

Meal Pattern and Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, effective July 1, 2026

Meal Pattern Components	Breakfast Meal Pattern			Lunch Meal Pattern		
	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
	Amount of Food a Per Week (Minimum Per Day)					
Fruits (cups) ^{a, b}	5 (1) ^c	5 (1) ^c	5 (1) ^c	2½ (½)	2½ (½)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups) ^{a, b, c}	No requirement, may substitute veg for fruit.			3¾ (¾)	3¾ (¾)	5 (1)
Dark green ^d	0	0	0	½	½	½
Red/Orange ^d	0	0	0	¾	¾	1¼
Beans, Peas, Lentils ^d	0	0	0	½	½	½
Starchy ^d	0	0	0	½	½	½
Other ^{d, e}	0	0	0	½	½	¾
Additional Veg to Reach Total ^f	0	0	0	1	1	1½
Grains (oz eq) ^g	7-10 (1)	8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)	8-9 (1)	8-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Meats/Meat Alternates (oz eq) ^h	No requirement May substitute MMA for Grains			8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Fluid milk (cups) ⁱ	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
	Other Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week					
Min-max calories (kcal) ^j	350-500	400-550	450-600	550-650	600-700	750-850
Saturated fat (% of total calories) ^k	< 10	< 10	< 10	< 10	< 10	< 10
Sodium Target 1A (mg) ^{j, k}	≤540	≤600	≤640	≤1,100	≤1,225	≤1,280
Sodium Target SY 2027-2028 ^{j, k}	≤485	≤535	≤570	≤935	≤1,035	≤1,080
Added Sugars ^l	Product-based limits on breakfast cereals, yogurt, and flavored milk as of July 1, 2025 Weekly limit of 10% added sugar effective July 1, 2027					

- ^a Food items included in each group and subgroup and amount equivalents. Minimum creditable serving is 1/8 cup. Traditional indigenous foods (for example yams, plantains, sweet potatoes, and buffalo) may be used in school meals.
- ^b One quarter cup of dried fruit counts as 1/2 cup of fruit; 1 cup of leafy greens counts as 1/2 cup of vegetables. No more than half of the fruit or vegetable offerings may be in the form of juice. All juice must be 100% full-strength.
- ^c Schools must offer 1 cup of fruit daily and 5 cups of fruit weekly. For SY 2026-2027, Section 736, of Division B of the 2026 Appropriates Act, allows SFAs participating in the SBP to credit any vegetable offered in place of fruit without including vegetables from other subgroups in the weekly menus.
- ^d Larger amounts of these vegetables may be served. In School Food Authorities that are tribally operated, BIE operated, or primarily serve American Indian or Alaska Native children, vegetables may be substituted to meet the grain requirement.
- ^e This category consists of “Other vegetables” as defined in 7 CFR 210.10(c)(2)(ii)(E). For the purposes of the NSLP, the “Other vegetables” requirement may be met with any additional amounts from the dark green, red/orange, and beans/peas/lentils vegetable subgroups.
- ^f Any vegetable subgroup may be offered to meet the total weekly vegetable requirement.
- ^g At least 80% of the weekly grains must be whole grain-rich; the remaining weekly grains planned must be enriched. Meat/meat alternates may be substituted for grains at breakfast.
- ^h Beans, peas, and lentils may be planned to meet either the vegetable subgroup requirement or the meat/meat alternates requirement but cannot count toward both requirements in the same meal. Beans, peas, and lentils credited as meat/meat alternates may count toward the weekly vegetable subgroup requirement. There is no meat/meat alternate requirement at breakfast, menu planners may substitute some or all grains with meat/meat alternate.
- ⁱ Two milk choices must be offered at meal service. Unflavored milk is offered at each meal service. This requirement also applies to Special Milk Program for children ages 6 and older and Smart Snacks in School. Milk may be whole, reduced-fat (2 percent), low-fat (1%), or fat-free(skim) flavored or unflavored. Lactose free and reduced-lactose fluid milk may also be offered. Schools may exclude the saturated fat from fluid milk only when calculating the weekly average saturated fat requirement.
- ^j The average daily calories for a 5-day school week menu must be within the range. Discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) may be added to the meal pattern if within the specifications for calories, saturated fat, added sugars, and sodium.
- ^k Sodium Target 1A is effective July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2027 (SY2026-2027). Effective July 1, 2027, Sodium requirements will be reduced by 10% at breakfast and by 15% at lunch.
- ^l Product-based added sugar limits for breakfast cereals, yogurt, and flavored milk in NSLP and SBP as of July 1, 2025. Product-based limit for flavored milk also applies to Smart Snacks in School. Effective July 1, 2027, a weekly 10% limit of added sugars will be implemented in NSLP and SBP.