



# Breakfast Meal Pattern

## Idaho School Nutrition Reference Guide

### OVERVIEW

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) is a Federally-funded, State administered, nonprofit meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. The SBP provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free breakfasts to children each school day. First established by Congress as a pilot program in 1966, the SBP became a permanent program in 1975 and has continued to expand every year. The School Breakfast Program operates in the same manner as the National School Lunch Program. School districts and independent schools that choose to take part in the breakfast program receive reimbursement from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), through their State agency (SA), for each meal they serve. In return, participating School Food Authorities (SFAs) must serve breakfasts that meet Federal meal pattern requirements, and they must offer free or reduced price breakfasts to eligible children. The meal pattern and nutrition standards are based on the latest *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, though decisions about specific food items to serve and how to prepare food are made by local SFAs.

### TERMINOLOGY

**Food component (aka meal component)** - One of the required food groups that comprise a USDA reimbursable meal; the three required breakfast food components are: fruit/vegetable; grain; and fluid milk. Schools must offer the specified food components in at least the minimum required quantities.

**Food item** - A specific food offered within the food components required at breakfast. Depending on the planned menu, the student may need to select more than one food item to have the minimum quantity needed for a component to be credited. For the purposes of OVS at breakfast, a school must offer at least four food items that meet the required three food components and the student must select at least three food items, including at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of fruit/vegetable, in order to have a reimbursable breakfast. The menu planner decides how to count/credit food items.

**Offer versus serve (OVS)** - A menu planning and meal service concept that allows students to decline some of the food offered in a reimbursable meal in order to permit students to choose the foods they want, while reducing food waste. OVS is optional at breakfast for all grade K-12 students. For further information, see the Offer Versus Serve section in the Reference Guide or see the OVS link listed under Additional Resources.

Ounce equivalent (oz eq) – The amount of food counted as equal to one grain component when crediting grain and/or one meat/meat alternate component when crediting meat/meat alternate in the SBP.

Point-of-service (POS) - Food service operation point where determination of a reimbursable meal served to free, reduced-price, or paid lunch eligible students is made.

Reimbursable meal - A meal that has met all of the mandatory Federal meal requirements and can be claimed to receive reimbursement.

Vegetable subgroup – A subgroup of vegetables that falls within the following five categories: dark green, red/orange, beans or peas, starchy, or other.

Whole grain-rich (WGR) – Whole grain-rich products must: meet portion size requirements for the grains component; have at least 50 percent of the grains in the product as whole grains; have all the grains in the product be whole or enriched; have whole grain as the primary ingredient by weight (non-mixed dishes) or as the primary *grain* ingredient by weight (mixed dishes). For further information, see the Whole Grain Resource link listed under Additional Resources.

## WHAT IS THE BREAKFAST MEAL PATTERN?

A healthy breakfast should consist of a variety of foods, such as low-fat or fat free milk, whole grains, lean meats or meat alternates, and fruits/vegetables. Offering these menu items will help provide a variety of nutrients and keep students ready to learn until lunchtime. The SBP meal pattern helps menu planners plan for healthy breakfast options each day by offering a variety of items from the required food components.

Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students have the same daily minimum portion sizes for fruit/vegetable, grain, and fluid milk components. Only the grain component has varying weekly minimums depending on the age/grade group, meaning that on some days more than 1 oz eq grain needs to be offered to meet weekly breakfast meal pattern requirements.

- A typical week equals five school operating days. SFAs that regularly operate for six or seven days must increase the weekly requirements by 20 percent for each additional day. Schools that regularly operate for less than five days must decrease the weekly requirements by 20 percent for each day less than five days.
- Calories, saturated fat, and sodium limits listed apply to the average daily amounts found in a week of reimbursable lunches. They do not apply to each individual meal or per student.
- Upon State agency administrative review, menus must be determined to meet the current nutrient standards (find guidance in Additional Resources).
- *Trans* fat is restricted to zero grams of non-naturally occurring *trans* fat per serving.

- Potable water must be available and accessible without restriction to children at no charge in the place(s) where breakfasts are served during the meal service. Water cannot be used as a replacement for the milk component.

### Reimbursable Breakfast Meal:

Three creditable food items must be taken, one of which must be at least ½ cup of fruit/vegetable.

### Offer Versus Serve (OVS)

Schools using OVS at breakfast must **offer at least four food items from the three required food components**.

The SBP must **offer three food components** in creditable portion sizes:

- Fruit/Vegetable, 1 cup
- Grain, 1 oz eq
- Fluid Milk (unflavored/flavored fat-free milk or unflavored low-fat milk), 1 cup/8 fluid oz

Example of three food components being offered within a minimum four food items:

Food Component	Component Amount Offered	Food Item
Fruit/Vegetable	1 cup of fruit/vegetable	1 cup fresh kiwi/strawberries
Grain	1 oz eq of WGR product	1 oz eq whole grain toast
		1 oz eq whole grain cereal
Fluid Milk	1 cup of fluid milk	8 fl oz unflavored 1% milk

**To count as a reimbursable meal, a student must select at least three food items, one of which must be at least ½ cup of fruit/vegetable.**

- There can be multiple choices of food items.
- The student must have the option to decline at least one food item.
- At least two milk varieties must be offered; the student may select one. The student may not select 2 milks and have that count as 2 out of the 3 items.
- The menu must meet daily and weekly Federal meal pattern requirements while staying within the calorie, saturated fat, and sodium dietary specifications averaged over the week.
- The menu planner decides how to count items.
  - Double servings are allowed for fruit / vegetable (e.g., two pieces of 1 oz eq whole grain toast counts as 2 items).
  - Large portions can count as more than one item (e.g., 2 oz eq muffin can count as 1 or 2 items).
  - A combination food can count as two or more items (e.g., breakfast pizza can count as 1 grain and 1 fruit).

## Serve (No OVS)

The **three food components** in a minimum of three food items in **creditable serving sizes** must be served:

- Fruit/Vegetable, 1 cup
- Grain, 1 oz eq
- Fluid Milk (unflavored/flavored fat-free milk or unflavored low-fat milk), 1 cup/8 fluid oz

**To count as a reimbursable meal, the student must take all items in their full component portion sizes served.** The option to select only ½ cup fruit/vegetable is not allowable if OVS is not being utilized.

The menu must meet daily and weekly Federal meal pattern requirements while staying within the calorie, saturated fat, and sodium dietary specifications averaged over the week.

## Guidelines for the School Breakfast Program:

### Fruit

- Daily: 1 cup fruit (&/or vegetable) must be planned for, available, and noted on the production record for grade K-12 students.
- To qualify as a reimbursable breakfast under OVS, at least ½ cup of fruit/vegetable must be taken. If OVS is not used the full portion must be served.
- More fruit may be selected as long as it is counted in the nutrient analysis averaged over the week.
- Schools may substitute vegetable in place of fruit. If a starchy vegetable such as hash browns is offered in place of fruit, then two cups per week of any non-starchy vegetable must be offered as well. Non-starchy vegetables are found in the following subgroups: dark green, red/orange, beans/peas, or other vegetables. Find a link to a list of vegetable subgroups under Additional Resources.
  - If a starchy vegetable, such as hash browns, is to be served during a week without having met the requirement of having planned to offer 2 cups of non-starchy vegetables that week, then the starchy vegetable may be offered as an “extra” food item as long as a fruit is served to meet the fruit component requirement. The “extra” is counted in the nutrient analysis in regards to the dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. “Extra” food does not credit toward meeting USDA meal requirements and so does not count towards a reimbursable meal.
  - All vegetables credit based on volume. NOTE: Raw, leafy greens credit as half the volume served (e.g., 1 c romaine lettuce credits as ½ c of vegetables) and tomato paste and puree credit based on the volume as if reconstituted (see *The Food Buying Guide for School Meal Programs* link under Additional Resources).
- Fruit may be offered in several different forms, including: fresh, frozen, canned in juice or light syrup, 100% juice, and dried.
  - *The Food Buying Guide* (FBG) can be used to determine how to credit whole fruit.
  - 100% juice may only meet up to one-half of the weekly fruit requirements.

- Dried fruit credits for double the amount offered (e.g., ¼ cup of raisins credits as ½ cup fruit).
- Fruit may *not* be declined under OVS. The student must select at least:
  - ½ cup fruit or
  - ½ cup vegetable, if substituted, or
  - ¼ cup fruit plus ¼ cup vegetable

## Grain

- All grains offered must be whole-grain rich products, unless a waiver has been obtained. Please visit the Additional Resources Breakfast Meal Pattern section of the guide for further information.
- Daily: a minimum of 1 oz eq grain for K-12 students.
- The weekly minimum grain requirement varies by grade groups and serves as a guide to help schools plan age-appropriate meals and meet dietary specifications requirements.
  - Grades K-5            7 oz equivalent/week
  - Grades 6-8           8 oz equivalent/week
  - Grades 9-12         9 oz equivalent/week
  - ❖ Additional whole grain-rich products must be offered over the course of the week to meet the weekly grain requirement for each grade group.
- Sugar in grain items is allowed at breakfast and there are no maximum grain-based dessert restrictions. Some grain products can *only* be served as desserts in lunch and they are not allowable in breakfast. This means that brownies, cookies, cobblers, and cake cannot be served at breakfast. For further information, please see Exhibit A in the Breakfast Meal Pattern section in the Additional Resources link.
- Documentation from manufacturers verifying the items they are selling meet the whole grain-rich requirements is needed. If a product formulation statement is not provided, Exhibit A and the list of ingredients must be used to determine the ounce equivalency of grain items. The item's portion size, in grams or ounces, must be provided on the package or in other supporting documentation from the manufacturer. Please visit the Additional Resources section of the reference guide for further information.
- Corn products treated with lime may be used to meet the whole grain-rich criteria provided that the manufacturer meets the requirements for inclusion of the Food and Drug Administration whole grain health claim and includes the claim on the product carton. If the product includes other grain ingredients, such as flour, these ingredients must be whole or enriched to meet the whole grain requirements. Grain products that are made from 100-percent whole grain corn continue to meet the WGR criteria and can be served in the School Meal Programs.
- It is very important to keep nutrition labels and/or product formulation sheets on file for grain items.
- An optional meat/meat alternate may be offered to meet part of the grain component if the minimum daily grain requirement (1 oz eq) is offered. A serving of 1 oz eq meat/meat alternate may credit as 1 oz eq grain. In this way, a meat/meat alternate may count toward the *weekly* grain requirement if it fits within dietary specifications.

- There is flexibility for how menu planners want to credit larger grain items. For example, if a muffin is 2 oz eq grain, then the menu planner can credit this as one food item, or as two food items.
- Grain items can be declined under OVS.

### Fluid Milk

- Daily: 1 cup (8 fluid ounces) milk daily for all age/grade groups.
- Must offer at least two of the following milk varieties daily:
  - Fat-free unflavored
  - Fat-free flavored
  - Low-fat (1% or less) unflavored
  - Low-fat (1% or less) or fat-free lactose-reduced/lactose-free
  - Fat-free flavored lactose-reduced /lactose-free milk
- No fat/flavor restriction on milk substitutes. The substituted product must be noted on the production records and included in the nutritional analysis.
- If a school chooses to offer one or more substitutes for fluid milk for non-disabled students with medical or special needs diets, the nondairy beverage(s) must be fortified in accordance with fortification guidelines issued by the Food and Drug Administration. A school need only offer the nondairy beverage(s) that it has identified as allowable fluid milk substitutes.
- Milk can be declined under OVS.

### Meat / Meat Alternate (m/ma)

- For SBP, the meat/meat alternate component is **optional**. If the minimum grain requirement for the day is met by providing at least 1 oz eq grain, then a meat /meat alternate may be offered in place of additional grain. A serving of 1 oz eq m/ma may credit as 1 oz eq grain. In this way, m/ma may count toward the *weekly* grain requirement if it fits within dietary specifications (it would be counted in the nutrient analysis in regards to the dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, and sodium).
- A meat/meat alternate may be offered as an “extra” food and not credit toward any component as long as it is counted in the nutrient analysis toward the calories, saturated fat, and sodium.
- Popular m/ma items to serve at breakfast include yogurt, cheese, eggs, and nuts. The yogurt in smoothies may be credited as m/ma in place of the grain component as long as a 1 oz eq of actual grain is available.
- Common conversions are:
  - 1 oz eq m/ma= ¼ c dry beans and peas, 2 tablespoons peanut butter, 4 oz (by weight) or ½ c (volume) soy or dairy yogurt, 1 oz cheese, 1 oz nuts or seeds, 2.2 oz (by weight) tofu containing 5 or more grams of protein
  - 2 oz eq m/ma=1 large egg

### Smoothies

- Milk used must be 1% plain, flavored nonfat, or unflavored nonfat, but it does not need to be the full 1 cup amount as long as all components are offered in the required quantities to meet meal pattern requirements.

- The volume of **pureed fruit** included in a beverage must be counted as **juice** toward the daily and weekly fruit requirements. The amount of juice offered must be limited to no more than half (50%) of the weekly fruit offerings in the School Breakfast Program.
  - Crediting of pureed fruit is determined on a volume as served basis. *The Food Buying Guide for School Meal Programs* currently has yield information for some fruits; the USDA is in the process of adding more fruits as they update the fruit section. For pureed fruit not addressed in the FBG, crediting is based on the volume of fruit AFTER pureeing. For example, the volume of blueberry puree may be determined by performing a yield study which involves pureeing whole blueberries and recording the resulting amount of puree; do this six times to find the average yield; document results.
  - Vegetables are allowed to be a creditable component in smoothies. As with fruits, vegetables that are pureed into a smoothie credit as juice. Vegetables may credit toward vegetable subgroups as long as there is only one vegetable subgroup present. If a variety of vegetable subgroups are included in the recipe then the vegetables would be creditable as additional vegetables. If both fruit and vegetables are included in the smoothie then the puree would credit as whichever is the most predominant ingredient.
- Offering an additional 1 cup (in ½ cup portion sizes) of fruit at breakfast is encouraged for variety and to allow a child that does not select a smoothie the option to select a fruit, helping to promote the selection of a reimbursable meal.
- Yogurt in the smoothie may be credited as a meat alternate (see above under m/ma), and so can be counted as a grain if the required 1 ounce equivalent grain is also available.
- For further information, see the Smoothie link listed under Additional Resources.

### Production Records (see the Production Records section in the Resource Guide)

Keeping accurate and organized production records are a critical component in the successful planning of SBP menus. Production records ensure the staff prepares the correct menu items in the correct portion sizes to fit the required meal pattern. Production records also provide a record that reimbursable meals were served, which is very important for proof of meal pattern compliance for State agency administrative reviews. A lack of production records or incomplete production records could result in the school not receiving reimbursement for meals served.

### Reimbursable Meals Signage

Students, servers, and cashiers must be able to identify what constitutes a reimbursable meal. Schools using OVS must also identify what a student must select in order to have a reimbursable meal (i.e., signage located in the cafeteria, preferably at or near the beginning of the serving line, explaining what constitutes a reimbursable meal to students, including the requirement to select at least ½ cup fruit or vegetable, accomplishes this). “What’s for Breakfast” posters are available through the State Department of Education, Child Nutrition Programs.

## Why is the School Breakfast Program Important?

Studies have consistently shown that students who eat breakfast benefit nutritionally and educationally. Starting the day with breakfast has been associated with improved academic performance evidenced by increased standardized test scores, improved classroom behavior, and attentiveness. Students who eat breakfast at school have reduced tardiness, improved attendance, and fewer visits to the nurse. Busy households benefit from the SBP because children have the option to receive a healthy, balanced, and affordable meal at school instead of rushing to eat before heading out the door.

## Resources

Additional resources may be available for this topic. Please check the Idaho School Nutrition Reference Guide website for copies of manuals, user guides and helpful links to relevant subject matter.

---

### For Questions Contact

Child Nutrition Programs  
Idaho State Department of Education  
650 W State Street, Boise, ID 83702  
208 332 6820 | [www.sde.idaho.gov](http://www.sde.idaho.gov)