

# School Nutrition Program At-A-Glance

## Topic: School Breakfast Meal Pattern At a Glance

### Overview

By regulation, school meals must be based on the goals of the latest Dietary Guidelines for Americans. USDA sets school meal nutrition standards to ensure that schools offer students the right balance of fruits, vegetables, low-fat or fat-free milk, whole grains, and protein rich foods.

### Requirements:

School Food Authorities (SFA's) must offer the meal components and quantities required in the school meal pattern based on the age/grade group served.

Age/grade groups are:

- K-5 (kindergarten through 5th grade)
- 6-8 (6th through 8th grade)
- 9-12 (9th through 12th grade)

Note: The breakfast meal pattern requirements for all grades overlap. It is possible to meet all grade requirements with a single menu if:

- Daily and weekly requirements are met.
- Meals meet average weekly dietary specification for calories, saturated fat, added sugar and sodium as specified in the meal patterns.

The standard meal pattern is based on a five-day week with adjusted meal patterns based on shorter and longer weeks.

<b>Breakfast Meal Pattern: Based on a 5 Day Week</b>			
Amount of Food Per Week (Minimum Per Day)			
Meal Components	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Fruits (cups)	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups)	0	0	0
Grains/Meat/Meat Alternates (oz. equivalents)	7-10 (1)	8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)
Fluid Milk (cups)	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Dietary Specifications: Average Daily Amount			
Minimum-Maximum Calories	350-500	400-550	450-600
Sodium Limit In place through June 30, 2027	≤ 540 mg	≤ 600 mg	≤ 640 mg
Sodium Limit To be implemented July 1, 2027	≤ 485 mg	≤ 535 mg	≤ 570 mg
Saturated Fat (% of total calories)	<10	<10	<10
Added Sugar (% of total calories) To be implemented July 1, 2027	<10	<10	<10

## Meal Pattern Components: Required Components

### Grains/ Meat/Meat Alternates:

Grains and meat/meat alternate meal component are combined as a single component in the School Breakfast Program. Schools may offer grains, meat/meat alternates, or a combination of both, to meet the minimum ounce equivalents in this combined meal component.

Meal patterns have both daily and weekly minimum requirements. It is important to note that SFA's must offer greater than minimum daily amounts throughout the course of the week to meet the weekly minimum.

Grades	Daily Minimum Requirement	Weekly Minimum Requirement
K-5	1 oz. equivalent	7 oz. equivalents
6-8	1 oz. equivalent	8 oz. equivalents
9-12	1 oz. equivalent	9 oz. equivalents

**Grains:** The minimum grain amount that can contribute to the meal pattern is a 0.25 oz equivalent. Over the course of the week, at least 80% of grains offered must be whole grain-rich and all other grain items offered must be enriched.

**Meat/Meat Alternate:** The minimum meat/meat alternate amount that can contribute to the meal pattern is a 0.25 oz equivalent.

### Fruit:

Grades	Daily Minimum Requirement	Weekly Minimum Requirement
K-5	1 Cup	5 Cups
6-8	1 Cup	5 Cups
9-12	1 Cup	5 Cups

Menu planners may allow students to select more than the daily minimum serving for fruit if the dietary specifications for average breakfasts offered over the school week are met. Full strength juice may be offered to meet up to one-half of the weekly fruit requirement. All juice must be 100% juice.

The minimum quantity that may be credited towards the fruit component is  $\frac{1}{8}$  cup. Dry fruit credits as double the amount served. Ex.  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup dried fruit =  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup fruit

### Fluid Milk:

Grades	Daily Minimum Requirement	Weekly Minimum Requirement
K-5	1 Cup	5 Cups
6-8	1 Cup	5 Cups
9-12	1 Cup	5 Cups

All milk must be fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1% or less). Milk can be flavored or unflavored, provided that unflavored milk is offered at each meal service. Flavored milk may not contain more than 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces. At least two types of allowable milk must be offered.

## Meal Pattern Components: Optional Components

### Vegetables:

There is no requirement to offer vegetables at breakfast; however, SFA's may choose to offer vegetables in place of, or in addition to fruit.

- Schools choosing to substitute vegetables for fruit at breakfast one day per school week have the option to offer a vegetable from any of the vegetable subgroups.
- Schools choosing to substitute vegetables for fruit at breakfast on two or more days per school week are required to offer vegetables from at least two different subgroups.

The minimum vegetable amount that can contribute to the meal pattern is a 1/8 cup. Leafy green vegetables credit as one-half the volume served. Ex. ½ cup lettuce = ¼ cup vegetable.

### Added Sugars

The following added sugar product-based limits apply:

- Breakfast cereals may have no more than 6 grams of added sugar per dry ounce.
- Yogurt may have no more than 12 grams of added sugar per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugar per ounce).
- Flavored milk may have no more than 10 grams of added sugar per 8 fluid ounces.

### Offer Versus Serve at Breakfast

Offer Versus Serve (OVS) is a provision in the School Breakfast Program that allows students to decline some of the food offered. The goals of OVS are to reduce food waste in the school meals programs while permitting students to decline foods they do not intend to eat.

- Offer versus Serve (OVS) is optional for breakfast for all grades.
- A food item is a specific food offered within the three meal components.
- SFA's must offer four food items from all three required components.
- Students must select at least three food items including a ½ cup of fruit and/or vegetable for the meal to be reimbursable.
- Students, servers, and cashiers must be able to identify a reimbursable meal.
- Signage explaining what constitutes a reimbursable meal must be posted at or near the beginning of the service line.

### Helpful Resources

[USDA Updates to the School Nutrition Standards](#)

[Five Day SBP Meal Pattern Chart](#)

[Serving Meat/Meat Alternates at Breakfast](#)

[Short and Long Week SBP Meal Pattern Chart](#)

[Offer versus Serve Manual](#)

[Offer versus Serve at A Glance](#)

**Regulatory Reference:**

[7 CFR 220.8](#) Meal Requirements for Breakfasts

[USDA Memo SP-19 2024](#) Initial Implementation Memorandum: Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

**Acronym Reference and Definitions**

SBP	School Breakfast Program
OVS	Offer versus Serve
SFA	School Food Authority
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
SP	Special Program