

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

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

This document compares the meal pattern requirements for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) preschool meal patterns (ages 1-5) and meal patterns for grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, including the updates required by the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) (89 FR 31962).

This document does not address the meal patterns for the Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP. For a comparison of the ASP meal pattern requirements for preschool and grades K-12, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the Afterschool Snack Program](#).

Contents

NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns	2
Meal Pattern Changes for School Year 2025-26	2
Serving the Same Foods to Preschool and Grades K-12	2
Considerations for Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children	4
Required Crediting Documentation	4
Chart 1: Meal Pattern Overview	5
Chart 2: Milk Component	8
Chart 3: Meats/Meat Alternates (MMA) Component	12
Chart 4: Vegetables Component and Fruits Component	20
Chart 5: Grains Component	26
Chart 6: Noncreditable Foods	43
Chart 7: Nutrition Standards	44
Chart 8: Offer versus Serve (OVS)	46
Regulations and Policy	47
Resources	48



Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns

The lunch and breakfast meal patterns for preschool and grades K-12 have different requirements.

- The meal pattern requirements for grades K-12 are defined by [7 CFR 210](#) (lunch) of the NSLP regulations and [7 CFR 220](#) (breakfast) of the SBP regulations. The SSO follows the NSLP and SBP meal patterns.
- The preschool meal pattern requirements are defined by [7 CFR 210.10\(p\)](#) (lunch) 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 in school meals meet the specific meal pattern requirements for each grade group.

For information on the meal patterns 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 visit the CSDE's webpages, [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#). For information on the preschool meal patterns, refer to the CSDE's [Menu Planning Guide for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs](#) and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

For summary charts of the crediting requirements, refer to the CSDE's [Crediting Summary Charts for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Summary Charts for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Meal Pattern 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 product-based added sugars limits for breakfast cereals, yogurt, and flavored milk in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12, and updates the current limits for breakfast cereals and yogurt in the preschool meal patterns from total sugars to added sugars.

- Breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.
- Yogurt cannot exceed 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugars per ounce).
- Flavored milk (allowed only for grades K-12) cannot exceed 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces. Flavored milk sold as a competitive food in middle and high schools cannot exceed 15 grams of added sugars per 12 fluid ounces.

Serving the Same Foods to Preschool 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 school meals that will be served to both groups. When SFAs serve the same foods to both groups, these foods must comply with whichever meal pattern requirements are stricter.

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

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 “[G7: 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 “[G11: Grain-based desserts](#)” and “[G12: Identifying grain-based desserts](#)” in this document).
- The preschool meal patterns require a sugar limit for yogurt and breakfast cereals, but the meal patterns for grades K-12 do not. Yogurt and breakfast cereals served to both groups must comply with the preschool sugar limits. For more information, refer to “[MMA10: yogurt and soy yogurt](#)” and “[G16: sugar limit for breakfast cereals](#).”

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 limit for added sugars in breakfast cereals and yogurt will be the same for the meal patterns for preschool and grades K-12 (refer to “[Meal Pattern Changes 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

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

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 age 4 are at the highest risk of choking. SFAs should consider children’s ages and developmental readiness when deciding what foods to offer in school menus. This consideration is especially important when serving young children or children with a disability. Serve foods in the appropriate sizes, shapes, and textures to reduce choking risks. Avoid serving foods that are as wide around as a nickel, which is about the size of a young child’s throat. For additional guidance, visit the “[Choking Prevention](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Required Crediting Documentation

SFAs must be able to document that lunch and breakfast menus provide the required meal components and quantities. Menu planners must use the USDA’s [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) to determine how foods credit and the amount that provides the required meal component serving. Commercial processed foods not listed in the FBG require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS) to document crediting information. Some examples include combination foods (e.g., pizza and chicken nuggets), deli meats, hot dogs, sausages, breaded vegetables, and other commercial products with added ingredients.

For information on crediting documentation, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs](#), [Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs](#), [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the School Nutrition Programs](#), and [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the School Nutrition Programs](#), and visit the “[Crediting Commercial Processed Products](#)” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Training on the requirements for CN labels and 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 Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Chart 1: Meal Pattern Overview

Meal Pattern Overview Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>MP1: Implementation</p>	<p>Regulations: The preschool meal pattern requirements are defined in 7 CFR 210.10(p) (lunch) of the NSLP regulations and 7 CFR 220.8(o) (breakfast) of the SBP regulations, and the updates required by the USDA final rule, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The preschool meal patterns are the same as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal patterns for children (7 CFR 226.20).</p> <p>Resources NSLP regulations 7 CFR 210.10(p) and 7 CFR 210.10(o)(3) SBP regulations 7 CFR 220.8(o) USDA Final Rule (81 FR 24347): CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 USDA Final Rule Corrections (81 FR 75671): CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 USDA Final Rule 89 FR 31962: Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans</p>	<p>Regulations: The meal pattern requirements for grades K-12 are defined in 7 CFR 210 (lunch) of the NSLP regulations and 7 CFR 220 (breakfast) of the SBP regulations, and the updates required by the USDA final rule, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.</p> <p>Resources NSLP regulations 7 CFR 210.10 SBP regulations 7 CFR 220.8(c) USDA Final Rule 89 FR 31962: Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Meal Pattern Overview Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>MP2: Age/grade groups</p>	<p>Two age groups: Ages 1-2 and 3-5.</p> <p>When a 5-year-old is in preschool or a 4-year-old is in kindergarten, SFAs may continue to serve the appropriate meal pattern for that grade.</p> <p>Resources Breakfast Meal Pattern for Preschoolers (CSDE) Lunch Meal Pattern for Preschoolers (CSDE) USDA Memo SP 37-2017: Flexibility for Co-Mingled Preschool Meals: Questions and Answers</p>	<p>Three grade groups: K-5, 6-8, and 9-12.</p> <p>Resources Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage) Menu Planning Guide for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE)</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Meal Pattern Overview Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>MP3: Meal components</p>	<p>Terminology: Effective with school year 2024-25 (beginning July 1, 2024), the USDA final rule, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, changes the previous “food component” references in the NSLP and SBP regulations to “meal components.” A meal component is one of the five food groups that comprise reimbursable meals, including milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and meats/meat alternates (MMA).</p> <p>Required meal components for lunch: Five meal components: 1) milk; 2) MMA; 3) grains; 4) vegetables; and 5) fruits.</p> <p>Required meal components for breakfast: Three meal components: 1) milk; 2) grains; and 3) vegetables, fruits, or both.</p> <p>Resources Breakfast Meal Pattern for Preschoolers (CSDE) Lunch Meal Pattern for Preschoolers (CSDE) Menu Planning Guide for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)</p>	<p>Terminology: Same</p> <p>Required meal components for lunch: Same</p> <p>Required meal components for breakfast: Three meal components: 1) milk; 2) grains/MMA; and 3) fruits. The fruits component includes optional vegetable substitutions (refer to VF1: Components). The grains/MMA component includes grains, MMA, or any combination and is effective with school year 2024-25 (beginning July 1, 2024), per the USDA final rule, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (refer to MMA3: meats/meat alternates at breakfast).</p> <p>Resources Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage) Menu Planning Guide for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE)</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Chart 2: Milk Component

Milk Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
M1: Fat content	Whole milk for ages 1 and low-fat or fat-free milk for ages 2-5. Milk must be unflavored.	Must be low-fat or fat-free milk.
M2: Flavored milk	Not allowed. Milk must be unflavored. Sugar limit for flavored milk: Not applicable: The preschool meal patterns do not allow flavored milk.	Allowed: Flavored milk must be low-fat or fat-free. Sugar limit for flavored milk: None through June 30, 2025 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 new sugar limit for flavored milk. Flavored milk cannot exceed 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces. Flavored milk sold as a competitive food in middle and high schools cannot exceed 15 grams of added sugars per 12 fluid ounces.

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Milk Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>M3: Allowable types of milk</p>	<p>Allowable types: Any of the following types of unflavored milk that meet the fat content restrictions for each age group (refer to “M1: Fat content”): lactose-reduced milk, lactose-free milk, acidified milk, cultured milk, cultured buttermilk, and Ultra High Temperature (UHT) milk. Breastmilk meets the milk component and may be served in place of fluid milk.</p> <p>Additional state milk requirements for public schools: In addition to the USDA’s requirements, milk available for sale to students in public schools (as part of and separately from school meals) must comply with the state beverage requirements of C.G.S. Section 10-221q. Milk cannot contain more than 4 grams of sugars per ounce. Products that meet the federal and state requirements are in list 16 on the CSDE’s List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages webpage.</p> <p>Resources Beverage Requirements (CSDE webpage) List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages (CSDE webpage)</p> <p>Resources Beverage Requirements (CSDE webpage) List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages (CSDE webpage) Milk Component for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage) Serving Milk in the CACFP (USDA)</p>	<p>Allowable types: Any of the following types of low-fat (1%) milk and fat-free milk, either unflavored or flavored: lactose-reduced milk, lactose-free milk, acidified milk, cultured milk, cultured buttermilk, and Ultra High Temperature (UHT) milk.</p> <p>Additional state milk requirements for public schools: Same.</p> <p>Resources CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 06-19: Summary of Federal and State Milk Requirements for the NSLP, SBP, SSO of the NSLP, ASP of the NSLP, and Special Milk Program (SMP) Milk Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage)</p>
<p>M4: Milk variety</p>	<p>Not required. SFAs may serve one type of allowable milk to all children (refer to “M3: Allowable types of milk”).</p>	<p>Must serve a variety of milk (at least two different choices of fat content or flavor). At least one milk choice must be unflavored.</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Milk Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>M5: Nondairy milk substitutes for children without a disability</p>	<p>Allowable nondairy beverages: Nondairy beverages that are nutritionally equivalent to cow’s milk may be served to children whose dietary needs do not constitute a disability if requested in writing by a parent or guardian. The nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes are defined by the NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210.10).</p> <p>Effective with school year 2024-25 (beginning July 1, 2024), the USDA final rule, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, updates the units for vitamin A and vitamin D requirements for fluid milk substitutes to align with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) labeling requirements. For vitamin A, instead of 500 IUs, the unit requirement is now 150 mcg retinol activity equivalents (RAE) per 8 fluid ounces. For vitamin D, instead of 100 IUs, the unit requirement is now 2.5 mcg per 8 fluid ounces. The amount of vitamin A and vitamin D required in fluid milk substitutes does not change; only the unit of measurement has changed to conform to FDA labeling requirements.</p> <p>For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in the USDA School Nutrition Programs.</p> <p>Other beverages: SFAs cannot offer any other beverages (including water and juice) in place of milk for reimbursable meals.</p>	<p>Same</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Milk Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>M5: Nondairy milk substitutes for children without a disability, <i>continued</i></p>	<p>Additional state requirements for public schools: In addition to the USDA requirements, nondairy milk substitutes available for sale to students in public schools must meet the beverage requirements of C.G.S. Section 10-221q. Nondairy milk substitutes cannot contain artificial sweeteners and cannot exceed 4 grams of sugar per fluid ounce, 35 percent of calories from fat, and 10 percent of calories from saturated fat. Products that meet the federal and state requirements are in list 17 on the CSDE’s List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages webpage.</p> <p>Resources Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in the USDA School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Beverage Requirements (CSDE webpage) Determining if Nondairy Beverages Meet the USDA’s Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Guide to Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Program (CSDE) List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages (CSDE webpage) USDA Memo SP 07-2010, CACFP 04-2010, and SFSP 05-2010: Questions and Answers: Fluid Milk Substitutions</p>	<p>Same</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Chart 3: Meats/Meat Alternates (MMA) Component

MMA Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
MMA1: Serving size	<p>Quantities: Effective with school year 2024-25 (beginning July 1, 2024), the USDA final rule, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, updates the quantities for MMA from ounces to ounce equivalents (oz eq). in the Child and Adult Care Food program (CACFP) meal patterns for children, which also apply to the NSLP, SBP, and ASP preschool meal patterns. A 1- oz eq serving of the MMA component equals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish; • 1 ounce of cheese (low-fat recommended); • 2 ounces of cottage or ricotta cheese, cheese food/spread, or cheese substitute (low-fat recommended); • ¼ cup of cooked beans, peas, or lentils, e.g., kidney beans, chick peas (garbanzo beans), lentils, and split peas (refer to “MMA5: Beans, peas, and lentils”); • ½ large egg; • 2 tablespoons of nut or seed butters, e.g., peanut butter, almond butter, cashew butter, and sunflower seed butter (refer to “MMA6: Nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters”); • 1 ounce of nuts or seeds, e.g., almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, soy nuts, and walnuts (refer to “MMA6: Nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters”); • ¼ cup (2.2 ounces) of commercial tofu containing at least 5 grams of protein; • 1 ounce of tempeh (refer to “MMA8: Tempeh”); • 3 ounces of surimi (refer to “MMA7: Surimi”); 	<p>Quantities: The meal patterns for grades K-12 list the MMA component in oz eq. The crediting information for 1 oz eq for the meal patterns for grades K-12 is the same as the preschool meal patterns.</p> <p>Resources</p> <p>Food Buying Guide Section 1: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Meats/Meat Alternates Component (USDA)</p> <p>Food Buying Guide Section 1: Yield Table for Meat/Meat Alternates (USDA)</p> <p>Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage)</p> <p>Meats/Meat Alternates Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage)</p> <p>Recipe Analysis Workbook (USDA’s Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs)</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

MMA Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
MMA1: Serving size, continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ½ cup (volume) or 4 ounces (weight) of yogurt or soy yogurt containing no more than 3.83 grams of sugars per ounce (refer to “MMA10: Yogurt and soy yogurt”); and • 1 ounce of alternate protein product (APP) that meets the USDA’s APP requirements. <p>Resources</p> <p>Food Buying Guide Section 1: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Meats/Meat Alternates Component (USDA)</p> <p>Food Buying Guide Section 1: Yield Table for Meats/Meat Alternates (USDA)</p> <p>Meats/Meat Alternates Component for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage)</p> <p>Recipe Analysis Workbook (USDA’s Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs)</p>	

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

MMA Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>MMA2: Weekly ranges for meats/meat alternates</p>	<p>Breakfast: No weekly minimums or maximums. The SBP meal pattern does not require the MMA component.</p> <p>Lunch: No weekly minimums or maximums.</p>	<p>Breakfast: The breakfast meal pattern requires weekly ranges of the grains/MMA component (refer to MMA3: Meats/meat alternates at breakfast). Menus must provide the minimum. The maximum is not required but provides a guide for planning meals that meet the weekly limits for calories, saturated fats, and sodium (refer to “NS1: Dietary specifications”).</p> <p>Lunch: The lunch meal pattern requires weekly ranges of the MMA component. Menus must provide the minimum. The maximum is not required but provides a guide for planning meals that meet the weekly limits for calories, saturated fats, and sodium (refer to “NS1: Dietary specifications”).</p> <p>Resources Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage) Menu Planning Guide for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE)</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

MMA Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>MMA3: Meats/meat alternates at breakfast</p>	<p>The SBP meal pattern does not require the MMA component. SFAs may substitute the MMA component for the entire grains component at breakfast up to three times per week (regardless of the number of days in the week).</p> <p>MMA as extra foods: SFAs may serve MMA as extra foods at breakfast.</p> <p>Resources Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage) Menu Planning Guide for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast (USDA)</p>	<p>Effective with school year 2024-25 (beginning 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.</p> <p>Resources Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage) Menu Planning Guide for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE)</p>
<p>MMA4: Meats/meat alternates at lunch</p>	<p>The MMA component must be served in a main dish or a main dish and one other food item.</p>	<p>Same</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

MMA Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>MMA5: Beans, peas, and lentils</p>	<p>Terminology: Effective with school year 2024-25 (beginning July 1, 2024), the USDA final rule, <i>Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans</i>, changes the name of the previous “legumes (beans and peas)” vegetable subgroup to the “beans, peas, and lentils” vegetable subgroup.</p> <p>Beans, peas, and lentils may credit as either MMA or vegetables but one serving cannot credit as both components in the same meal.</p> <p>A ¼-cup serving of cooked beans, peas, and lentils credits as 1 oz eq of MMA or ¼ cup of the vegetables component (beans, peas, and lentils subgroup).</p>	<p>Same</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

MMA Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>MMA6: Nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters</p>	<p>A 1-ounce serving of nuts/seeds credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component.</p> <p>Nut/seed butters (such as peanut butter, almond butter, and sunflower seed butter) credit based on volume not weight: 2 tablespoons credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. If measuring by weight, the FBG indicates that 1.1 ounces of nut/seed butter is required to credit as 1 oz eq of MMA.</p> <p>Effective with school year 2024-25 (beginning July 1, 2024), the USDA final rule, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, removes the previous 50 percent crediting limit for nuts and seeds at lunch. Nuts and seeds may credit for the full MMA component at any meal.</p> <p>Resources USDA Memo SP 24-2019, CACFP 11-2019, and SFSP 10-2019: Crediting Surimi Seafood in the Child Nutrition Programs</p>	<p>Same</p>
<p>MMA7: Surimi</p>	<p>A 3-ounce serving of surimi credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. To credit surimi seafood differently, SFAs must obtain a CN label or manufacturer’s PFS that documents how the crediting is determined (refer to “Crediting Documentation” on page 3).</p> <p>Resources USDA Memo SP 24-2019, CACFP 11-2019, and SFSP 10-2019: Crediting Surimi Seafood in the Child Nutrition Programs</p>	<p>Same</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

MMA Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
MMA8: Tempeh	<p>A 1-ounce serving of tempeh credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. This method of crediting applies only to tempeh products whose ingredients are limited to soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs. If a tempeh product contains other ingredients, SFAs must obtain a CN label or manufacturer’s PFS that documents how the crediting is determined (refer to “Crediting Documentation” on page 3).</p> <p>Resources USDA Memo SP 25-2019, CACFP 12-2019, and SFSP 11-2019: Crediting Tempeh in the Child Nutrition Programs USDA Webinar: Additional Meat/Meat Alternates Options for CNPs: Crediting Tempeh and Surimi</p>	Same
MMA9: Tofu and tofu products	<p>Tofu and tofu products must contain 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces by weight (¼ cup) to credit as 1 oz eq of the MMA component.</p> <p>Resources Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) USDA Memo SP 02-2024, CACFP 02-2024, and SFSP 02-2024: Revised: Crediting Tofu and Soy Yogurt Products in the School Meal Programs, CACFP, and SFSP</p>	Same

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

MMA Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>MMA10: Yogurt and soy yogurt</p>	<p>Sugar limit: No more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces, i.e., ≤3.83 grams per ounce.</p> <p>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 yogurt from total sugars to added sugars, consistent with the NSLP and SBP product-based added sugars limit. Yogurt cannot exceed 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugars per ounce).</p> <p>Resources Calculating Sugar Limits for Yogurt in the CACFP (USDA) Choose Yogurts that are Lower in Added Sugars (USDA) Crediting Yogurt in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)</p>	<p>Sugar limit: None</p> <p>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 yogurt. Yogurt cannot exceed 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugars per ounce).</p> <p>Serving the same yogurt/soy yogurt to preschoolers and grades K-12: The same yogurt or soy yogurt served to preschoolers must meet the preschool sugar limit. The only exception to this requirement is for co-mingled meal service (refer to “Serving the Same Foods to Preschoolers and Grades K-12” on page 1).</p> <p>Resources Crediting Yogurt in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Chart 4: Vegetables Component and Fruits Component

Vegetables and Fruits Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>VF1: Components</p>	<p>Breakfast: Vegetables and fruits are one component. Schools may serve vegetables, fruits, or both.</p> <p>Lunch: Vegetables and fruits are two separate components.</p> <p>Resources USDA Memo CACFP 09-2017: Vegetable and Fruit Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers Fruits Component for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage) Vegetables Component for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage)</p>	<p>Breakfast: The SBP meal pattern requires the fruits component and allows optional vegetable substitutions. Effective with school year 2024-25 (beginning July 1, 2024), the USDA final rule, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, continues to allow SFAs to substitute vegetables for fruits in the SBP and simplifies the vegetable variety requirement. Vegetable substitutions may be from any of the five vegetable subgroups (refer to “VF2: Vegetable subgroups”). SFAs that choose to offer vegetable substitutions on one day per school week have the option to offer any vegetable, including a starchy vegetable. SFAs that choose to offer vegetable substitutions on two or more days per school week must offer vegetables from at least two different subgroups.</p> <p>Lunch: Vegetables and fruits are two separate components.</p> <p>Resources USDA Memo SP 06-2020: School Breakfast Program: Continuation of the Substitution of Vegetables for Fruit Flexibility Fruits Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage) Vegetables Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage) Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program (CSDE) Vegetable Substitutions at Breakfast ("Related Resources" section of CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage)</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Vegetables and Fruits Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>VF2: Vegetable subgroups</p>	<p>Breakfast: No requirement.</p> <p>Lunch: No requirement.</p> <p>Recommendation: The USDA’s CACFP best practices recommend at least one serving per week of each vegetable subgroup. The five vegetable subgroups include dark green vegetables; red/orange vegetables; beans, peas, and lentils; starchy vegetables; and other vegetables. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s Vegetable Subgroups in the Child and Adult Care Food Program.</p> <p>Terminology: Effective with school year 2024-25 (beginning July 1, 2024), the USDA final rule, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, changes the name of the previous “legumes (beans and peas)” vegetable subgroup to the “beans, peas, and lentils” vegetable subgroup.</p> <p>Resources Vegetable Subgroups in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE) USDA Memo CACFP 15-2016: Optional Best Practices to Further Improve Nutrition in the CACFP USDA Memo CACFP 25-2016: Vegetable and Fruit Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers</p>	<p>Breakfast: No requirement.</p> <p>Lunch: SFAs must offer specific amounts of the five vegetable subgroups each week: dark green vegetables; red/orange vegetables; beans, peas, and lentils; starchy vegetables; and other vegetables. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program.</p> <p>Terminology: Same</p> <p>Resources Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage) Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program (CSDE)</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Vegetables and Fruits Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>VF3: Crediting vegetables and fruits</p>	<p>Crediting amounts: All vegetables and fruits credit based on the served volume (cups), except for dried fruits and raw leafy greens.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Dried fruits: Credit as twice the amount served, e.g., ¼ cup of dried fruit credits as ½ cup of the fruits component. Examples of dried fruits include raisins, apricots, dried cherries, dried cranberries, dried blueberries, mixed dried fruit, and dried coconut.</p> <p>Raw leafy greens: Credit as half the amount served, e.g., 1 cup of raw leafy greens credits as ½ cup of the vegetables component. Examples of raw leafy greens include kale, greens (e.g., beet, collard, mustard, and turnip), spinach, arugula, and lettuce such as iceberg, romaine, Boston, Bibb, red leaf, and spring mix.</p> <p>Resources</p> <p>Food Buying Guide Section 2: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Vegetables Component (USDA)</p> <p>Food Buying Guide Section 2: Yield Table for Vegetables (USDA)</p> <p>Food Buying Guide Section 3: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Fruits Component (USDA)</p> <p>Food Buying Guide Section 3: Yield Table for Fruits (USDA)</p> <p>Fruits Component for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage)</p> <p>Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, and NSLP Afterschool Snacks (USDA)</p> <p>Recipe Analysis Workbook (USDA’s Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs)</p> <p>Vegetables Component for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage)</p>	<p>Crediting amounts: Same</p> <p>Resources</p> <p>Food Buying Guide Section 2: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Vegetables Component (USDA)</p> <p>Food Buying Guide Section 2: Yield Table for Vegetables (USDA)</p> <p>Food Buying Guide Section 3: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Fruits Component (USDA)</p> <p>Food Buying Guide Section 3: Yield Table for Fruits (USDA)</p> <p>Fruits Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage)</p> <p>Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, and NSLP Afterschool Snacks (USDA)</p> <p>Recipe Analysis Workbook (USDA’s Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs)</p> <p>Vegetables Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage)</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Vegetables and Fruits Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>VF4: Coconut</p>	<p>Fresh and frozen coconut: Credit as the fruits component based on the volume served. For example, 1/8 cup of fresh or frozen coconut credits as 1/8 cup of the fruits component. The minimum serving is 1/8 cup.</p> <p>Dried coconut: Credits the same as other dried fruits. Dried fruits credit as twice the volume served (refer to “VF3: Crediting vegetables and Fruits”).</p> <p>Coconut water: Juices labeled as 100 percent juice, including coconut water, credit toward the fruits component based on the volume served. SFAs must count coconut water with all other juices toward the daily juice limit (refer to “VF5: Full-strength (100%) juice”).</p> <p>Crediting considerations: Menu planners should consider coconut’s high caloric and saturated fat content, which may limit its frequency in school menus.</p> <p>Noncreditable coconut products: Coconut flour, coconut oil, and coconut milk.</p> <p>Resources 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:</p>	<p>Same</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Vegetables and Fruits Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>VF5: Full-strength (100%) juice</p>	<p>Juice limit for all meals and snacks: Juice may count toward the entire fruits component or vegetables component at only one preschool meal or ASP snack per day. The juice limit includes fruit and vegetable juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, and pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies. The juice from canned fruit counts toward the juice limit if the menu planner credits the juice toward the fruits component or the vegetables component.</p> <p>Best practice: The USDA's CACFP best practices recommend serving a variety of fruits and choosing whole fruits (fresh, canned, dried, or frozen) more often than juice.</p> <p>Resources Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) USDA Memo CACFP 15-2016: Optional Best Practices to Further Improve Nutrition in the CACFP USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019, and SFSP 17-2019: Crediting of Smoothies in Child Nutrition Programs</p>	<p>Fruit juice limit at lunch: Fruit juice cannot exceed half of the weekly amount (cups) of fruits offered at lunch. The juice limit includes fruit juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, and pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies. The juice from canned fruit counts toward the juice limit if the menu planner credits the juice toward the fruits component.</p> <p>Vegetable juice limit at lunch: Vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly amount (cups) of vegetables offered at lunch. The juice limit includes vegetable juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, and pureed vegetables in smoothies.</p> <p>Juice limit at breakfast: Fruit juice together with vegetable juice (including fruit/vegetable juice blends) cannot exceed half of the total amount (cups) of fruits and vegetables offered at breakfast during the week.</p> <p>Resources Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019, and SFSP 17-2019: Crediting of Smoothies in Child Nutrition Programs</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Vegetables and Fruits Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>VF6: Juice from canned fruit:</p>	<p>The juice from canned fruit counts toward the juice limit if the menu planner credits the juice toward the fruits component. Juice from canned fruit does not count toward the weekly juice limit when it is planned an extra food. For example, the juice from canned fruit does not count toward the juice limit if food service personnel portion ½ cup of canned fruit in a 5½-ounce container and add the juice after measuring the full ½-cup serving of fruit. Drained canned fruit and canned fruit in water or light syrup do not count toward the juice limit.</p>	<p>Same</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Chart 5: Grains Component

Grains Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>G1: Creditable grains</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Corn: Commercial corn products such as tortilla chips, taco shells, and tamales credit as whole grains if the product is labeled “whole grain,” or the corn ingredient is nixtamalized (treated with lime). Nixtamalization is the process of soaking and cooked dried corn in an alkaline (slaked lime) solution. This process results in a product with similar nutrition to whole-grain corn.</p> <p>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 PFS from the manufacturer to document that cornmeal and corn flour ingredients meet one of these requirements (refer to “Crediting Documentation” on page 3).</p> <p>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</p>	<p>Creditable grains: Same</p> <p>Corn: Same</p> <p>Hominy, corn masa, and masa harina: Same</p> <p>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 National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program 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 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</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Grains Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>G2: Required amounts</p>	<p>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. A food must contain 16 grams of credible grains to credit as 1 ounce equivalent (oz eq) of the grains component. The amount of grain foods that provide 1 oz eq varies because different types of foods contain different amounts of creditable grains. If grains are offered as one of the two meal components at snack, the required preschool amount is ½ oz eq.</p> <p>Resources Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA) 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)</p>	<p>Same</p> <p>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) How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE)</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Grains Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>G3: Weekly ranges for grains</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>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 meals that meet the dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, and sodium (refer to “NS1: Dietary specifications”).</p> <p>Required weekly grains at lunch: 5-day week</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grades K-5: 8-9 oz eq • Grades 6-8: 8-10 oz eq • Grades 9-12: 10-12 oz eq <p>Required weekly grains at lunch: 7-day week</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grades K-5: 11-12½ oz eq • Grades 6-8: 11-14 oz eq • Grades 9-12: 14-17 oz eq

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Grains Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>G3: Weekly ranges for grains, continued</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>The breakfast meal pattern requires weekly ranges of the grains component. Effective with school year 2024-25 (beginning July 1, 2024), the grains component at breakfast becomes the grains/MMA component (refer to MMA3: Meats/meat alternates at breakfast). The weekly ranges at breakfast apply to the total oz eq of offered grains and MMA. They are the same as the previous ranges for the grains component.</p> <p>Required weekly grains/MMA at breakfast: 5-day week</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grades K-5: 7-10 oz eq • Grades 6-8: 8-10 oz eq • Grades 9-12: 9-10 oz eq <p>Required weekly grains/MMA at breakfast: 7-day week</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grades K-5: 10-14 oz eq • Grades 6-8: 11-14 oz eq • Grades 9-12: 12½-14 oz eq <p>Resources</p> <p>Menu Planning Guide for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE webpage)</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Grains Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>G4: Methods to determine required amounts</p>	<p>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</p> <p>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)</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Resources Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (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)</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Grains Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>G5: Method 1 Exhibit A chart</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Resources</p> <p>Child Care Worksheet 1: Crediting Commercial Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE)</p> <p>Child Care Worksheet 2: Crediting Ready-to-eat (RTE) Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE)</p> <p>Child Care Worksheet 3: Crediting Cooked Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE)</p> <p>Child Care Worksheet 4: Crediting Family-size Recipes for Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE)</p> <p>Child Care Worksheet 5: Crediting Quantity Recipes for Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE)</p> <p>Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)</p> <p>How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE)</p> <p>Webinar: Exhibit A Grains Tool to the Rescue (USDA)</p> <p>Webinar: How to Maximize the Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA)</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Resources</p> <p>Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE)</p> <p>How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE)</p> <p>Webinar: Exhibit A Grains Tool to the Rescue (USDA)</p> <p>Webinar: How to Maximize the Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA)</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Grains Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>G6: Method 2 Creditable grains</p>	<p>Method 2 calculates the total weight (grams) of creditable grains (whole and enriched) per manufacturer’s serving or recipe serving.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To credit as ½ oz eq of an enriched grain (the required serving in the preschool meal patterns), 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 for method 2 is 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 page 3). <p>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 (refer to the CSDE’s When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs).</p>	<p>Method 2 calculates the total weight (grams) of creditable grains (whole and enriched) per manufacturer’s serving or recipe serving.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 for method 2 is 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 page 3). <p>When method 2 is required: Same</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Grains Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>G6: Method 2 Creditable grains, continued</p>	<p>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) When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)</p>	<p>Resources Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12(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)</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Grains Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>G7: WGR requirement</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>Best practice: Serve only WGR grains and serve 100 percent whole grains most often.</p> <p>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 USDA Memo CACFP 15-2016: Optional Best Practices to Further Improve Nutrition in the CACFP</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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) 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).</p> <p>Best practice: Same</p> <p>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)</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Grains Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>G8: WGR criteria</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>RTE breakfast cereals (group I): refer to “G14: WGR criteria for breakfast cereals.”</p> <p>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).</p> <p>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)</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>RTE breakfast cereals (group I): Same</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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) Whole Grain Resource for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs (USDA) Whole Grain-rich Requirement for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage)</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Grains Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>G9: Serving the same WGR foods to preschoolers and grades K-12</p>	<p>Grain foods that meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12 will meet the preschool WGR criteria. However, grain foods that meet the preschool WGR criteria may or may not meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12. The same grain foods served to preschoolers and grades K-5 must meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12. The same breakfast cereals must meet the preschool sugar limit (refer to “G13: Crediting criteria for breakfast cereals”).</p> <p>Change for school year 2025-26: Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, <i>Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans</i>, the limit for added sugars in breakfast cereals will be the same for the meal patterns for preschool and grades K-12 (refer to “G16: Sugar limit for breakfast cereals”).</p>	<p>Same</p>
<p>G10: Enriched grain products, e.g., enriched white bread, enriched crackers, enriched white rice, enriched cream of wheat cereal, and enriched corn grits</p>	<p>Enriched grain products credit as the grains component but at least one grain menu item per day must be WGR (refer to “G7: WGR requirement”).</p> <p>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</p>	<p>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 “G7: 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.</p> <p>Resources Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Grains Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>G11: Grain-based desserts</p>	<p>Restrictions: Grain-based desserts do not credit in preschool meals and ASP snacks.</p> <p>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</p>	<p>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 (refer to “NS1: Dietary specifications”). The CSDE recommends limiting grain-based desserts to no more than twice per week and serving whole grains instead.</p> <p>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 (refer to “NS1: Dietary specifications”).</p> <p>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</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Grains Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>G12: Identifying grain-based desserts</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Sweet crackers (graham crackers and animal crackers): Graham crackers and animal crackers are not grain-based desserts. 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.</p> <p>Resources Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP (USDA)</p>	<p>Examples of grain-based desserts: Same. 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</p> <p>Examples of foods that are not grain-based desserts: Same</p> <p>Sweet crackers (graham crackers and animal crackers): These foods are grain-based desserts and are subject to the crediting restrictions for breakfast and lunch noted in G11: Grain-based Desserts.</p> <p>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)</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Grains Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>G13: Crediting criteria for breakfast cereals (RTE and cooked)</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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 “G16: Sugar limit for breakfast cereals”). The serving must provide the required volume or weight (refer to “G15: Serving size for breakfast cereals”).</p> <p>Change for school year 2025-26: Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, <i>Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans</i>, changes the product-based limit for breakfast cereals from total sugars to added sugars. Breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.</p> <p>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</p>	<p>Allowable types: Same.</p> <p>Crediting criteria: 1) Must be WGR (refer to “G14: 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 “G15: Serving Size for Breakfast Cereals”).</p> <p>Change for school year 2025-26: Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, <i>Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans</i>, establishes a sugar limit for breakfast cereals of no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.</p> <p>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 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</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Grains Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>G14: WGR criteria for breakfast cereals</p>	<p>RTE breakfast cereals (group I): Must meet three criteria: 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 “G16: Sugar Limit for Breakfast Cereals”). Fortification is not required for RTE breakfast cereals that are 100 percent whole grain.</p> <p>Cooked breakfast cereals (group H): Must meet three criteria: 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 to “G16: Sugar limit for breakfast cereals”).</p> <p>Change for school year 2025-26: Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, <i>Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans</i>, changes the product-based limit for RTE and cooked breakfast cereals from total sugars to added sugars. Breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.</p> <p>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-5 must meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12 and the preschool sugar limit (refer to “Serving the Same Foods to Preschoolers and Grades K-12” on page 1).</p>	<p>RTE breakfast cereals (group I): Must meet two criteria: 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.</p> <p>Cooked breakfast cereals (group H): Must meet two criteria: 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.</p> <p>Change for school year 2025-26: Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, <i>Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans</i>, establishes a sugar limit for RTE and cooked breakfast cereals of no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.</p> <p>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-5 must meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12 and the preschool sugar limit (refer to “Serving the Same Foods to Preschoolers and Grades K-12” on page 1).</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Grains Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>G14: WGR criteria for breakfast cereals, continued</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>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)</p>
<p>G15: Serving size for breakfast cereals</p>	<p>Amount for cooked breakfast cereals (group H): ½ oz eq = ¼ cup cooked or 14 grams dry</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Resources Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)</p>	<p>Amount for cooked breakfast cereals (group H): 1 oz eq = ½ cup cooked or 28 grams dry</p> <p>Amount for RTE breakfast cereals (group I): 1 oz eq = 1 cup of flaked or round cereal, 1½ cups of puffed cereal, and ¼ cup of granola.</p> <p>Resources Crediting Breakfast Cereals 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)</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Grains Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>G16: Sugar limit for breakfast cereals</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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. Breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.</p> <p>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 only exception to this requirement is for co-mingled meal service (refer to “Serving the Same Foods to Preschoolers and Grades K-12” on page 1).</p> <p>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</p>	<p>Limit: None</p> <p>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 of no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.</p> <p>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 only exception to this requirement is for co-mingled meal service (refer to “Serving the Same Foods to Preschoolers and Grades K-12” on page 1).</p> <p>Resources Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) USDA Memo SP 38-2019: Meal Requirements under the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Q&As for Program Operators</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Chart 6: Noncreditable Foods

Nutrition Standards Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>NF1: Noncreditable foods</p>	<p>Restrictions: Noncreditable foods do not count toward the NSLP and SBP meal patterns. Examples include condiments, potato chips, pudding, ice cream, gelatin, cream cheese, bacon, and fruit roll-ups. Some noncreditable foods may be served in addition to the snack components to add variety, help improve acceptability, and satisfy appetites. Examples include maple syrup on pancakes, salad dressing on tossed greens, and condiments such as ketchup or mustard on sandwiches.</p> <p>Resources Noncreditable Foods in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)</p>	<p>Restrictions: Same</p> <p>Count toward dietary specifications: All noncreditable foods offered as part of reimbursable meals must count toward the weekly dietary specifications (nutrition standards) for school meals. Their inclusion in school meals cannot cause the weekly menu to exceed the limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium (refer to “NS1: Dietary specifications”).</p> <p>Resources Noncreditable Foods for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE)</p>
<p>NF2: Water</p>	<p>Requirement: Schools must make plain potable drinking water available to children at no charge where meals are served during the meal service. Water does not credit as a meal pattern component and cannot be offered in place of the required meal components Lunch and breakfast menus cannot offer a choice between water and milk or juice.</p> <p>Resources USDA Memo SP 19-2018: Clarification on the Milk and Water Requirements in the School Meal Programs USDA Memo SP 49-2016 and CACFP 18-2016: Resources for Making Potable Water Available in Schools and Child Care Facilities What’s in a Meal Module 14: Water Availability during Meal Service (CSDE)</p>	<p>Same</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Chart 7: Nutrition Standards

Nutrition Standards Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>NS1: Dietary specifications</p>	<p>Weekly requirements: None</p> <p>Other requirements: Sugar limits for yogurt (refer to “MMA8: Yogurt and soy yogurt” and breakfast cereals (refer to “G13: Crediting criteria for breakfast cereals”).</p> <p>Best practices: The USDA’s CACFP best practices recommend additional optional best practices that reflect recommendations from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the National Academy of Medicine to help increase children’s consumption of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains; and reduce the consumption of added sugars and saturated fats.</p> <p>Resources Breakfast Meal Pattern for Preschoolers (CSDE) Lunch Meal Pattern for Preschoolers (CSDE) USDA Memo CACFP 15-2016: Optional Best Practices to Further Improve Nutrition in the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Pattern</p>	<p>Weekly requirements: School meals must, on average, meet the dietary specifications, which include weekly limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. For information on the dietary specifications, refer to the meal patterns for grades K-12 (available on the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage) and section 6 of the CSDE’s Menu Planning Guide for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elimination of trans fat standard: Effective with school year 2024-25 (beginning July 1, 2024), the USDA final rule, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, removes the dietary specification prohibiting synthetic trans fat in school meals, and in foods sold to children on campus during the school day under the USDA’s Smart Snacks nutrition standards for competitive foods. This change eliminates a requirement that the USDA determined is no longer necessary due to the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) actions that eliminated synthetic trans fat from the U.S. food supply. • Changes to sodium standard: The USDA final rule, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (89 FR 31962), maintains the current sodium limits for lunch and breakfast through school year 2026-27 (June 30, 2027) and codifies a single sodium reduction for both programs. <p>Other requirements: None</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Nutrition Standards Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>NS1: Dietary specifications, continued</p>		<p>Resources Menu Planning Guide for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE) Sodium Limits for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for School Meals for Grades K-12 (CSDE) Weekly Calorie Ranges for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE)</p> <p>Change for school year 2026-27: By July 1, 2027, the final sodium limit applies. Schools must implement a 15 percent reduction for lunch and a 10 percent reduction for breakfast from the current sodium limits (refer to Sodium Limits for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for School Meals for Grades K-12).</p> <p>Change for school year 2027-28: Effective July 1, 2027, the USDA final rule, <i>Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans</i>, phases in a weekly dietary limit for added sugars of less than 10 percent of calories per week. The weekly limits will be in addition to the product-based limits for added sugars in breakfast cereals (refer to “G16: Sugar Limit for breakfast cereals,” yogurt (refer to “MMA8: Yogurt and soy yogurt”), and flavored milk (refer to “M1: Allowable types of milk”).</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Chart 8: Offer versus Serve (OVS)

OVS Requirements	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Preschool (Ages 1-5)	NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns: Grades K-12
<p>OVS1: Offer versus serve (OVS)</p>	<p>Lunch: Not allowed. Breakfast: Not allowed.</p>	<p>Lunch: Required in high schools. Optional for middle and elementary schools. Breakfast: Optional for all grades. Resources Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals (CSDE) OVS for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage) OVS in the School Breakfast Program (CSDE) OVS in the National School Lunch Program (CSDE) What's in a Meal Module 15: Offer versus Serve (OVS) in the NSLP (CSDE) What's in a Meal Module 16: Offer versus Serve (OVS) in the SBP (CSDE)</p>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Regulations and Policy

School Meals Legislation and Regulations:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/program-legislation-regulations>

USDA Final Rule: CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (81 FR 24347)

<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>

USDA Final Rule Corrections: CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (81 FR 75671)

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/11/01/2016-26339/child-and-adult-care-food-program-meal-pattern-revisions-related-to-the-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act>

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 Final Rule: Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs (77 FR 4087):

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/02/07/2022-02327/child-nutrition-programs-transitional-standards-for-milk-whole-grains-and-sodium>

USDA Memo CACFP 09-2017: Vegetable and Fruit Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answer:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/vegetable-and-fruit-requirements-cacfp-qas>

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 04-2022 and CACFP 04-2022: Question and Answer Guidance on the Final Rule Child Nutrition Programs: Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Effective July 1, 2022:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/question-answer-final-rule-transitional-standards>

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>

USDA Memo SP 37-2017: Flexibility for Co-Mingled Preschool Meals: Questions and Answers:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/flexibility-co-mingled-preschool-meals-questions-and-answers>

USDA NSLP Regulations (7 CFR 210):

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-210>

USDA SBP Regulations (7 CFR 220):

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-220>

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

Resources

Crediting Foods for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs>

Crediting Foods in Preschool Menus (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-preschoolers-in-school-nutrition-programs/related-resources>

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

Laws and Regulations for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/laws-and-regulations-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs>

Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-preschoolers-in-school-nutrition-programs>

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

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>

Nutrition Standards for CACFP Meals and Snacks (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks>

Operational Memoranda for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/lists/operational-memoranda-for-school-nutrition-programs>

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

Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/special-diets-in-school-nutrition-programs>

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

Comparison of Lunch and Breakfast Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

For more information, visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage or [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage 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/preschool/comparison_snp_preschool_grades_k-12.pdf.

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