Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs

School Year 2024-25 (July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025)

This document compares the requirements for the grains component in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool (ages 1-5) in the school nutrition programs, including the updates required by the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The school nutrition programs include the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP, and Special Milk Program (SMP). The SSO follows the NSLP and SBP meal patterns.

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Grains Component

The USDA regulations define different requirements for the grains component in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool.

- **Grades K-12:** The meal pattern requirements for grades K-12 are defined by 7 CFR 210 (lunch) and 7 CFR 210.10(o)(2) (snack) of the NSLP regulations and 7 CFR 220 (breakfast) of the SBP regulations.

- **Preschool (ages 1-5):** The preschool meal pattern requirements are defined by 7 CFR 210.10(p) (lunch) and 7 CFR 210.10(o)(3) (snack) of the NSLP regulations and 7 CFR 220.8(o) (breakfast) of the SBP regulations. The preschool meal patterns are the same as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal patterns for children (7 CFR 226.20).

> School food authorities (SFAs) must ensure that all foods served as the grain component meet the specific meal pattern requirements for each school nutrition program and grade group.

For information on the NSLP and SBP meal pattern and crediting requirements for grades K-12, refer to the CSDE's *Menu Planning Guide for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program* and *Crediting Summary Charts for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs,* and visit the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage and Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

For information on the ASP meal pattern and crediting requirements for grades K-12, refer to the CSDE's *Afterschool Snack Program Handbook* and *Crediting Summary Charts for the Afterschool Snack Program Meal Pattern for Grades K-12*, and visit the CSDE's Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) webpage.

For information on the NSLP, SBP, and ASP preschool meal pattern and crediting requirements, refer to the CSDE's *Menu Planning Guide for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs* and *Crediting Summary Charts for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Program*s, and visit the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

For a comparison of the lunch and breakfast meal pattern requirements for preschool and grades K-12, refer to the CSDE's *Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs*. For a comparison of the ASP meal pattern requirements for preschool and grades K-12, refer to the CSDE's *Comparison of Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12*.

Changes to Grains Component for School Year 2025-26

Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, implements the changes below to the grains component of the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool.

- Aligns the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) snack meal pattern requirements (including the grains component name and the required ounce equivalents (oz eq), except that the NSLP and

SBP weekly whole grain-rich (WGR) requirement applies. At least 80 percent of the grains offered weekly in ASP snacks must be WGR, based on the oz eq of offered grains. Grain-based desserts cannot credit in ASP snacks

- Establishes a new added sugars limit for breakfast cereals in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12 and updates the current limit for the NSLP, SBP, and ASP preschool meal patterns from total sugars to added sugars. Breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.

Serving the Same Foods to Preschoolers and Grades K-12

SFAs must consider the different meal pattern requirements for preschool and grades K-12 when making menu planning and purchasing decisions for grain foods that will be served to both groups. Grain foods served to both groups must comply with whichever meal pattern requirements are stricter. The examples below show how these requirements apply.

- The NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12 have stricter whole grain-rich (WGR) criteria than the preschool meal patterns (refer to "R9: WGR requirement" in this document). Grain foods served to both groups must comply with the WGR criteria for grades K-12.
- Grain-based desserts credit in the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12, but not the preschool meal patterns (refer to "R12: Grain-based Desserts" and "R13: Identifying grain-based desserts" in this document).
- The preschool meal patterns require a sugar limit for breakfast cereals, but the meal patterns for grades K-12 do not. Breakfast cereals served to both groups must comply with the preschool sugar limit (refer to "R17: Sugar Limit for Breakfast Cereals" in this document).

> Effective with school year 2025-26 (beginning July 1, 2025), the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, the added sugars limit for breakfast cereals will be the same for preschool and grades K-12 (refer to "Changes to the Grains Component for School Year 2025-26".)

School menus must meet these requirements unless meals are co-mingled. "Co-mingling" is the practice of serving meals to a variety of grades in the same service area at the same time. This typically occurs due to operational constraints within a school, such as limited time and space.

When preschoolers and older grades are co-mingled, SFAs may use the meal pattern of the older grades for preschoolers if the meal service meets three criteria: 1) the preschoolers and students from older grade groups are served together in the same place at the same time; 2) it is hard to tell the preschoolers from older students; and 3) it would be operationally difficult to serve different foods or different amounts of foods during the combined meal service. For example, SFAs that serve lunch or breakfast to preschoolers and grades K-5 in the same service area at the same time may choose to follow the K-5 lunch or breakfast meal pattern for both groups because it would be difficult for food service staff to determine which children are in preschool or kindergarten.

SFAs must use the preschool meal pattern when meals are served to preschoolers in a different area or at a different time than students in older grades. The preschool meal patterns provide the amounts and types of foods that most younger children need for healthy growth and development. The USDA strongly encourages SFAs to find ways to serve grade-appropriate meals to preschoolers and older students to best address their nutritional needs.

For additional guidance, refer to the USDA's *Serving School Meals to Preschoolers* and USDA Memo SP 37-2017*: Flexibility for Co-Mingled Preschool Meals: Questions and Answers,* and visit the "Preschoolers Eating with Other Grades: Co-mingled Meals" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage. Training on co-mingled meals is available in "Module 3: Meal Pattern Comparison of Preschool and Grades K-12" of the CSDE's Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs.

Considerations for Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Examples of grain foods that may cause choking include hard pretzels; pretzel chips; corn chips; breakfast cereals that contain nuts, whole-grain kernels (such as wheat berries), and hard chunks (such as granola); and crackers or breads with seeds, nut pieces, or whole-grain kernels. Consider children's age and developmental readiness when deciding what types of grain foods to offer in preschool menus and modify foods and menus as appropriate. For additional guidance, visit the "Choking Prevention" section of the CSDE's Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Crediting Documentation

SFAs must be able to document that grain menu items meet the crediting and WGR requirements and required quantities of the school meal patterns. SFAs must obtain a product formulation statement (PFS) from the manufacturer if a commercial product's ingredients statement and packaging do not provide sufficient information to determine if it meets these requirements. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs, Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs*, and *How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*.

Training on the requirements for PFS forms is available in Module 6: Meal Pattern Documentation of the CSDE's training program, *What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12*.

Foods made from scratch must have a standardized recipe that documents the crediting information per serving. For more information, visit the "Crediting Foods Made from Scratch" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs

Comparison Chart for the Grains Component

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
G1: Component name	Grains **Resources** Grains Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage) Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage) NSLP Regulations (7 CFR 210.10) SBP Regulations (7 CFR 220.8)	Grains/breads. The ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 refers to the grains/breads component instead of the grains component because the USDA's final rule (77 FR 4087), *Nutrition Standards for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs,* does not apply to the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12. **Change for school year 2025-26:** Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, aligns the grains component of the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 with the CACFP snack meal pattern requirements (including the grains component name and the required oz eq quantities) except that at least 80 percent of the grains offered weekly in ASP snacks must be WGR, based on the oz eq of offered grains. **Resources** Grains/Breads Component for Grades K-12 in the ASP (CSDE webpage)	Grains **Resources** Grains Component for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage) Final Rule (81 FR 24347): Child and Adult Care Food Program: Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 Final Rule Correction (81 FR 75671): CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
G2: Creditable grains	Whole grains, enriched grains, bran (such as oat bran, wheat bran, corn bran, rice bran, and rye bran) and germ (such as wheat germ). Bran and germ credit the same as enriched grains. **Corn:** Corn ingredients credit if they are whole grain, enriched, or treated with lime (nixtamalized). Nixtamalization is a process in which dried corn is soaked and cooked in an alkaline (slaked lime) solution. This process results in a product with similar nutrition to whole-grain corn. **Hominy, corn masa, and masa harina:** Ingredients labeled as hominy, corn masa, or masa harina are nixtamalized, and therefore credit as whole grains. However, cornmeal and corn flour do not credit unless they are whole grain, enriched, or nixtamalized. If the product's ingredients statement does not provide sufficient information, SFAs must obtain a product formulation statement (PFS) from the manufacturer to document that cornmeal and corn flour ingredients meet one of these requirements. Corn flour ingredients that are not are whole grain, enriched, or nixtamalized count toward the limit for noncreditable grains under the WGR criteria (refer to "R10: WGR Criteria"). **Resources** Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Grains Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage) Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE) USDA Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019, and SFSP 15-2019: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs	Same **Resources** Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Grains/Breads Component for Grades K-12 in the ASP (CSDE webpage) USDA Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019, and SFSP 15-2019: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs	Same **Resources** Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Grains Component for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage) How to Identify Creditable Grains for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers USDA Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019, and SFSP 15-2019: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
G3: Required amounts	The required quantities for the grains component are in ounce equivalents (oz eq). Oz eq are a unit of measure that indicates the contribution of a given serving size toward the grains component of the NSLP and SBP meal patterns. One oz eq provides 16 grams of credible grains. The amount of a grain food that provides 1 oz eq varies because different types of foods contain different amounts of creditable grains. **Resources** Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA) Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE)	The required quantities for the grains/breads component are in servings. One grains/breads serving provides 14.75 grams of credible grains. The amount of a grain food that provides one grains/breads serving varies because different types of foods contain different amounts of creditable grains. **Using oz eq:** 1 grains/breads serving is slightly less than 1 oz eq. ASP sponsors may choose to use grain oz eq to simplify menu planning and provide consistency across the school nutrition programs. **Resources** Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA) Servings for Grains/Breads in the Afterschool Snack Program Meal Pattern for Grades K-12 (CSDE) **Change for school year 2025-26:** Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, aligns the grains component of the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 with the CACFP snack meal pattern requirements. The grains/breads component changes to the grains component and grains/breads servings change to oz eq.	The required quantities for the grains component are in ounce equivalents (oz eq). Oz eq are a unit of measure that indicates the contribution of a given serving size toward the grains component of the NSLP and SBP meal patterns. One oz eq provides 16 grams of credible grains. The amount of a grain food that provides 1 oz eq varies because different types of foods contain different amounts of creditable grains The required preschool amount is ½ oz eq. **Resources** Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA) Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
G4: Weekly ranges for grains	The lunch and breakfast meal patterns require weekly ranges for the grains component. Menus are not required to comply with the maximums but must meet the minimums and stay within the weekly calorie range for each age group. The weekly maximum provides a guide for planning age-appropriate meals that meet the dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. For information on the dietary specifications, visit the "Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards for School Meals)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage and section 6 of the CSDE's guide, Menu Planning Guide for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. **Required weekly grains at lunch: 5-day week** • Grades K-5: 8-9 oz eq • Grades 6-8: 8-10 oz eq • Grades 9-12: 10-12 oz eq **Required weekly grains at lunch: 7-day week** • Grades K-5: 11-12½ oz eq • Grades 6-8: 11-14 oz eq • Grades 9-12: 14-17 oz eq	None	None
G4: Weekly ranges for grains, *continued*	Effective July 1, 2024, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, establishes a combined grains and MMA component in the SBP meal pattern and removes the requirement to offer 1 oz eq of grains each day at breakfast. SFAs may offer 1 oz eq of grains, MMA, or a combination of both. The weekly requirements for the grains/MMA component are the same as the weekly recruitment for the previous grains component. **Required weekly grains/MMA at breakfast: 5-day week** • Grades K-5: 7-10 oz eq • Grades 6-8: 8-10 oz eq • Grades 9-12: 9-10 oz eq	None	None

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
	Required weekly grains/MMA at breakfast: 7-day week • Grades K-5: 10-14 oz eq • Grades 6-8: 11-14 oz eq • Grades 9-12: 12½-14 oz eq **Resources** Menu Planning Guide for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE webpage)		

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
G5: Methods to determine required amounts	**Oz eq:** The USDA allows two methods for determining the oz eq of creditable grain products and recipes. Method 1 is used for commercial grain products and may also be used for standardized recipes that indicate the weight of the prepared (cooked) serving. Method 2 is used for standardized recipes and may also be used for commercial grain products that have a PFS stating the weight of creditable grains per serving (refer to "Crediting Documentation" on page 3). SFAs may use either method but must document how the crediting information was obtained. For detailed guidance on both methods, refer to the CSDE's Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12. **Resources** Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE) Recipe Analysis Workbook (USDA's Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs) Module 13: Grain Ounce Equivalents (CSDE's training program, What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12)	**Grains/breads servings:** The USDA allows two methods for determining the grains/breads servings of creditable products and recipes. Method 1 is used for commercial grain products and may also be used for standardized recipes that indicate the weight of the prepared (cooked) serving. Method 2 is used for standardized recipes and may also be used for commercial grain products that have a PFS stating the weight of creditable grains per serving (refer to "Crediting Documentation" on page 3). SFAs may use either method but must document how the crediting information was obtained. For detailed guidance on both methods, refer to the CSDE's Calculation Methods for Grains/Breads Serving for the Afterschool Snack Program Meal Pattern for Grades K-12. **Resources** Calculation Methods for Grains/Breads Serving for the Afterschool Snack Program Meal Pattern for Grades K-12 (CSDE) Recipe Analysis Workbook (USDA's Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs)	**Oz eq:** The USDA allows two methods for determining the oz eq of creditable grain products and recipes. Method 1 is used for commercial grain products and may also be used for standardized recipes that indicate the weight of the prepared (cooked) serving. Method 2 is used for standardized recipes and may also be used for commercial grain products that have a PFS stating the weight of creditable grains per serving (refer to "Crediting Documentation" on page 3). SFAs may use either method but must document how the crediting information was obtained. For detailed guidance on both methods, refer to the CSDE's Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs **Resources** Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Recipe Analysis Workbook (USDA's Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs) Module 13: Grain Ounce Equivalents (CSDE's training program, What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12)

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
G6: Method 1 Exhibit A chart	**Method 1** uses the amount for the appropriate grain group in the USDA's chart, Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs. Exhibit A provides minimum weights (groups A-G) and volumes (groups H-I) for nine groups of grain foods, based on the average grain content of similar products. The CSDE's Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 lists the Exhibit A oz eq that apply to the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12. **Resources** Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE) How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE) Webinar: Exhibit A Grains Tool to the Rescue (USDA) Webinar: How to Maximize the Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA)	**Method 1** uses the amount for the appropriate grain group in the USDA's chart, Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs. Exhibit A provides minimum weights (groups A-G) and volumes (groups H-I) for nine groups of grain foods, based on the average grain content of similar products. The CSDE's Servings for Grains/Breads in the Afterschool Snack Program Meal Pattern for Grades K-12 lists the Exhibit A servings that apply to the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12. **Resources** How to Use the Grains/Breads Servings Chart for the Afterschool Snack Program Meal Pattern for Grades K-12 (CSDE) Servings for Grains/Breads in the Afterschool Snack Program Meal Pattern for Grades K-12 (CSDE) Webinar: Exhibit A Grains Tool to the Rescue (USDA) Webinar: How to Maximize the Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA)	**Method 1** uses the amount for the appropriate grain group in the USDA's chart, Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs. Exhibit A provides minimum weights (groups A-G) and volumes (groups H-I) for nine groups of grain foods, based on the average grain content of similar products. The CSDE's Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs lists the Exhibit A oz eq that apply to the preschool meal patterns. Groups F and G (grain-based desserts) are not included because grain-based desserts do not credit as the grains component in the preschool meal patterns. **Resources** Child Care Worksheet 1: Crediting Commercial Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE) Child Care Worksheet 2: Crediting Ready-to-eat (RTE) Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE) Child Care Worksheet 3: Crediting Cooked Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE) Child Care Worksheet 4: Crediting Family-size Recipes for Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE) Child Care Worksheet 5: Crediting Quantity Recipes for Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE) Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE) Webinar: Exhibit A Grains Tool to the Rescue (USDA) Webinar: How to Maximize the Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA)

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
G7: Method 2 creditable grains	**Method 2** calculates the total weight (grams) of creditable grains (whole and enriched) per manufacturer's serving or recipe serving. • **To credit as 1 oz eq of an enriched grain**, foods in groups A-E must contain 16 grams of creditable grains and noncreditable grains cannot exceed 3.99 grams per portion; and foods in group H must contain 28 grams of creditable grains and noncreditable grains cannot exceed 6.99 grams per portion. • **To credit as 1 oz eq of a WGR food**, foods in groups A-E must contain 16 grams of creditable grains (including at least 8 grams of whole grains) and noncreditable grains cannot exceed 3.99 grams per portion; and foods in group H must contain 28 grams of creditable grains (including at least 14 grams of whole grains) and noncreditable grains cannot exceed 6.99 grams per portion. **Required documentation:** A PFS for commercial products that states the weight of creditable grains per serving or a standardized recipe for foods prepared from scratch that lists the weight of creditable grains (refer to "Crediting Documentation" on	**Method 2** calculates the total weight (grams) of creditable grains (whole and enriched) per manufacturer's serving or recipe serving. To credit as one grains/breads serving, foods in groups A-G must contain 14.75 grams of creditable grains. Foods in group H must contain 25 grams of creditable grains. **Required documentation:** Same	**Method 2** calculates the total weight (grams) of creditable grains (whole and enriched) per manufacturer's serving or recipe serving. **To credit as ½ oz eq of an enriched grain**, foods in groups A-E must contain 8 grams of creditable grains; and foods in group H must contain 14 grams of creditable grains. **To credit as ½ oz eq of a WGR food**, foods in groups A-E must contain 8 grams of creditable grains (including at least 4 grams of whole grains); and foods in group H must contain 14 grams of creditable grains (including at least 7 grams of whole grains). **Required documentation:** Same

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
	page 3).		
G7: Method 2 creditable grains, *continued*	**Resources** Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE) Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA) Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs: Completed Sample (USDA) When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)	**Resources** Calculation Methods for Grains/Breads Servings for the Afterschool Snack Program Meal Pattern for Grades K-12 (CSDE) Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains/Breads Servings in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, and NSLP Afterschool Snacks (USDA) Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains/Breads Servings in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, and NSLP Afterschool Snacks: Completed Sample (USDA)	**Resources** Calculation Methods for Grain Servings for Preschoolers in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA) Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs: Completed Sample (USDA)
G8: When method 2 is required	There are specific situations when SFAs must use method 2 (instead of the USDA's Exhibit A chart) to determine the oz eq for commercial grain products. **Resources** When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs	There are specific situations when SFAs must use method 2 (instead of the USDA's Exhibit A chart) to determine the grains/breads servings for commercial grain products. **Resources** When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)	There are specific situations when SFAs must use method 2 (instead of the USDA's Exhibit A chart) to determine the oz eq for commercial grain products. **Resources** When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs

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Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
G9: WGR requirement	**Frequency:** At least 80 percent of the weekly grains offered at lunch must be WGR. At least 80 percent of the weekly grains offered at breakfast must be WGR. Grains that are not WGR must be enriched and cannot exceed 20 percent of all grains offered during the week. **Documentation:** SFAs must maintain documentation to indicate that 1) at least 80 percent of the weekly grains offered in school meals are WGR (refer to the CSDE's Calculating the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program); and 2) all grain foods counted toward the 80 percent WGR requirement meet the WGR criteria. Documentation of the WGR criteria includes a PFS for commercial foods and a standardized recipe for foods made from scratch (refer to "Crediting Documentation" on page 3). **Best practice:** Serve only WGR grains and serve 100 percent whole grains most often. **Resources** Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE) Worksheet to Calculate the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in School Lunch and Breakfast Menus for Grades K-12 (CSDE) Whole Grain Resource for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs (USDA) Whole Grain-rich Requirement for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage)	**Frequency:** None **Documentation:** Not applicable **Best practice:** Same **Change for school year 2025-26:** Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, requires that at least 80 percent of the grains offered weekly in ASP snacks must be WGR.	**Frequency:** At least one serving per day must be WGR, between all meals and ASP snacks served to preschoolers. The USDA's CACFP best practices recommend at least two servings of WGR grains per day. **Documentation:** SFAs must maintain documentation to indicate that 1) preschool menus contain at least one WGR serving per day; and 2) all grain foods counted toward the daily WGR requirement meet the preschool WGR criteria. Documentation of the WGR criteria includes a PFS for commercial foods and a standardized recipe for foods made from scratch (refer to "Crediting Documentation" on page 3). **Best practice:** Same **Resources** Adding Whole Grains to Your CACFP Menu (USDA) Crediting Commercial Processed Products in Preschool Menus (CSDE webpage) Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Foods Made from Scratch in Preschool Menus (CSDE webpage) Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP (CSDE) Whole Grain-rich Requirement for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage) USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
G10: WGR criteria	**Commercial grain products in groups A-G (e.g., breads, muffins, pancakes, and crackers) and group H (e.g., rice, pasta, quinoa, and cooked breakfast cereals):** Two WGR criteria: 1) must contain 100 percent whole grain or a blend of whole and enriched grains that is at least 50 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains cannot exceed 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G or 6.99 grams per portion for groups H-I. **RTE breakfast cereals (group I):** refer to "R15: WGR Criteria for Breakfast Cereals." **Foods made from scratch:** The weight of whole grains in the SFA's standardized recipe must be equal to or more than the combined weight of the other creditable grains. Noncreditable grains cannot exceed 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G or 6.99 grams per portion for groups H-I. **Resources** Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Guide to Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE) Whole Grain Resource for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs (USDA) Whole Grain-rich Requirement for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage)	None **Change for school year 2025-26:** Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, requires that at least 80 percent of the grains offered weekly in ASP snacks must be WGR and the NSLP WGR criteria apply to the ASP. SFAs must use the NSLP WGR criteria to identify WGR foods for ASP menus.	**Commercial grain products in groups A-G (e.g., breads, muffins, pancakes, and crackers) and group H (e.g., rice, pasta, quinoa, and cooked breakfast cereals):** Commercial products must meet the "Rule of Three," which applies only to the preschool meal pattern: The first ingredient must be a whole grain (or water is the first ingredient and a whole grain is the next ingredient), and the next two grain ingredients (if any) are whole, enriched, bran, or germ. The preschool WGR criteria do not require a specific limit for noncreditable grains. **RTE breakfast cereals (group I):** Same **Foods made from scratch:** The weight of whole grains in the SFA's standardized recipe must be equal to or more than the combined weight of the other creditable grains (enriched grains., bran, and germ). **Resources** Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP (CSDE) How to Spot Whole Grain-Rich Foods for the CACFP (USDA) Identifying Whole Grain-rich Foods for the CACFP (USDA) USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers Whole Grain-rich Requirement for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage)

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
G11: Enriched grain products, e.g., enriched white bread, enriched crackers, enriched white rice, enriched cream of wheat cereal, and enriched corn grits	Enriched grain products may credit for up to 20 percent of all grains offered at lunch and up to 20 percent of all grains offered at breakfast (refer to "R9: WGR Requirement"). Enriched grains must comply with the limit for noncreditable grains: no more than 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G and no more than 6.99 grams per portion for groups H-I. **Resources** Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)	Enriched grain products credit as the grains component. **Resources** Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)	Enriched grain products credit as the grains component but at least one grain menu item per day must be WGR (refer to "R9: WGR Requirement"). **Resources** Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
G12: Grain-based desserts	**Restrictions at breakfast:** Only certain types of grain-based desserts credit at breakfast (refer to the CSDE's Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs). The inclusion of grain-based desserts cannot cause the breakfast menu to exceed the weekly dietary specifications (nutrition standards), i.e., limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. The CSDE recommends limiting grain-based desserts to no more than twice per week and serving whole grains instead. **Restrictions at lunch:** Grain-based desserts cannot exceed 2 oz eq per week. Grain-based desserts served as extra menu items are included in this limit. The inclusion of grain-based desserts cannot cause the lunch menu to exceed the weekly dietary specifications. **Resources** Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE) USDA Memo SP 30-2012: Grain Requirements for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program USDA Memo SP 38-2019: Meal Requirements under the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Q&As for Program Operators	**Restrictions:** None. The CSDE recommends limiting grain-based desserts to no more than twice per week and serving whole grains instead. Grain-based desserts often contain more solid fats and added sugars than traditional grains. **Change for school year 2025-26:** Effective with school year 2025-26 (beginning July 1, 2025), the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, prohibits grain-based deserts in ASP snacks, consistent with the CACFP meal patterns for children. **Resources** Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Servings for Grains/Breads in the Afterschool Snack Program Meal Pattern for Grades K-12 (CSDE)	**Restrictions:** Grain-based desserts do not credit in preschool meals and ASP snacks. **Resources** Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP (USDA) Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) USDA Memo CACFP 16-2017: Grain-based Desserts in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
G13: Identifying grain-based desserts	**Examples of grain-based desserts:** Breakfast bars, brownies, cakes (including cupcakes and coffee cakes), cereal bars, cinnamon rolls, cinnamon streusel quick breads, cookies (all kinds, including vanilla wafers), doughnuts, gingerbread, granola bars, ice cream cones, marshmallow cereal treats, pastries (e.g., cinnamon buns, Danish, eclairs, sweet buns, sweet rolls, and toaster pastries) piecrusts in sweet pies (e.g., apple, coconut, blueberry, and pecan), sweet biscotti (such as those made with fruits, chocolate, or icing) sweet bread pudding, sweet croissants (e.g., chocolate filled), sweet crackers (graham crackers and animal crackers), sweet scones (e.g., blueberry, raisin, and orange cranberry), and rice pudding. The CSDE's Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 indicates the grain-based desserts allowed at breakfast **Examples of foods that are not grain-based desserts:** Grain-based desserts do not include muffins, quick breads, e.g., banana bread and zucchini bread (except for cinnamon streusel), cornbread, pancakes, waffles, French toast, savory scones (such as cheese and herb), and piecrusts in entrees such as quiche, meat pies, and chicken potpie. **Sweet crackers (graham crackers and animal crackers):** These foods are grain-based desserts and are subject to the crediting restrictions noted for breakfast and lunch in R12:Grain-based Desserts. **Resources** Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE)	**Examples of grain-based desserts:** Same. **Sweet crackers (graham crackers and animal crackers):** These foods are grain-based desserts. The CSDE recommends limiting all grain-based desserts to no more than twice per week and serving whole grains instead. **Resources** Servings for Grains/Breads in the Afterschool Snack Program Meal Pattern for Grades K-12 (CSDE)	**Examples of grain-based desserts:** Breakfast bars, brownies, cakes (including cupcakes and coffee cakes), cereal bars, cinnamon rolls, cinnamon streusel quick breads, cookies (all kinds, including vanilla wafers), doughnuts, gingerbread, granola bars, ice cream cones, marshmallow cereal treats, pastries (e.g., cinnamon buns, Danish, eclairs, sweet buns, sweet rolls, and toaster pastries) piecrusts in sweet pies (e.g., apple, coconut, blueberry, and pecan), sweet biscotti (such as those made with fruits, chocolate, or icing) sweet bread pudding, sweet croissants (e.g., chocolate filled), sweet scones (e.g., blueberry, raisin, and orange cranberry), and rice pudding. **Examples of foods that are not grain-based desserts:** Grain-based desserts do not include muffins, quick breads, e.g., banana bread and zucchini bread (except for cinnamon streusel), cornbread, pancakes, waffles, French toast, savory scones (such as cheese and herb), and piecrusts in entrees such as quiche, meat pies, and chicken potpie. **Sweet crackers (graham crackers and animal crackers):** These foods are allowed in the preschool meal patterns. However, the USDA encourages SFAs to limit sweet crackers in preschool menus because of their higher sugar content. The CSDE recommends not serving sweet crackers more than twice per week, between all meals and ASP snacks served to preschoolers. **Resources** Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP (USDA)

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
G14: Crediting criteria for breakfast cereals (RTE and cooked)	**Allowable types:** Ready-to-eat (RTE) cereals (group I) and cooked cereals (group H) such as oatmeal (including regular and instant) and cream of wheat. **Crediting criteria:** 1) Must be WGR (refer to "R15: WGR Criteria for Breakfast Cereals"), enriched, or fortified; and 2) cannot exceed 6.99 grams of noncreditable grains per portion. The serving must provide the required volume or weight (refer to "R16: Serving Size for Breakfast Cereals"). **Resources** Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) USDA Final Rule (83 FR 63775): Child Nutrition Programs: Flexibilities for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Requirements USDA Memo SP 05-2022: Meal Requirements Under the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Questions and Answers for Program Operators Updated to Support the Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Effective July 1, 2022	**Allowable types:** Same **Crediting criteria:** The first ingredient must be a creditable grain or the cereal must be fortified. The serving must provide the required volume or weight (refer to "G10: Serving Size for Breakfast Cereals"). **Resources** Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)	**Allowable types:** Same **Crediting criteria:** 1) The first ingredient must be a creditable grain, or the cereal must be fortified; and 2) the cereal cannot exceed the sugar limit (refer to "G11: Sugar Limit for Breakfast Cereals"). The serving must provide the required volume or weight (refer to "R16: Serving Size for Breakfast Cereals"). **Resources** Child Care Worksheet 2: Crediting Ready-to-eat (RTE) Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE) Child Care Worksheet 3: Crediting Cooked Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE) Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) How to Identify Creditable Grains for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
G14: Crediting criteria for breakfast cereals (RTE and cooked). ***continued***	**Change for school year 2025-26:** Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, establishes a sugar limit for breakfast cereals: no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.	Same	**Change for school year 2025-26:** Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, changes the product-based limit for breakfast cereals from total sugars to added sugars, consistent with the NSLP and SBP product-based added sugars limit. Breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
G15: WGR criteria for breakfast cereals	**RTE breakfast cereals (group I):** 1) The first ingredient must be a whole grain and the cereal must be fortified, or the cereal must be 100 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains cannot exceed 6.99 grams per portion. Fortification is not required for 100 whole grain cereals. **Cooked breakfast cereals (group H):** 1) Must be 100 percent whole grain or contain a blend of whole and enriched grains that is at least 50 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains cannot exceed 6.99 grams per portion. Breakfast cereals that are not WGR must be enriched or fortified. **Serving the same WGR cooked breakfast cereals to preschoolers and grades K-12:** Cooked breakfast cereals that meet the preschool WGR criteria may or may not meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12. The same breakfast cereals served to preschoolers and grades K-12 must meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12 and the preschool sugar limit (refer to "Preschoolers eating with other grades (co-mingling) in the NSLP, SBP, and SSO" on page 2). **Resources** Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE)	None: no WGR requirement **Change for school year 2025-26:** Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, requires that at least 80 percent of the grains offered weekly in ASP snacks must be WGR and the NSLP WGR criteria apply to the ASP. SFAs must use the NSLP WGR criteria to identify WGR foods for ASP menus.	**RTE breakfast cereals (group I):** 1) The first ingredient must be a whole grain and the cereal must be fortified, or the cereal must be 100 percent whole grain; and 2) the cereal cannot exceed the sugar limit (refer to "R17: Sugar Limit for Breakfast Cereals"). Fortification is not required for RTE breakfast cereals that are 100 percent whole grain. **Cooked breakfast cereals (group H):** 1) The first ingredient must be a whole grain (or water is the first ingredient and a whole grain is the next ingredient); 2) the next two grain ingredients (if any) must be whole grain, enriched, bran, or germ; and 3) the cereal cannot exceed the sugar limit (refer t to "R17: Sugar Limit for Breakfast Cereals"). **Serving the same WGR cooked breakfast cereals to preschoolers and grades K-12:** Cooked breakfast cereals that meet the preschool WGR criteria may or may not meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12. The same breakfast cereals served to preschoolers and grades K-12 must meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12 and the preschool sugar limit (refer to "Preschoolers eating with other grades (co-mingling) in the NSLP, SBP, and SSO" on page 2). **Resources** Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP (CSDE) USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
G15: WGR criteria for breakfast cereals, *continued*	**Upcoming changes for school year 2025-26:** Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, establishes a sugar limit for breakfast cereals: no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.	**Upcoming changes for school year 2025-26:** Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, requires that at least 80 percent of the grains offered weekly in ASP snacks must be WGR and the NSLP WGR criteria apply to the ASP. The final rule also establishes a sugar limit for breakfast cereals: no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.	Upcoming changes for school year 2025-26**: Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, changes the product-based limit for breakfast cereals from total sugars to added sugars, consistent with the NSLP and SBP product-based added sugars limit. Breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.**
G16: Serving size for breakfast cereals	**Amount for cooked breakfast cereals (group H):** ½ oz eq **=** ¼ cup cooked or 14 grams dry**.** **Amount for RTE breakfast cereals (group I):** ½ oz eq **=** ½ cup of flaked or round cereal, ¾ cup of puffed cereal, and ⅛ cup of granola. **Resources** Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE)	**Amount for cooked breakfast cereals (group H):** 1 serving = ½ cup cooked or 25 grams dry. **Amount for RTE breakfast cereals (group I):** 1 serving = ¾ cup or 1 ounce, whichever or less. **Resources** Afterschool Snack Program Meal Pattern for Grades K-12 (CSDE) Servings for Grains/Breads in the Afterschool Snack Program Meal Pattern for Grades K-12 (CSDE) **Change for school year 2025-26:** Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, the required quantities of grains will change from servings to oz eq.	**Amount for cooked breakfast cereals (group H):** ½ oz eq **=** ¼ cup cooked or 14 grams dry**.** **Amount for RTE breakfast cereals (group I):** ½ oz eq **=** ½ cup of flaked or round cereal, ¾ cup of puffed cereal, and ⅛ cup of granola. **Resources** Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
G17: Sugar limit for breakfast cereals	**Limit:** None **Serving the same breakfast cereals to preschoolers and grades K-12:** The same breakfast cereals served to preschoolers and grades K-12 cannot exceed the preschool sugar limit. The exception is when SFAs choose to use the K-5 meal pattern for preschoolers and grades K-5 who eat in the same service area at the same time (refer to "Preschoolers Eating with Other Grades (Co-Mingling) in the NSLP, SBP, and SSO" on page 2). **Resources** Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE) USDA Memo SP 38-2019: Meal Requirements under the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Q&As for Program Operators	**Limit:** None **Serving the same breakfast cereals to preschoolers and grades K-12:** If SFAs serve the same breakfast cereals to preschoolers and grades K-12, these cereals must comply with the preschool limit for sugars. The exception is when SFAs choose to use the K-12 ASP meal pattern for preschoolers and grades K-12 who eat in the same service area at the same time (refer to "Preschoolers and grades K-12 eating together (co-mingling) in the ASP" on page 2). **Resources** Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)	**Limit:** RTE and cooked breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce, i.e., ≤ 21.2 grams of sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal. **Serving the same breakfast cereals to preschoolers and grades K-12:** The same breakfast cereals served to preschoolers and grades K-12 cannot exceed the preschool sugar limit. The exception is when SFAs choose to use the K-5 meal pattern for preschoolers and grades K-5 who eat in the same service area at the same time (refer to "Preschoolers Eating with Other Grades (Co-Mingling) in the NSLP, SBP, and SSO" on page 2). **Resources** Calculating Sugar Limits for Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (USDA) Choose Breakfast Cereals that are Lower in Sugar (USDA) Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, SSO	Grades K-12: ASP	Preschool (Ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, SSO, ASP
G17: Sugar limit for breakfast cereals, *continued*	**Upcoming changes for school year 2025-26:** Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, establishes a sugar limit for breakfast cereals: no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.	**Upcoming changes for school year 2025-26:** Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, establishes a sugar limit for breakfast cereals: no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.	**Upcoming changes for school year 2024-25:** Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, changes the product-based limit for breakfast cereals from total sugars to added sugars, consistent with the NSLP and SBP product-based added sugars limit. Breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.

Regulations and Policy

Final Rule (81 FR 24347) and Final Rule Corrections (81 FR 75671): CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/fr-042516

Final Rule (84 FR 50287): Child Nutrition Programs: Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium: https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/02/07/2022-02327/child-nutrition-programs-transitional-standards-for-milk-whole-grains-and-sodium

Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs (77 FR 4088): https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/fr-012612

School Meals Legislation and Regulations (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/program-legislation-regulations

Upcoming Meal Pattern Changes (CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs#Upcoming_Meal_Pattern_Changes

Updates to the School Nutrition Standards (USDA webpage): https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/school-nutrition-standards-updates

USDA Final Rule: Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (89 FR 31962): Https://Www.Federalregister.Gov/Documents/2024/04/25/2024-08098/Child-Nutrition-Programs-Meal-Patterns-Consistent-With-The-2020-2025-Dietary-Guidelines-For

USDA Memo CACFP 08-2017: Questions and Answers on the Updated Meal Pattern Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/questions-and-answers-updated-meal-pattern-requirements

USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/grain-requirements-cacfp-questions-and-answers

USDA Memo CACFP 16-2017: Grain-based Desserts in the Child and Adult Care Food Program: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/grain-based-desserts-child-and-adult-care-food-program

USDA Memo SP 30-2012: Grain Requirements for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/grain-requirements-national-school-lunch-program-and-school-breakfast-program

USDA Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019, and SFSP 15-2019: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-coconut-hominy-corn-masa-and-masa-harina-child-nutrition-programs

Resources

Afterschool Snack Program Handbook (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/asp/asp_handbook.pdf

Crediting Summary Charts for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/crediting_summary_charts_snp_grades_k-12.pdf

Crediting Summary Charts for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/crediting_summary_charts_snp_preschool.pdf

Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/ExhibitA.pdf

Food Buying Guide Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-interactive-web-based-tool

Food Buying Guide Section 4: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Grains Component (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section4_Grains.pdf

Food Buying Guide Section 4: Yield Table for Grains (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section4_GrainsYieldTable.pdf

Grains Component for Grades K-12 ("Documents/Forms" section of CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs/documents#grains

Grains Component for Preschool ("Related Resources" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-preschoolers-in-school-nutrition-programs/related-resources#grains

Grains/Breads Component for Grades K-12 in the ASP ("Documents/Forms" section of the CSDE's Afterschool Snack Program webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/afterschool-snack-program/documents#grainsbreadsk12

How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/how_to_use_ounce_equivalents_chart.pdf

How to Use the Grains/Breads Servings Chart for Grades K-12 in the ASP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/how_to_use_grains_breads_servings_chart_asp_k-12.pdf

Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-preschoolers-in-school-nutrition-programs

Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs (Grades K-12) (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials

Menu Planning Guide for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning-guide-for-school-meals

Menu Planning Guide for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/preschool/menu_planning_guide_preschool.pdf

Operational Memoranda for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/lists/operational-memoranda-for-school-nutrition-programs

Policy Memos for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA webpage):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/resources

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Grains_Oz_Eq_Fillable_508.pdf

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains/Breads Servings in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, and NSLP Afterschool Snacks (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Grains-Breads_Servings_Fillable_508.pdf

Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/program-guidance-school-nutrition-programs

Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/preschool/resources_preschool_meal_patterns.pdf

Resources for the School Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/mealpattern/resources_school_meal_patterns_grades_k-12.pdf

USDA Final Rule (81 FR 24347): CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010
https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/04/25/2016-09412/child-and-adult-care-food-program-meal-pattern-revisions-related-to-the-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act

When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/when_commercial_grain_products_require_pfs_snp.pdf

Whole Grain Resource for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/whole-grain-resource-national-school-lunch-and-breakfast-programs

For more information, visit the "Grains Component" section of the Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs and Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpages, or contact the school nutrition programs staff at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841. This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/comparison_grain_crediting_snp.pdf.

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1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
   Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
   1400 Independence Avenue, SW
   Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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