

Guide to Offer Versus Serve (OVS) in the Summer Food Service Program



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Connecticut State Department of Education
Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs
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About This Guide

The Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) *Guide to Offer Versus Serve (OVS) in the Summer Food Service Program* provides comprehensive information and resources to assist Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sponsors with implementing OVS. This guide reflects the USDA regulations and policies in effect as of the publication date. Please note that this information may change.

The CSDE will update this guide whenever the USDA issues new SFSP meal pattern and OVS guidance. Please check the "[Meal Service](#)" section of the CSDE's SFSP webpage for the most current version. This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/mealpattern/guide_ovs_sfsp.pdf.

CSDE Contact Information

For questions regarding the SFSP, please contact the [Summer Meals staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs. The CSDE's resource, [County Assignments for Summer Meals](#), indicates each Connecticut county's assigned CSDE Summer Meals team member who provides technical assistance for the SFSP. For a list of all CSDE Child Nutrition Programs staff, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Child Nutrition Staff and Responsibilities](#).

For information about the SFSP, visit the CSDE's [Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\)](#) webpage. For links to federal and state requirements and guidance for the SFSP, visit the CSDE's [Program Guidance for the Summer Food Service Program](#) webpage.

1 — Introduction

OVS is an optional approach to menu planning and meal service in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). OVS allows children to decline some of the offered foods in SFSP meals and select the foods they prefer to eat. The purpose of OVS is to simplify program administration and reduce food waste and costs while maintaining the nutritional integrity of SFSP meals.

OVS for breakfast is implemented differently from OVS for lunch and supper. OVS for breakfast is based on food items. OVS for lunch and supper is based on meal components. For all reimbursable meals, OVS consists of two separate requirements.

- **Menu planning:** Sponsors must **plan menus** to meet the applicable SFSP meal pattern requirements.
- **Children's selections:** Children must **select** the minimum portions of each food item or meal component.

For specific guidance on the SFSP meal pattern requirements, visit the "[Meal Patterns](#)" section of the CSDE's [SFSP](#) webpage. For information on the crediting requirements for foods and beverages, visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program](#) webpage and [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Allowed Sponsors of OVS

OVS is allowed only for school food authority (SFA) sponsors of the SFSP. An SFA is the governing body that is responsible for the administration of one or more schools and has the legal authority to operate the USDA's [school nutrition programs](#).

OVS is not allowed for:

- non-SFA sponsors of the SFSP; or
- SFA sponsors of the Seamless Summer Option (or SSO) of National School Lunch Program (NSLP). The OVS requirements for the SSO are the same as the NSLP and School Breakfast Program (SBP) and are available on the CSDE's [Offer versus Serve for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

The OVS requirements for the SFSP are different from the OVS requirements for the NSLP and SBP. SFA sponsors of the SFSP that elect to implement the SFSP meal patterns must follow the SFSP OVS requirements outlined in this guide.

Approval of OVS at Summer Meals Sites

SFA sponsors of the SFSP must indicate which sites intend to implement OVS in their annual online SFSP application packet submitted to the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs. These sites must be approved by the CSDE prior to OVS implementation.

Allowed Meals for OVS

OVS may be implemented at breakfast, lunch, and supper. OVS is not allowed at snack.

Terms to Know

Meal components are the food groups that comprise reimbursable meals in the SFSP. The four meal components include meats/meat alternates (MMA), grains/breads, vegetables/fruits, and milk.

Food items are specific foods offered within the meal components. For example, peaches and pears are two food items from the vegetables/fruits component. A hamburger on a whole-wheat bun is one food item that contains two meal components (MMA and grains/breads).

Combination foods contain more than one food item from different meal components that cannot be separated or are not intended to be separated. Some examples include yogurt and fruit parfaits, pizza, sandwiches, and burritos. For example, macaroni and cheese contains the grains/breads component from the macaroni and the MMA component from the cheese.

Minimum quantity is the full required serving for each meal component indicated in the SFSP meal patterns.

Noncreditable foods are foods and beverages that do not credit toward the SFSP meal patterns. Some examples include maple syrup, cream cheese, and condiments like salad dressing, ketchup, and relish. Noncreditable foods that accompany the meal do not count toward the OVS requirements. For more information on noncreditable foods, refer to the CSDE's resource, [*Noncreditable Foods in the Summer Food Service Program*](#).



Meal Counts with OVS

Like all SFSP meal counts, sponsors must take OVS meal counts at the point of service. The point of service for OVS is the moment in the meal service where staff can accurately determine that the child has selected all required food items for a reimbursable breakfast, or all required meal components for a reimbursable lunch or supper.

Supervising staff cannot take meal counts before or after the meal service. The USDA does not allow any other meal counts methods that are not point of service, such as attendance, meal orders, or the number of meals sent to or returned from SFSP sites. Meal counts must be recorded by trained staff who understand the SFSP meal patterns and OVS requirements and can recognize reimbursable meals.

Identifying Reimbursable Meals

SFSP sites that use OVS must identify what children are required to select for a reimbursable meal under OVS. Signage, menus, and verbal instructions should provide clear information about allowable choices. This helps children understand which foods may be declined so they can choose a reimbursable meal.

SFA sponsors should provide OVS training, so site staff understand the OVS requirements and how to identify reimbursable meals at the point of service. The CSDE encourages sponsors to conduct this training prior to the start date of the SFSP.

Second Meals with OVS

Section [7 CFR 225.15\(b\)\(4\)](#) of the SFSP regulations allows sponsors to serve second meals after all children attending the Summer Meals site have been offered a first meal. Second meals must contain the same meal components and food items as first meals and must follow the same OVS requirements.

Second meals must be counted separately from first meals. Reimbursement is limited to 2 percent of the number of first meals served to children for each meal type (breakfast, lunch, and supper).



2 — OVS Requirements for Breakfast

This section addresses the OVS menu planning requirements for breakfast and the required food items that children must select for a reimbursable meal. To implement OVS at breakfast, SFSP menus must offer the full serving of at least four food items from the three meal components required by the SFSP breakfast meal pattern. Children must select the full serving of at least three food items for a reimbursable meal but must be allowed to choose all offered food items.

Minimum of Four Required Food Items for Breakfast

OVS at breakfast is based on food items. The breakfast menu must offer the full serving of at least four food items from the three meal components (grains/breads, vegetables/fruits, and milk). The MMA component is optional for breakfast. The four food items must include:

- one serving of grains/breads (1 serving);
- one serving of vegetables/fruits (½ cup);
- one serving of milk (1 cup); and
- one serving of an additional food item from any meal component except milk. The additional food item may be 1 serving grains/breads, ½ cup vegetables/fruits, or 1 ounce MMA.

Each food item must be at least the minimum serving required by the [SFSP breakfast meal pattern](#). The required servings for different types of food items in the grains/breads component are indicated in the CSDE's resource, [Servings for Grains/Breads in the Summer Food Service Program](#).

Nonreimbursable breakfast menus

Breakfast menus that contain less than the minimum serving or are missing any of the four required food items are not reimbursable. For example, the breakfast menu below is not reimbursable.

- 1 hard-boiled egg (one food item)
- ½ cup red apple (one food item)
- ½ cup fresh plums (one food item)
- 1 cup low-fat milk (one food item)

While this menu contains four food items, it is missing the grains/breads component.

Requirements for Children's Selection of Reimbursable Breakfasts

Children must select the full serving of at least three food items, regardless of the number of offered food items in the breakfast menu. Children decide which food items to decline, if any. Children must be allowed to choose all offered food items for breakfast, based on the stated number of allowed food items on the breakfast menu.

- **Breakfast menus with four food items:** Children must select the full serving of at least three of the four offered food items. Children may decline any one of the required food items, including milk.
- **Breakfast menus with more than four food items:** Children must select the full serving of at least three of the offered food items. Children may decline any required food items, including milk, but must choose at least three food items.

Children may take smaller portions of declined food items, but these foods do not count toward the reimbursable breakfast.

Menu Planning Requirements for Breakfast

For reimbursable meals under OVS, SFSP sponsors must plan breakfast menus to meet the menu planning requirements below.

Different food items

The four food items must be different from each other. Breakfast menus cannot include two servings of the same food item, such as:

- two servings of toast;
- one serving of flaked cereal and one serving of puffed cereal;
- one serving of orange and one serving of orange juice; or
- one serving of applesauce and one serving of apple slices.

For example, the following breakfast menu is not reimbursable: 2 slices of toast, ½ cup of pineapple, and 1 cup of low-fat milk. This menu contains four food items, but the two servings of toast are the same food item.

Planned serving size

The planned serving size for each food item must be at least the minimum quantity specified in the SFSP breakfast meal pattern. The breakfast menu must offer the full serving of at least four different food items to all children.

Larger food items

Menu planners may choose to serve larger amounts of any meal component but must offer at least the minimum meal pattern servings. Larger food items that provide more than one serving by weight or volume count as only one food item. For example, a 2-ounce whole-grain roll counts as one food item from the grains/breads component and 1 cup of fruit salad counts as one food item from the vegetables/fruits component.

Combination foods at breakfast

Whether a child can decline a combination food for a reimbursable breakfast depends on the number of food items in the combination food and the number of other offered food items in the breakfast.

If the breakfast menu provides four food items, children cannot decline the combination food because they would be selecting fewer than three food items.

- **Example 1 – Four food items:** A breakfast menu offers a combination food with the full serving of MMA and grains/breads (two food items), the full serving of the fruits component (one food item); and the full serving of milk (one food item).
 - Egg (1) and cheese (½ ounce) on English muffin (2 ounces)
(two food items: MMA and grains/breads)
 - Strawberries, ½ cup (one food item: vegetables/fruits)
 - Low-fat milk, 1 cup (one food item: milk)

A child who declines the combination food (two food items) cannot select a reimbursable meal because only two food items remain (fruits and milk).

If the breakfast menu provides five food items or more, and the combination food contains two food items, participants could decline the combination food and still select a reimbursable meal.

- **Example 2 – Five food items:** A breakfast menu offers the full serving of five required food items. The food items include a combination food with the full serving of MMA and grains/breads (two food items), the full serving of two different fruits (two food items); and the full serving of milk (one food item).
 - Egg (1) and cheese (½ ounce) on English muffin (2 ounces)
(two food items: MMA and grains/breads)
 - Strawberries, ½ cup (one food item: vegetables/fruits)
 - Strawberries, ½ cup (one food item: vegetables/fruits)
 - Low-fat milk, 1 cup (one food item: milk)

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A child who declines the combination food (two food items) could still select three food items for a reimbursable meal (two different fruits and milk). When breakfast menus include combination foods, offering more variety increases the likelihood that children will select the required food items for a reimbursable breakfast.

Splitting the minimum quantity of a food item

If the menu planner splits the minimum quantity of a food item between two different servings, children must select both servings to count as one food item for OVS. The sponsor's instructions and signage must clearly inform site supervisors and children what choices make up the reimbursable breakfast (refer to "[Identifying Reimbursable Meals](#)" in section 1).

- **Example for vegetables/fruits:** The minimum quantity for the vegetables/fruits component is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. A breakfast menu offers $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of fruit salad and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of blueberries to meet this requirement.
 - Enriched corn muffin, 2 ounces (one food item: grains/breads)
 - Fruit salad, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup ($\frac{1}{2}$ food item: vegetables/fruits)
 - Blueberries, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup ($\frac{1}{2}$ food item: vegetables/fruits)
 - Low-fat milk, 1 cup (one food item: milk)

Children must select both servings to count as one food item from the vegetables/fruits component. For a reimbursable breakfast, children must also select the full serving of at least two other different food items.

- **Example for grains/breads:** The minimum quantity for the grains/breads component is 1 serving. A breakfast menu offers $\frac{1}{2}$ serving ($\frac{3}{8}$ cup) of whole-grain flaked cereal and $\frac{1}{2}$ serving (31 grams) of an enriched cereal bar to meet this requirement.
 - Whole-grain flaked cereal, $\frac{3}{8}$ cup = $\frac{1}{2}$ serving ($\frac{1}{2}$ food item: grains/breads)
 - Enriched cereal bar, 31 grams = $\frac{1}{2}$ serving ($\frac{1}{2}$ food item: grains/breads)
 - Fruit salad, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (one food item: vegetables/fruits)
 - Low-fat milk, 1 cup (one food item: milk)

Children must select both servings to count as one food item from the grains/breads component. For a reimbursable breakfast, children must also select the full serving of at least two other different food items.

Splitting the minimum quantity of a food item into two different servings might make it more difficult for children to select a reimbursable breakfast with OVS. An alternative menu planning strategy to promote children's selection of reimbursable meals is offering the minimum quantity of each food item as one serving. For additional OVS menu planning strategies, refer to [section 4](#).

Offering choices within meal components at breakfast

Menu planners may choose to offer a variety of food items within a meal component and allow children to select one or more servings. For example, the breakfast menu could offer an assortment of fresh fruits, canned fruits, and juices; or a variety of grain items, such as breakfast cereals, bagels, and granola bars. Menu planners can simplify OVS for participants and staff by making all choices within a meal component the same meal pattern contribution. For example, offer ½-cup servings of fruits and vegetables or offer one serving of all grains/breads items.

The number of food items that may be counted toward the OVS menu planning requirements depends on the number of servings that children are allowed to select and whether the choices are different from each other.

- **Select one serving:** If the breakfast menu instructs children to select one serving from a variety of choices, this counts as one planned food item. For example, if the breakfast menu states, “Choose one serving: strawberries, blueberries, orange juice, or peaches,” the fruit choices count as one food item from the vegetables/fruits component. To provide the four required food items for a reimbursable breakfast, this menu must also include the minimum serving of milk, grains/breads, and one other food item from any meal component except milk.
- **Select two different servings:** If the breakfast menu instructs children to select two different servings from a variety of choices, this counts as two planned food items. For example, if the breakfast menu states, “Choose two different servings: strawberries, blueberries, orange juice, or peaches,” the fruit choices count as two food items from the vegetables/fruits component. To provide the four required food items for a reimbursable breakfast, this menu must also include the minimum serving of milk and grains/breads.

When a breakfast menu offers choices, the sponsor’s instructions and signage must clearly inform site supervisors and children of the number of servings allowed from each meal component (refer to [“Identifying Reimbursable Meals”](#) in this document).

Children cannot be allowed to select two of the same servings (such as two juices) for a reimbursable breakfast because the breakfast meal pattern requires four different food items for OVS. The sponsor’s instructions and signage must clearly indicate this information.

Examples of OVS at Breakfast

The examples below show how OVS is implemented at breakfast.

Example 1: Breakfast menu with four food items

This menu offers the full serving of four food items from the three breakfast meal components, including a second serving of fruits.

Menu	Meal pattern contribution
• Whole-grain corn muffin, 3 ounces	Grains/breads (one food item)
• Strawberries, ½ cup	Vegetables/fruits (one food item)
• Orange slices, ½ cup	Vegetables/fruits (one food item)
• Low-fat milk, 1 cup	Milk (one food item)

Child selects	Number of food items	Reimbursable meal: Full serving of at least three different food items
Corn muffin Milk	2	No. The selected meal contains the full serving of only two food items (grains/breads and milk).
Corn muffin Strawberries	2	No. The selected meal contains the full serving of only two food items (grains and vegetables/fruits).
Corn muffin Orange slices Milk	3	Yes. The selected meal contains the full serving of three different food items (grains/breads, vegetables/fruits, and milk).
Corn muffin Strawberries Milk	3	Yes. The selected meal contains the full serving of three different food items grains/breads, vegetables/fruits, and milk).
Strawberries Orange slices Milk	3	Yes. The selected meal contains the full serving of three different food items (two vegetables/fruits and milk).
Corn muffin Strawberries Orange slices Milk	4	Yes. The selected meal contains the full serving of all four food items (grains, two different vegetables/fruits, and milk).

Example 2: Breakfast menu with four food items

This menu offers the full serving of four food items from the three breakfast meal components, including a serving of MMA.

Menu

- grain-bagel, 2 ounces
- Peanut butter, 2 tablespoons
- Red grapes, ½ cup
- Low-fat milk, 1 cup

Meal pattern contribution

Grains/breads (one food item)
MMA (one food item)
Vegetables/fruits (one food item)
Milk (one food item)

Child selects	Number of food items	Reimbursable meal: Full serving of at least three different food items
Bagel Red grapes	2	No. The selected meal contains the full serving of only two food items (grains/breads and vegetables/fruits).
Bagel Peanut butter Milk	3	Yes. The selected meal contains the full serving of three different food items (grains/breads, MMA, and milk).
Peanut butter Red grapes Milk	3	Yes. The selected meal contains the full serving of three different food items (MMA, vegetables/fruits, and milk).
Bagel Peanut butter Red grapes	3	Yes. The selected meal contains the full serving of three different food items (grains/breads, MMA, and vegetables/fruits).
Bagel Peanut butter Milk	3	Yes. The selected meal contains the full serving of three different food items (grains/breads, MMA, and milk).
Bagel Peanut butter Red grapes Milk	4	Yes. The selected meal contains the full serving of all four food items (grains, MMA, vegetables/fruits, and milk).

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Example 3: Breakfast menu with five food items

This menu offers the full serving of five food items from the three breakfast meal components, including two different servings of grains/breads and two different servings of vegetables/fruits.

Menu

- Whole-grain cereal, 1 ounce
- Enriched toast, 1 ounce
- Cantaloupe, ½ cup
- Blueberries, ½ cup
- Low-fat milk, 1 cup

Meal pattern contribution

Grains/breads (one food item)
 Grains/breads (one food item)
 Vegetables/fruits (one food item)
 Vegetables/fruits (one food item)
 Milk (one food item)

Child selects	Number of food items	Reimbursable meal: Full serving of at least three different food items
Toast Blueberries Milk	3	Yes. The selected meal contains the full serving of three different food items (grains/breads, vegetables/fruits, and milk).
Cereal Milk	2	No. The selected meal contains the full serving of only two food items (grains/breads and milk).
Cereal Cantaloupe	2	No. The selected meal contains the full serving of only two food items (grains/breads and vegetables/fruits).
Cereal Cereal Milk	2	No. The selected meal contains the full serving of only two food items (grains/breads and milk). Children must select three different food items.
Cereal Toast Milk	3	Yes. The selected meal contains the full serving of three different food items (two grains/breads and milk).
Cereal Cantaloupe Blueberries	3	Yes. The selected meal contains the full serving of three different food items (grains/breads and two vegetables/fruits).

Child selects	Number of food items	Reimbursable meal: Full serving of at least three different food items
Milk Cantaloupe Blueberries	3	Yes. The selected meal contains the full serving of three different food items (milk and two vegetables/fruits).
Toast Cantaloupe Blueberries	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three different food items (grains/breads and two vegetables/fruits).



3 — OVS Requirements for Lunch and Supper

This section addresses the OVS menu planning requirements for lunch and supper and the required meal components that children must select for a reimbursable meal. To implement OVS at lunch/supper, SFSP menus must offer the full serving of all four meal components (including a total of five food items) required by the SFSP lunch/supper meal pattern. Participants must select the full serving of at least three meal components for a reimbursable meal but must be allowed to choose all offered meal components.

Required Meal Components for Lunch/Supper

OVS at lunch and supper is based on meal components. The lunch/supper menu must offer the full serving of all four meal components, including a total of five food items:

- one serving of MMA, 2 ounces (one food item);
- two different servings of vegetables/fruits, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup total (two food items);
- one serving of grains/breads, 1 serving (one food item); and
- one serving of milk, 1 cup (one food item).

Each required meal component must be at least the minimum serving required by the [SFSP lunch and supper meal pattern](#). The required servings for different types of food items in the grains/breads component are indicated in the CSDE's resource, [Servings for Grains/Breads in the Summer Food Service Program](#).

Nonreimbursable lunch/supper menus

Lunches and suppers are not reimbursable if they contain less than the minimum serving or are missing any of the five required food items from the four meal components. For example, the lunch/supper menu below is not reimbursable.

- 3 ounces grilled chicken (MMA: one food item)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup mixed vegetables (vegetables: one food item)
- 1-ounce whole-grain roll (grains/breads: one food item)
- 1 cup low-fat milk (milk: one food item)

While this menu contains the four meal components, it is missing the second serving of the vegetables/fruits component. Mixed vegetables and mixed fruits count as only one of the two required servings.

Requirements for Children's Selection of Reimbursable Lunch/Supper

- Children must be allowed to choose all offered meal components at lunch and supper.
- Children must select the full serving of at least three meal components.
- Children decide which meal components to decline, if any. Children may decline any meal component, including milk.
- Children may take smaller portions of declined food items, but these foods do not count toward the reimbursable meal.
- The lunch/supper meal pattern requires two different servings of the vegetables/fruits component that total at least $\frac{3}{4}$ cup. A child may select one or both offered servings to count as the vegetables/fruits component for OVS.
 - **Example:** The lunch menu offers $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of broccoli and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of peaches. A child who selects the broccoli has selected the vegetables/fruits component for OVS. A child who selects the peaches has selected the vegetables/fruits component for OVS. A child who selects broccoli and peaches has selected the vegetables/fruits component for OVS.
- If the menu planner splits the minimum serving of the MMA component or grains/breads component between two food items, children must select both food items to count as one meal component (refer to [“Splitting the minimum quantity of MMA or grains/breads”](#) in this section).



Menu Planning Requirements for Lunch/Supper

For reimbursable meals under OVS, SFA sponsors must plan lunch and supper menus to meet the menu planning requirements below.

Two different servings of vegetables/fruits

The two servings of the vegetables/fruits component must be different from each other. Menu planners may choose to offer:

- two different fruits (e.g., apple and blueberries);
- two different vegetables (e.g., broccoli and carrots);
- or one fruit and one vegetable (e.g., strawberries and sliced green peppers).

The lunch/supper menu cannot include two servings of the same food item, such as apple slices and applesauce or orange slices and orange juice. Mixed vegetables and mixed fruits count as only one of the two required servings. For more information on the crediting requirements for the vegetables/fruits component, refer to the CSDE's resource, [*Requirements for the Vegetables/Fruits Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns*](#).

Planned serving size

The planned serving size for each meal component must be at least the minimum quantity specified in the SFSP lunch and supper meal pattern. The lunch/supper menu must offer the full serving of the four meal components to all children, including at least two different servings of the vegetables/fruits component.

Larger food items

Larger food items that provide more than one serving by weight or volume count as only one food item. For example, 1 cup of brown rice counts as one food item from the grains/breads component and a 3-ounce hamburger counts as one food item from the MMA component.

Combination foods at lunch/supper

If the lunch/supper menu offers the full serving of the four meal components, and the combination food contains two or more meal components, children cannot decline the combination food because they would be selecting fewer than three meal components.

- **Example 1 – Combination food with three meal components:** A lunch/supper menu offers a combination food with the full serving of MMA and grains, the full serving of two different vegetables/fruits, and the full serving of milk.
 - 2½-ounce chicken patty (MMA) on 2-ounce whole-grain roll (grains/breads)
 - Carrot sticks, ½ cup (vegetables/fruits)
 - Apple slices, ½ cup (vegetables/fruits)
 - Low-fat milk, 1 cup (milk)

A child who declines the combination food (two meal components) cannot select a reimbursable meal because only two meal components remain (vegetables/fruits and milk). A selection of one or both servings of vegetables and fruits counts as only one meal component (vegetables/fruits) for OVS.

If the lunch/supper menu offers the full serving of four meal components and offers additional servings within the meal components, children could decline the combination food and still select a reimbursable meal.

- **Example 2 – Combination food with two meal components:** A lunch/supper menu offers a combination food with the full serving of MMA and grains, a second serving of MMA, the full serving of two different vegetables/fruits, and the full serving of milk.
 - 2½-ounce chicken patty (MMA) on 2-ounce whole-grain roll (grains/breads)
 - Baked beans, ¼ cup (MMA)
 - Carrot sticks, ½ cup (vegetables/fruits)
 - Apple slices, ½ cup (vegetables/fruits)
 - Low-fat milk, 1 cup (milk)

Note: A selection of one or both servings of vegetables and fruits counts as only one meal component (vegetables/fruits) for OVS. The menu planner may choose whether to credit cooked beans, peas, and lentils as the MMA component or vegetables/fruits component. For this menu, crediting the baked beans as MMA allows children to select another choice for a reimbursable meal.

A child who declines the combination food (two meal components) could still select three meal components for a reimbursable meal (MMA, vegetables/fruits, and milk). Offering more variety increases the likelihood that participants will select the required food items for a reimbursable lunch/supper.

Splitting the minimum quantity of MMA or grains/breads

If the menu planner splits the minimum quantity of the MMA component or grains/breads component between two different food items, children must select both servings to count as one meal component for OVS. The sponsor's instructions and signage must clearly inform site supervisors and children what choices make up the reimbursable lunch/supper (refer to ["Identifying Reimbursable Meals"](#) in section 1).

- **Example for grains/breads:** The minimum quantity for the grains/breads component is 1 serving. A lunch/supper menu offers $\frac{1}{2}$ serving of brown rice and $\frac{1}{2}$ serving of a whole-grain crackers to meet this requirement.
 - Grilled chicken, 2 oz eq (MMA)
 - Brown rice, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup ($\frac{1}{2}$ serving grains/breads)
 - Whole-grain crackers, 0.4 ounce ($\frac{1}{2}$ serving grains/breads)
 - Broccoli, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (vegetables)
 - Peaches, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (fruits)
 - Low-fat milk, 1 cup (milk)

Children must select both grain foods (brown rice and crackers) to count as the grains/breads component for OVS. A selection of only brown rice or crackers does not count as the grains/breads component because each individual food item is less than the full serving.

- **Example for MMA:** The minimum quantity for the MMA component is 2 ounces. A lunch/supper menu offers 1 ounce of grilled chicken and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of black beans to meet this requirement.
 - Grilled chicken, 1 ounce (1 ounce MMA)
 - Black beans, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (1 ounce MMA)
 - Brown rice, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (grains/breads)
 - Broccoli, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (vegetables)
 - Peaches, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (fruits)
 - Low-fat milk, 1 cup (milk)

Children must select both MMA foods (chicken and black beans) to count as the MMA component for OVS. A selection of only grilled chicken or black beans does not count as the MMA component because each individual food item is less than the full serving.

Splitting the grains/breads component or MMA component into two different servings might make it more difficult for children to select a reimbursable lunch/supper with OVS. Some alternative menu planning strategies to promote children's selection of reimbursable meals include offering the minimum quantity as one serving or packaging both food items together. For additional OVS menu planning strategies, refer to [section 4](#).

Offering choices within meal components

Menu planners may choose to offer a variety of food items within a meal component and allow children to select one or more servings. For example, the lunch/supper menu could offer:

- an assortment of fresh and canned fruits and vegetables and allow children to choose two different servings;
- two different grains and allow participants to choose one; or
- two different entree choices and allow children to choose one.

To simplify OVS for children and staff, menu planners should make all choices within a meal component the same meal pattern contribution. For example, offer $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup servings of fruits and vegetables or offer entrees that each contain 2 ounces of MMA and two servings of grains/breads.

When a sponsor offers choices, their instructions and signage must clearly inform site supervisors and children of the number of servings allowed from each meal component (refer to [“Identifying Reimbursable Meals”](#) in section 1).



Examples of OVS at Lunch and Supper

The examples below show how OVS is implemented at lunch and supper.

Example 1: Lunch/supper menu with turkey sandwich combination food

The turkey and cheese sandwich is a combination food that contains the full serving of two meal components (MMA and grains/breads). Children who select the sandwich need only one more meal component for a reimbursable meal. Children who decline the sandwich cannot select a reimbursable meal because only two meal components remain (vegetables/fruits and milk).

Menu	Meal pattern contribution
- Turkey sandwich (combination food) - Turkey, 2 ounces - Whole-wheat bread, 2 slices - Lettuce and tomato, ¼ cup - Carrot sticks, ½ cup - Red apple, ½ cup - Low-fat milk, 1 cup	MMA Grains/breads Vegetables/fruits Vegetables/fruits Vegetables/fruits Milk

Child selects	Reimbursable meal: Full serving of at least three meal components
Turkey and cheese sandwich Milk	Yes. The meal contains the full serving of three meal components (MMA, grains/breads, and milk).
Turkey and cheese sandwich Apple	Yes. The meal contains the full serving of three meal components (MMA, grains/breads, and vegetables/fruits).
Apple Carrots Milk	No. The meal contains the full serving of only two meal components (vegetables/fruits and milk).
Turkey and cheese sandwich	Yes. The meal contains the full serving of three meal components (MMA, grains/breads, and vegetables/fruits).
Apple Milk	No. The meal contains the full serving of only two meal components (vegetables/fruits and milk)

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Example 2: Lunch/supper menu with yogurt and cheese stick (split MMA component)

This menu offers the full serving of the MMA component from two different food items (yogurt and cheese stick). Children who select only yogurt or cheese stick must still select three meal components for a reimbursable meal.

Menu

- Yogurt, ½ cup
- Cheese stick, 1 ounce
- Whole-grain crackers, 1 ounce
- Broccoli florets, ½ cup
- Orange slices, ½ cup
- Low-fat milk, 1 cup

Meal pattern contribution

½ MMA
 ½ MMA
 Grains/breads
 Vegetables/fruits
 Vegetables/fruits
 Milk

Child selects	Reimbursable meal: Full serving of at least three meal components
Yogurt Broccoli florets Orange slices Crackers	No. The meal contains the full serving of only two meal components (vegetables/fruits and grains/breads). The yogurt alone does not count as the MMA component for OVS because it does not provide the full serving.
Yogurt Cheese stick Crackers Milk	Yes. The meal contains the full serving of three meal components (MMA, grains/breads, and milk). The yogurt and cheese stick together count as the full serving of MMA.
Crackers Broccoli florets Orange slices Milk	Yes. The meal contains the full serving of three meal components (grains/breads, vegetables/fruits, and milk).
Crackers Orange slices Milk	Yes. The meal contains the full serving of three meal components (grains/breads, vegetables/fruits, and milk).
Cheese stick Broccoli florets Crackers Milk	Yes. The meal contains the full serving of three meal components (vegetables/fruits, grains/breads, and milk). The cheese stick alone does not count as the MMA component for OVS because it does not provide the full serving.

Example 3: Lunch/supper menu with vegetable pizza combination food

The vegetable pizza is a combination food that contains the full serving of two meal components (MMA and grains/breads). Children who select the pizza need only one more meal component for a reimbursable meal. Children who decline pizza cannot select a reimbursable meal because only two meal components remain (vegetables/fruits and milk).

Menu

- Vegetable pizza (combination food)
 - Cheese, 2 ounces
 - Pizza crust, 3 ounces
 - Tomato sauce and vegetables, ¼ cup
- Tossed salad, ½ cup
- Fresh peach, ½ cup
- Low-fat milk, 1 cup

Meal pattern contribution

MMA
Grains/breads
Vegetables/fruits
Vegetables/fruits
Vegetables/fruits
Milk

Child selects	Reimbursable meal: Full serving of at least three meal components
Vegetable pizza Tossed salad	Yes. The meal contains the full serving of three meal components (MMA, grains/breads, and vegetables/fruits).
Tossed salad Peach	No. The meal contains the full serving of only one meal component (vegetables/fruits).
Tossed salad Peach Milk	No. The meal contains the full serving of only two meal components (vegetables/fruits and milk).
Vegetable pizza Milk	Yes. The meal contains the full serving of four meal components (MMA, grains/breads, vegetables/fruits, and milk).
Vegetable pizza Peach	Yes. The meal contains the full serving of three meal components (MMA, grains/breads, and vegetables/fruits).
Vegetable pizza	Yes. The meal contains the full serving of three meal components (MMA, grains/breads, and vegetables/fruits).

Example 4: Lunch/supper menu with separate meal components

This menu offers the full serving of each meal component as a separate menu item.

Menu	Meal pattern contribution
• Roast chicken, 2 ounces	MMA
• Brown rice, ½ cup	Grains/breads
• Broccoli, ½ cup	Vegetables/fruits
• Fresh fruit salad, ½ cup	Vegetables/fruits
• Low-fat milk, 1 cup	Milk

Child selects	Reimbursable meal: Full serving of at least three meal components
Roast Chicken Brown Rice Broccoli	Yes. The meal contains the full serving of three meal components (MMA, grains/breads, and vegetables/fruits).
Roast Chicken Brown Rice Milk	Yes. The meal contains the full serving of three meal components (MMA, grains/breads, and milk).
Roast Chicken Fresh fruit salad Milk	Yes. The meal contains the full serving of three meal components (MMA, vegetables/fruits, and milk).
Roast Chicken Broccoli Fresh fruit salad	No. The meal contains the full serving of only two meal components (MMA and vegetables/fruits).
Brown Rice Broccoli Fresh fruit salad	No. The meal contains the full serving of only two meal components (grains/breads and vegetables/fruits).
Brown Rice Broccoli Milk	Yes. The meal contains the full serving of three meal components (grains/breads, vegetables/fruits, and milk).
Brown Rice Broccoli Fresh fruit salad Milk	Yes. The meal contains the full serving of three meal components (grains/breads, vegetables/fruits, and milk).

4 — Menu Planning Strategies

Sponsors decide how to offer the required food items and meal components for OVS. These menu planning decisions are important because they determine what foods and amounts children must select for a reimbursable meal.

The menu planning goal for OVS is to make it easy for children to select reimbursable meals and for Summer Meals staff to identify reimbursable meals. The menu planning strategies below can assist menu planners with successful OVS implementation.

- **Be consistent with menu planning and crediting foods:** Consistent menu planning and crediting makes it easier for children to understand what foods they can choose and helps staff to identify reimbursable meals. For example, the SFSP meal patterns allow menu planners to decide whether to credit beans, peas and lentils as the MMA component or the vegetables/fruits component. If the lunch/supper menu includes chickpeas in a salad, decide how to credit it and then credit it the same way for all lunch and supper menus.
- **Offer combination foods:** Combination foods make it easier for children to choose a reimbursable meal since they already have at least two meal components. For example, a breakfast menu offers low-fat milk and a yogurt-fruit parfait (combination food) made with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of yogurt (MMA), $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of strawberries (vegetables/fruits), and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of granola (grains/breads). Since the parfait counts as three food items, a child who selects the parfait has a reimbursable breakfast.

When menus include combination foods, the best practice is ensuring that children who decline the combination food can still select the minimum required food items (breakfast) or meal components (lunch/supper) for a reimbursable meal. The menu planner may need to offer additional food items at breakfast (refer to [“Combination foods at breakfast”](#) in section 2) or additional servings within the meal components at lunch/supper (refer to [“Combination foods at lunch/supper”](#) in section 2).

- **Make all choices within a meal component the same meal pattern contribution:** When all choices within a meal component provide the same meal pattern contribution, each food item counts the same toward the OVS requirements. This simplifies OVS. Some examples include an assortment of $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup servings of fruits and vegetables and

two entree choices that each offer 2 ounces of MMA and two servings of grains/breads, such as a slice of cheese pizza and a turkey sandwich.

- **Offer food items at breakfast as one serving:** Offering the minimum quantity of each food item as one serving instead of two different servings makes it more likely that children will select the full food item to count toward a reimbursable meal. For example, offer a food item from the vegetables/fruits component as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup instead of two different $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup servings.
- **Offer the grains/breads component at lunch/supper as one food item:** Offering the full serving of grains/breads as one food item instead of two different food items ensures the selection counts as one meal component for OVS. For example, instead of offering one serving of grains/breads from $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of enriched rice and a $\frac{1}{2}$ -ounce whole-grain roll, offer $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of enriched rice or a 1-ounce whole-grain roll. This makes it more likely that children will select the full serving to count as one meal component for a reimbursable meal.
- **Offer the MMA component at lunch/supper as one food item:** Offering the full serving of MMA as one food item instead of two different food items ensures the selection counts as one meal component for OVS. For example, instead of offering 2 ounces of MMA from $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of yogurt and 1 ounce of cheese, offer 1 cup of yogurt or 2 ounces of cheese. This makes it more likely that children will select the full serving to count as one meal component for a reimbursable meal.
- **Package smaller grains/breads or MMA foods together at lunch and supper:** When a food item is less than the full serving of the grains/breads component or MMA component, package it together with another food item from the same component so children must take both. For example, wrap $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of yogurt with a 1-ounce cheese stick to provide 2 ounces of the MMA component or wrap two $\frac{1}{2}$ -ounce packages of whole-grain crackers together to provide 1 ounce (1 serving) of the grains/breads component.

The CSDE encourages sponsors to contact the [Summer Meals](#) staff for additional guidance.



5 — Resources

[Administration Guide: Summer Food Service Program](#) (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/administration-guide>

[County Assignments for Summer Meals](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cnstaff/county_assign_summer_meals.pdf

[Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs>

[Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-the-summer-food-service-program>

[Crediting Summary Charts for the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsfp/crediting_summary_charts_sfsp.pdf

[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

[Meal Patterns](#) (CSDE's SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program/meal-patterns>

[Noncreditable Foods in the Summer Food Service Program](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsfp/noncreditable_foods_sfsp.pdf

[Nutrition Guide: Summer Food Service Program](#) (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/nutrition-guide>

[Offer versus Serve \(OVS\)](#) ("Meal Service" section of CSDE's SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program/meal-service#OVS>

[Requirements for the Grains/Breads Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsfp/component_grains_breads_sfsp.pdf

[Requirements for the Meats/Meat Alternates Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsfp/component_mma_sfsp.pdf

[Requirements for the Milk Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsfp/component_milk_sfsp.pdf

[Requirements for the Vegetables/Fruits Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsfp/component_vegetables_fruits_sfsp.pdf

[Servings for Grains/Breads in the Summer Food Service Program](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsfp/servings_grains_breads_sfsp.pdf

[Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\) Meal Patterns](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/mealpattern/sfsp_meal_patterns.pdf

[Summer Food Service Program Regulations](#) (7 CFR 225):

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-225>

[Summer Meals Annual Sponsor Training: Offer versus Service \(OVS\) in the Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\)](#) (“Annual Training” section of CSDE’s SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program/annual-training>

[USDA Memo SP10-2017 and SFSP 06-2017: Meal Service Requirements in the Summer Meal Programs, with Questions and Answers – Revised:](#)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/meal-service-requirements-summer-meal-programs-questions-and-answers-revised>

Glossary

combination food: a menu item that contains more than one meal component, such as pizza, sandwiches, burritos, tacos, lasagna, chicken stir-fry, and smoothies made with milk and fruit. For example, macaroni and cheese contains two meal components from the pasta (grains component) and cheese (MMA component). Combination foods generally cannot be separated (such as pizza and burritos) or are not intended to be separated (such as a hamburger on a bun or turkey sandwich).

creditable food: A food or beverage that counts toward the meal pattern requirements for a reimbursable meal or snack in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs. For more information, visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program](#) webpage.

food items: Specific foods offered within the meal components. For example, peaches and pears are two food items from the vegetables/fruits component. A hamburger on a whole-wheat bun is one food item that contains two meal components (MMA and grains/breads).

full serving: The minimum amount required in the SFSP meal patterns. The full serving is identified by the measure, typically as a weight or volume.

grains and breads component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs that is comprised of cereal grains and products made from their flours. Creditable grain foods include products and recipes that are whole grain-rich (WGR) or enriched. Creditable cooked and ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals include products that are WGR, enriched, or fortified. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Requirements for the Grains/Breads Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns](#), and visit the "[Grains and Breads](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program webpage.

meal component: One of the food groups that comprise a reimbursable meal. The four meal components include meats/meat alternates (MMA), grains/breads, vegetables/fruits, and milk. The SFSP breakfast meal pattern requires three meal components (milk, the combined vegetables/fruits component, and grains). The CACFP supper meal pattern requires five meal components (milk, MMA, vegetables, fruits, and grains). For information on the individual meal components, visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program](#) webpage.

meat alternates: Foods that provide similar protein content to meat. Meat alternates include alternate protein products, cheese, eggs, cooked dry beans, peas, and lentils, nuts and seeds and their butters (except for acorn, chestnut, and coconut), tofu and other soy products that contain at least 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces (weight) or ¼ cup (volume), tempeh, and yogurt or soy yogurt. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Requirements for the Meats/Meat Alternates Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns](#), and visit the "[Meats and Meat Alternates](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program webpage.

meats/meat alternates (MMA) component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs that includes meats (e.g., beef, poultry, and fish) and meat alternates, such as eggs, cheese, yogurt, beans, peas, and lentils, nuts, and seeds. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Requirements for the Meats/Meat Alternates Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns](#), and visit the "[Meats and Meat Alternates](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program webpage.

menu item: Any single food or combination food offered on the menu. A menu item may contain one or more meal components. For example, vegetable lasagna is a menu item that contains three meal components: vegetables, grains (pasta noodles), and MMA (cheese).

milk component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs that includes pasteurized fluid milk that meets the fat content and flavor restrictions of the USDA regulations. The allowable types of milk for the SFSP include unflavored or flavored whole milk, reduced-fat milk, low-fat milk, and fat free milk. The USDA recommends serving only unflavored milk. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Requirements for the Milk Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns](#), and visit the "[Milk](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program webpage.

minimum quantity: The full required serving for each meal component indicated in the SFSP meal patterns.

noncreditable foods: Foods and beverages that do not credit toward the SFSP meal patterns. Some examples include maple syrup, cream cheese, and condiments like salad dressing, ketchup, and relish. Noncreditable foods that accompany the meal do not count toward the OVS requirements. For more information on noncreditable foods, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Noncreditable Foods in the Meal Patterns for the Summer Food Service Program](#)

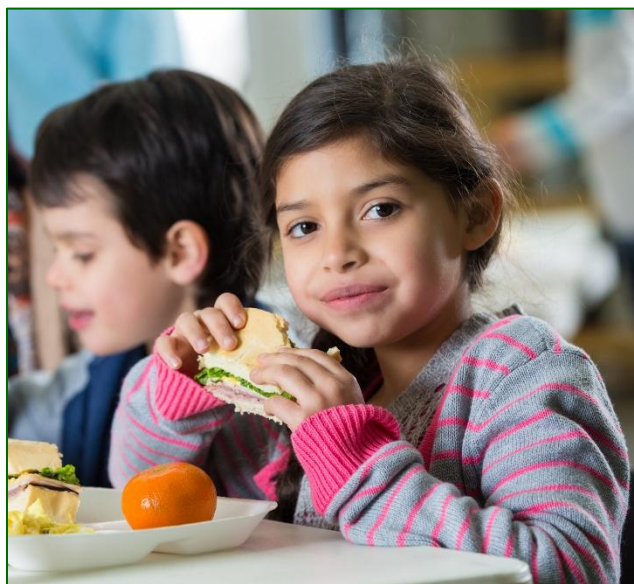
reimbursable meals and snacks: Meals and snacks that meet the meal pattern requirements of the USDA regulations and are eligible for USDA funds. Reimbursable meals and snacks contain the minimum serving of each required meal component.

SFSP meal patterns: The required meal components and minimum serving sizes that sponsors participating in the SFSP must provide to receive federal reimbursement for meals (breakfast, lunch, and supper) and snacks served to participants. For more information, visit the “[SFSP Meal Patterns](#)” section of the CSDE’s SFSP webpage.

sponsor: A public or private nonprofit school food authority, a public or private nonprofit residential summer camp, a unit of local, municipal, county or state government, a public or private nonprofit college or university currently participating in the National Youth Sports Program (NYSP), or a private nonprofit organization which develops a special summer or other school vacation program providing food service similar to that made available to children during the school year under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) and which is approved to participate in the SFSP. For more information, refer to the section [7 CFR 225.2](#) of the SFSP regulations.

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP): The USDA’s federally assisted meal program providing nutritious meals and snacks to children and teens in low-income areas during periods when school is not in session. Approved program operators receive reimbursement for eligible meals and snacks served in accordance with USDA requirements. For more information, visit the USDA’s [Summer Food Service Program](#) webpage and the CSDE’s [Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\)](#) webpage.

vegetables and fruits component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs that is comprised of fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) and pasteurized full-strength juice. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Requirements for the Vegetables/Fruits Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns](#), and visit the “[Vegetables and Fruits](#)” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program webpage.





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