per serving)
K-5	550-650	≤1,110	<10	0
6-8	600-700	≤1,225	<10	0
K-8	600-650	≤1,110	<10	0
9-12	750-850	≤1,380	<10	0

Menu Planning

- Refer to the [Lunch Meal Pattern Table](#) for daily and weekly requirements
- All meals must meet the daily minimum requirements for all 5 components
- Each serving line must meet the daily and weekly requirements, independently
- All foods and condiments that students have access to as part of a reimbursable meal must be included in the dietary specifications
- Maintain Child Nutrition (CN) labels and/or Product Formulation Statements (PFS) to document compliance

Offer versus Serve (OVS)

- Students must be offered all 5 components in portions planned to meet the daily minimum quantities for each age/grade group
 - All students must be allowed to decline up to two components
 - To qualify as a reimbursable meal, students must select at least 3 full and different components one of which is a ½ cup fruit, vegetable or combination of fruits and vegetables
 - There is no requirement for a student to select milk under OVS.
- OVS is required for grades 9-12
 - It is optional, but encouraged, for grades K-8

Resources

- DPI [National School Lunch Program](#) homepage
- [Menu Planning](#)