

School Lunch Patterns

For Various Age/Grade Groups

USDA recommends, but does not require, that you adjust portions by age/grade group to better meet the food and nutritional needs of children according to their ages. If you adjust portions, Groups I-IV are minimum requirements for the age/grade groups specified. If you do not adjust portions, the Group IV portions are the portions to serve all children.

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

Meat or Meat Alternate

- Must be served in the main dish or the main dish and only one other menu item.
- Vegetable protein products, cheese alternate products, and enriched macaroni with fortified protein may be used to meet part of the meat/meat alternate requirement. Fact sheets on each of these alternate foods give detailed instructions for use.

Vegetables and/or Fruits

- No more than one-half of the total requirement may be met with full-strength fruit or vegetable juice.
- Cooked dry beans or peas may be used as a meat alternate or as a vegetable but not as both in the same meal.

Servings of bread or Bread Alternate

- At least 1/2 serving of bread or an equivalent quantity of bread alternate for Group I, and 1 serving for Groups II-V, must be served daily.
- Enriched macaroni with fortified protein may be used as a meat alternate or as a bread alternate but not as both in the same meal.

NOTE: Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs, PA-1331 (1984) provides the information for the minimum weight of a serving.

Milk

The following forms of milk must be offered:

- Whole milk
- Unflavored lowfat milk

NOTE: This requirement does not prohibit offering other milk, such as flavored milk or skim milk, along with the above.

COMPONENTS

Meat or Meat Alternate

A serving of one of the following or a combination to give an equivalent quantity:

Lean meat, poultry, or fish (edible portion as served)

Cheese

Large egg(s)

Cooked dry beans or peas

Peanut butter or other nut or seed butters

Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds, as listed in program guidance, meet no more than 50% of the requirement and must be combined in the meal with at least 50% of other meat or meat alternate. (1 oz of nut/seeds=1 oz of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish.)

Vegetables and/or Fruits

Two or more servings of vegetables or fruits or both to total

Servings of bread or Bread Alternate

A serving is:

- 1 slice of whole-grain or enriched bread
- A whole-grain or enriched biscuit, roll, muffin, etc.
- 1/2 cup of cooked whole-grain or enriched rice, macaroni, noodles, whole-grain or enriched pasta products, or other cereal grains such as bulgur or corn grits
- A combination of any of the above

Milk

A serving of fluid milk

COMPONENTS	Minimum Quantities				Recommended Quantities ¹
	Preschool	Grades K-3	Grades 4-12 ²	Grades 7-12	age 12 & over (Group V)
	ages 1-2 (Group I)	ages 3-4 (Group II)	ages 5-8 (Group III)	age 9 & over (Group IV)	
Meat or Meat Alternate					
Lean meat, poultry, or fish (edible portion as served)	1 oz	1-1/2 oz	1-1/2 oz	2 oz	3 oz
Cheese	1 oz	1-1/2 oz	1-1/2 oz	2 oz	3 oz
Large egg(s)	1/2	3/4	3/4	1	1-1/2
Cooked dry beans or peas	1/4 cup	3/8 cup	3/8 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup
Peanut butter or other nut or seed butters	2 Tbsp	3 Tbsp	3 Tbsp	4 Tbsp	6 Tbsp
Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds, as listed in program guidance, meet no more than 50% of the requirement and must be combined in the meal with at least 50% of other meat or meat alternate. (1 oz of nut/seeds=1 oz of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish.)	1/2 oz=50%	3/4 oz=50%	3/4 oz=50%	1 oz=50%	1-1/2 oz=50%
Vegetables and/or Fruits	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	3/4 cup
Servings of bread or Bread Alternate	5 per week	8 per week	8 per week	8 per week	10 per week
Milk	3/4 cup (6 fl oz)	3/4 cup (6 fl oz)	1/2 pint (8 fl oz)	1/2 pint (8 fl oz)	1/2 pint (8 fl oz)

¹Group IV is highlighted because it is the one meal pattern which will satisfy all requirements if no portion size adjustments are made.
²Group V specifies recommended, not required, quantities for students 12 years and older. These students may request smaller portions, but not smaller than those specified in Group IV.