

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



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Education

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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 consists of two separate requirements for reimbursable meals.

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

OVS is implemented differently for breakfast and lunch/supper. OVS for lunch and supper is based on meal components. OVS for breakfast is based on food items. 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.

Meal counts cannot be taken before or after the meal service. The USDA does not allow any other methods to determine meal counts, such as attendance, meal orders, or the number of meals sent to or returned from Summer Meals 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,

Four Required Food Items for Breakfast

OVS at breakfast is based on food items. The breakfast menu must offer at least four food items from the three meal components, including 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 of grains/breads, ½ cup of vegetables/fruits, or 1 ounce of MMA.

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

To implement OVS at breakfast, SFSP menus must offer at least four food items from the three meal components required by the SFSP breakfast meal pattern. Children must select at least three food items for a reimbursable meal but must be allowed to choose all offered food items.

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 following breakfast menu is not reimbursable: 1 hard-boiled egg; ½ cup of red apple. ½ cup of fresh plums; and 1 cup of low-fat milk. This meal contains four food items but is missing the grains/breads component.

Menu Planning Requirements for Breakfast

To be reimbursable under OVS, SFA 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; or
- one serving of sliced orange and one serving of orange juice.

For example, the following breakfast menu is not reimbursable: 2 slices of toast, $\frac{1}{2}$ 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

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.

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. Children must select both servings to count as one

food item from the vegetables/fruits component. For a reimbursable breakfast, children must also select 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 cereal and $\frac{1}{2}$ serving (31 grams) of an enriched cereal bar to meet this requirement. Children must select both servings to count as one food item from the grains/breads component. For a reimbursable breakfast, children must also select 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

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. To simplify OVS for children and staff, menu planners should make all choices within a meal component the same meal pattern contribution, such as $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup servings of fruits and vegetables or 1 serving of grain 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 low-fat milk, grains/breads, and one other food item from any meal component except milk.
- **Select two servings:** If the breakfast menu instructs children to select two 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

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component. To provide the four required food items for a reimbursable breakfast, this menu must also include the minimum serving of low-fat 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 because the breakfast meal pattern requires four different food items for OVS. The sponsor's instructions and signage must clearly indicate this information.

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. 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.

Examples of OVS at Breakfast

The examples below show how OVS is implemented at breakfast.

Example 1: Breakfast with four food items

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

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



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Example 2: Breakfast with four food items

- Whole grain-bagel, 2 ounces
 - Peanut butter, 2 tablespoons
 - Red grapes, ½ cup
 - Low-fat milk, 1 cup
- Grains/breads (1 food item)
MMA (1 food item)
Vegetables/fruits (1 food item)
Milk (1 food item)

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



Example 3: Breakfast with five food items

- Whole-grain cereal, 1 ounce Grains/breads (1 food item)
- Enriched toast, 1 ounce Grains/breads (1 food item)
- Cantaloupe, ½ cup Vegetables/fruits (1 food item)
- Blueberries, ½ cup Vegetables/fruits (1 food item)
- Low-fat milk, 1 cup Milk (1 food item)

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

Required Meal Components for Lunch and Supper

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

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

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

Nonreimbursable lunch and supper menus

Lunch and supper menus that contain less than the minimum serving or are missing any of the five required food items from the four meal components are not reimbursable. For example, the following lunch menu is not reimbursable: 3 ounces of grilled chicken; $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of mixed vegetables; a 1-ounce whole-grain roll; and 1 cup of low-fat milk. While this meal 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.

To implement OVS at lunch and supper, SFSP menus must offer at least five food items from the four meal components. Children must select at least three meal components for a reimbursable meal but must be allowed to choose all offered meal components.

Menu Planning Requirements for Lunch and Supper

To be reimbursable 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 or 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 or 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.



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 or 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 or supper menu offers $\frac{1}{2}$ serving ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) of brown rice and $\frac{1}{2}$ serving (13 grams) of whole-grain crackers to meet this requirement. Children must select both servings to count as the grains/breads component for OVS. A selection of only the 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 or supper menu offers 1 ounce of grilled chicken and 1 ounce of black beans to meet this requirement. Children must select both servings to count as the MMA component for OVS. A selection of only the 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 or 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 or supper menu could offer:

- an assortment of fresh and canned fruits and vegetables and allow children to choose two different servings; 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

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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).

Requirements for Children’s Selection of Reimbursable Lunches and Suppers

- 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 the 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).

Examples of OVS at Lunch and Supper

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

Example 1: Turkey sandwich combination food

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

Child selects	Reimbursable meal (at least 3 meal components)
Turkey and cheese sandwich Milk	Yes. The meal contains four meal components (MMA, grains/breads, vegetables/fruits and milk).
Turkey and cheese sandwich Apple	Yes. The meal contains four meal components (MMA, grains/breads, vegetables/fruits and milk).
Apple Carrots Milk	No. The meal contains only two meal components (vegetables/fruits and milk).
Turkey and cheese sandwich	Yes. The meal contains three meal components (MMA, grains/breads, and vegetables/fruits).
Apple Milk	No. The meal contains only two meal components (vegetables/fruits and milk)



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Example 2: Yogurt and cheese stick split MMA component

- Yogurt, ½ cup ½ MMA
- Cheese stick, 1 ounce ½ MMA
- Whole-grain crackers, 1 ounce Grains/breads
- Broccoli florets, ½ cup Vegetables/fruits
- Orange slices, ½ cup Vegetables/fruits
- Low-fat milk, 1 cup Milk

Child selects	Reimbursable meal (at least 3 meal components)
Yogurt Broccoli florets Orange slices Crackers	No. The meal contains 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 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 three meal components (grains/breads, vegetables/fruits, and milk).
Crackers Orange slices Milk	Yes. The meal contains three meal components (grains/breads, vegetables/fruits, and milk).
Cheese stick Broccoli florets Crackers Milk	Yes. The meal contains 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: Vegetable pizza combination food

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

Child selects	Reimbursable meal (at least 3 meal components)
Vegetable pizza Tossed salad	Yes. The meal contains three meal components (MMA, grains/breads, and vegetables/fruits).
Tossed salad Peach	No. The meal contains only one meal component (vegetables/fruits).
Tossed salad Peach Milk	No. The meal contains only two meal components (vegetables/fruits and milk).
Vegetable pizza Milk	Yes. The meal contains four meal components (MMA, grains/breads, vegetables/fruits, and milk).
Vegetable pizza Peach	Yes. The meal contains three meal components (MMA, grains/breads, and vegetables/fruits).
Vegetable pizza	Yes. The meal contains three meal components (MMA, grains/breads, and vegetables/fruits).



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Example 4: Roast chicken

- 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 (at least 3 meal components)
Roast Chicken Brown Rice Broccoli	Yes. The meal contains three meal components (MMA, grains/breads, and vegetables/fruits).
Roast Chicken Brown Rice Milk	Yes. The meal contains three meal components (MMA, grains/breads, and milk).
Roast Chicken Fresh fruit salad Milk	Yes. The meal contains three meal components (MMA, vegetables/fruits, and milk).
Roast Chicken Broccoli Fresh fruit salad	No. The meal contains only two meal components (MMA and vegetables/fruits).
Brown Rice Broccoli Fresh fruit salad	No. The meal contains only two meal components (grains/breads and vegetables/fruits).
Brown Rice Broccoli Milk	Yes. The meal contains three meal components (grains/breads, vegetables/fruits, and milk).
Brown Rice Broccoli Fresh fruit salad Milk	Yes. The meal contains 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 or 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.
- **Make all meal component choices 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 and makes it easier for children to select a reimbursable meal and easier for staff to identify reimbursable meals. 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.

4 | Menu Planning Strategies

- **Offer the grains/breads component at lunch or 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 or 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>



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