

training for cashiers and serving line staff so they can help students select reimbursable lunches and breakfasts.

For more information on requirements for à la carte and other competitive foods sold, please refer to guidance on the Smart Snacks regulation, (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/smart-snacks-school>)

OVS and “Extra” Foods

A school may offer “extra” foods, such as ice cream or pudding, which are not creditable. These foods may complement a reimbursable meal or entice students to purchase a meal. This “extra” food may be selected by the student in addition to the meal, but may not credit toward the minimum number of food components/food items a school is required to offer under OVS. However, these “extra” foods must be included in a nutrient analysis **of the weekly menu** to assess compliance with the dietary specifications (calories, saturated fat, and sodium). (Also, see the Grains Component section on crediting of grain-based desserts.)

Implementing OVS at Lunch

Overview of Menu Planning/OVS **At** Lunch

Function	Requirement
Implementation of OVS	Mandatory at the senior high level Optional below senior high school level
Reimbursable Meals Number of Food Components/Food Items Offered	Offer five food components Five food components/number of food items offered varies
Required number of selections for OVS	At all grade levels, student must select at least three components, one of which must be ½ cup of fruits or vegetables
OVS and fruits and vegetables food components/food items	Fruits and vegetables are two separate components. Student must select at least a ½ cup of fruits or vegetables or a combined total of ½ cup of both
Extra foods offered	Not credited for OVS but must be included in dietary specifications

Definitions

A food component is one of five food groups that comprise reimbursable lunches. These are meats/meat alternates; grains; fruits; vegetables; and fluid milk. Schools must always offer all five food components in at least the minimum required quantities.

A food item is a specific food offered within the five food components. For example, a hamburger patty on a bun is one food item with two of the five food components (meats/meat alternates and grains). Separate ½ cup servings of peaches, applesauce and pears are three food items that **represent** one component (fruits).

Under OVS **at lunch**, a student must take at least three components in the required quantities. One selection must be at least ½ cup (total) from either the fruits or vegetables component. 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.

Use of OVS in the NSLP

- OVS must be available for students at senior high schools (as defined by the State educational agency).
- OVS is optional at middle and elementary schools (as defined by the State educational agency).
- OVS is not allowed for the NSLP snack service.
- OVS is optional for summer meals offered through the Seamless Summer Option of the NSLP.

The Basics

The meal pattern for lunches consists of five food components:

- (1) Fruits
- (2) Vegetables
- (3) Grains
- (4) Meats/meat alternates (m/ma) and
- (5) Fluid milk.

The age/grade groups for lunches are:

- K-5
- 6-8 and
- 9-12.

Under OVS, all students, at any grade level, must select:

- At least 3 of 5 food components **AND**

For the fruit and vegetable components:

- One of the choices selected must be at least a ½ cup serving of the fruits or vegetables component or a ½ cup total serving of both fruit and vegetable.

If only three components are selected, and two of these are fruit and vegetable, the student may only select the ½ cup portion for the fruit OR vegetable. For the other two components, the student must select at least the minimum daily required serving* of the components for them to be counted. For example: Student in 5th grade wants to select milk, ½ cup fruit and ½ cup vegetable. In grades k-5 and 6-8 if a student selects the ½ cup fruit, they are selecting the full component of fruit and thus only have to select ½ cup vegetable for OVS; and

- If grains, meats/meat alternates and milk are selected, the student must select at least the daily ½ cup fruit and/or vegetable minimum required amount.

*(for K-5 & 6-8, ¾ cup and for 9-12, 1 cup)

Three food components are required for an adequate nutritious meal for students and to warrant the Federal reimbursement. Within each component, different food items may be offered, giving students many combinations for building a reimbursable meal. Example 1 below shows a typical menu that allows for choices that may be selected by students for a reimbursable lunch for grades 9-12, and K-8.

EXAMPLE 1

Menu for Grades 9-12:

Choose 1: Hamburger on Bun OR Roasted Turkey Sandwich (2 ounce equivalents of grains and 2 ounce equivalents of m/ma each)

Choose up to 2: seasoned corn, green beans, potato wedges (1/2 cup vegetables each)*

Choose up to 2: orange slices, fruit cocktail, banana, apple juice (1/2 cup fruit each)*

Choose 1: nonfat unflavored milk OR nonfat flavored milk (1 cup milk each)

* Two ½ cups of a fruit and ½ cup of a vegetable cannot be credited as two components if the student only selects three components total. Either the fruit or vegetable must be a full cup to count both as components for OVS.

Menu for Grades K-5 and 6-8:

Choose 1: Hamburger on Bun or Roasted Turkey Sandwich (1.5 oz eq meat/meat alternate, 2 oz eq grains)

Choose 1: baked beans, sweet potato wedges, green beans (¾ cup each)

Choose up to 2: Assorted fruit, fruit cocktail (1/4 cup each (1/2 cup total with two selections))

Choose 1: nonfat flavored milk or low fat unflavored milk (1 cup milk)

In the first lunch menu for grades 9-12, in Example 1, the menu planner offered the daily required minimum amount for the fruit and vegetable components (1 cup total). The student is able to decline some of the offerings as long as at least ½ cup of fruit or vegetable is selected. In this example, the following combinations are reimbursable under OVS:

- the turkey sandwich entrée and ½ cup of orange slices;

- milk, ½ cup of green beans, and the ½ cup banana and ½ cup orange slices (counts as the fruit component since the full 1 cup required daily serving was selected); and
- the hamburger and ½ cup potato wedges.

However, if the student selects the ½ cup corn, ½ cup fruit cocktail, and milk, the meal is not reimbursable because neither the fruit nor vegetable at half cup each, meets the required full component serving size of 1 cup.

In the second lunch menu for K-8, the menu planner offered, in total, the daily required minimum amount for the fruits component (1/2 cup) and the vegetables component (3/4 cup). The student is able to decline some of the offerings as long as at least ½ cup of fruit or vegetable is selected. This means that for this menu, the student must take at least two servings from the fruit or at least one of the vegetable offerings in order to have the minimum daily required serving. In this example, the following combinations are reimbursable under OVS:

- the turkey sandwich, ¼ cup assorted fruit, and ¼ cup fruit cocktail (counts as the full required ½ cup daily serving);
- milk, two 1/4 cup assorted fruits (counts as the full required ½ cup daily serving), ¾ cup sweet potato wedges; and
- hamburger, and ¾ cup potato wedges, (counts as the full required ¾ cup daily serving).

Signage and instructions to students are important to assist them in understanding which foods may be declined under OVS. For examples of signage, check out the school meals Best Practices Sharing Center. (<http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/best-practices>)

Other than selecting the required minimum ½ cup fruit and/or vegetable serving, it is the student's choice to select or decline a food component. Schools may not specify other food components a student must select. However, if the lunch menu includes, for example, a combination food such as a slice of pizza that provides three of the five required food components (grains from the crust; vegetables from the sauce and toppings; and m/ma from the cheese), the student may have to select the slice of pizza if not enough additional options are available to select a reimbursable lunch.

Five food components must be offered in at least the daily minimum required quantities and weekly minimum quantities, if applicable. However, OVS only applies to daily selections, not available choices over the school week.

Food Component Requirements for Lunches

Please note that in the following sections on the individual components (fruits, vegetables, m/ma, and grains), information that applies to each of these components is intentionally repeated.

Meats/Meat Alternates (M/MA) Component

Students in all grades must be offered at least the daily minimum ounce equivalents (oz eq) of m/ma required in the meal pattern. In addition, there is a range over the school week with a minimum number of oz eq that must be offered. This means that on some days, schools serving Grades K-5 and 6-8 must offer more than the minimum daily amount to meet the weekly minimum requirement. The minimum quantity that may be credited towards the m/ma component is 0.25 ounce equivalent.

Grades	Daily Minimum Requirement	Weekly Requirement
K-5	1 ounce equivalent	8-10 ounce equivalents
6-8	1 ounce equivalent	9-10 ounce equivalents
9-12	2 ounce equivalents	10-12 ounce equivalents

Schools are only required to meet the daily and weekly minimum requirements for this food component. This policy is found at 7 CFR 210.7(d) (1) for eligibility to receive additional reimbursement and at 7 CFR 210.18(g) (2) (vi) for the purposes of administrative reviews. State agencies would consider SFAs compliant with the weekly ranges for this component if the FNS-developed or FNS-approved Certification Tool and required supporting documentation indicate the menu is compliant with the daily and weekly *minimums*.

The m/ma component may be offered in a main dish or in a main dish and one other food item as shown in Example 2 below. All four options offer at least two oz eq of m/ma. However, the beef stew and roast pork options contain all of the m/ma in one food item (main dish), while the other options (peanut butter sandwich plus cheese stick or salad w/chickpeas plus yogurt) split the m/ma component into 2 food items (main dish plus side item).

EXAMPLE 2	
M/MA choices at lunch:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Beef stew (3 oz eq m/ma)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Roast pork over rice (2 oz eq m/ma)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Peanut butter sandwich (1.5 oz eq m/ma) and cheese stick (0.75 oz eq m/ma)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Entree salad w/chickpeas (1 oz eq m/ma) and yogurt (1 oz eq m/ma)

If the m/ma component is offered in two food items, the m/ma component is credited if the student selects the required daily minimum for her/his grade group. This means, again using Example 2, that a student in grades K-5 or 6-8 (with a required daily m/ma minimum of 1 oz eq) could select just the peanut butter sandwich with 1.5 oz eq of m/ma (declining the cheese stick). This selection would credit as meeting the m/ma component. However, since the daily minimum m/ma required for grades 9-12 is 2 oz eq, a 10th grader would have to select *both* the peanut butter sandwich and cheese stick (2.25 oz eq total) to meet the

minimum daily quantity for the m/ma component. Similarly, if only the cheese stick (0.75 oz eq m/ma) was selected by a student at any grade level, it cannot be credited as meeting the m/ma component because it does not meet the daily minimum m/ma required for any age/grade group.

Mature, dry Beans and peas including dry lentils and immature, fresh soy beans may be credited as either m/ma or legume vegetable. Peanuts, which are legumes, cannot count towards the legume vegetable requirement. It is up to the menu planner to determine each day how beans/peas are credited.

Vegetables Component

Students in all grades must be offered daily and weekly minimum servings of vegetables.

Grades	Daily Minimum Requirement	Weekly Minimum Requirement
K-5	¾ cup	3¾ cups
6-8	¾ cup	3¾ cups
9-12	1 cup	5 cups

Full strength juice may be offered to meet up to one-half of the weekly vegetable requirements. Menu planners may allow students to select more than the daily minimum serving of vegetables if the dietary specifications for lunches are not exceeded. The minimum quantity that may be credited towards the vegetables component is one-eighth of a cup.

The vegetables component consists of a variety of subgroups that must be offered over the week. While there is no requirement that a student select each subgroup, the SFA must ensure that all students have the opportunity to select each of the vegetable subgroups over the week.

To be credited as part of a reimbursable lunch for OVS, the minimum quantity of vegetable a student must select is:

- ½ cup of vegetables, or
- ½ cup total from the fruits and vegetables components (credits as one component), or
- ½ cup of an item containing both fruits and vegetables (e.g., a carrot/raisin salad).

A student may take two ¼ cup servings of either the same or a different vegetable to meet the ½ cup minimum requirement for OVS.

EXAMPLE 3

Food items at lunch containing vegetables:

- Beef stew (contains ½ cup vegetables)
- Seasoned corn (½ cup vegetables)
- Carrot/raisin salad (contains ¼ vegetable and ¼ cup fruit)
- Green bean casserole (contains ¼ cup vegetables)
- Green peas (contains ¼ cup vegetables)

Example 3 below lists some possible lunch offerings containing vegetables.

In Example 3, the beef stew is a main dish that contains ½ cup of vegetables, while the corn is a side item containing ½ cup of vegetables. The carrot/raisin salad consists of ½ cup combination of both fruits and vegetables in the same dish. Since the green beans and peas are each ¼ cup portions, taking one selection of green beans and one selection of peas meets the ½ cup requirement. Likewise, as noted above, taking two selections of the same vegetable item (such as the green bean casserole) is allowable in order to reach the ½ cup minimum vegetable requirement for OVS.

Beans/peas (legumes) may be credited as either m/ma or vegetable. It is up to the menu planner to determine each day how beans/peas are credited.

If a student does not select at least a ½ cup serving total of fruits and/or vegetables, the lunch is not reimbursable, even if he/she has three other components (e.g., m/ma, grains, and milk). Cashiers should allow these students to select fruits or vegetables from the serving line or have these items available at the point of service. If the student *still* does not select at least a ½ cup serving of fruits and/or vegetables, the meal is not reimbursable. The school may charge the student à la carte prices for the foods selected. Please refer to guidance on the Smart Snacks (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/healthierschoolday/tools-schools-smart-snacks>).

For OVS purposes, if a student can select more than the minimum daily required serving of vegetables (such as from a salad bar), the component is credited only once. For example, if a 10th grade student makes a salad with three cups of vegetables, s/he must still select at least two other components in order to have a reimbursable meal (one of which could be a ½ cup of fruit).

For OVS, if a 10th grade student selects only three components and two of these are a fruit and a vegetable, s/he must select the full required serving size for either the fruits or vegetables **component** to have both credited as components. In other words, a 10th grader who selects ½ cup of fruit and ½ cup of vegetables and milk does not have a reimbursable meal. Either the fruit or vegetable selection must be one cup to credit it as a full component. Alternately, the student could select a grain or m/ma choice as the third component, instead of more fruits or vegetables.

EXAMPLE 4

Menu for Grades 9-12:

Choose 1: hamburger on bun OR turkey sandwich (2 oz eq of grains, 2 oz eq of m/ma)

Choose up to 2: seasoned corn, green beans, potato wedges (½ cup of vegetables each)

Choose up to 2: orange slices, fruit cocktail, banana, apple juice (½ cup of fruit each)

Choose 1: nonfat unflavored milk OR nonfat flavored milk (1 cup)

Schools are encouraged to allow students to select more items as long as the weekly dietary specifications are not exceeded.

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- ½ cup seasoned corn and ½ cup green beans (1 cup vegetables total; the full vegetables component); ½ cup orange slices (½ cup meets minimum for OVS); 1 cup unflavored milk (milk component)

OR

- ½ cup green beans (½ cup meets minimum for OVS); two ½ cups orange slices (1 cup fruit total; the full fruit component); 1 cup unflavored milk (milk component).

The menu in Example 4 limits the fruit and vegetable choices to two selections for each component. However, schools are encouraged to allow students to take more items if the weekly dietary specifications are met.

Fruits Component

Grades	Daily Minimum Requirement	Weekly Minimum Requirement
K-5	½ cup	2 ½ cups
6-8	½ cup	2 ½ cups
9-12	1 cup	5 cups

Full strength juice may be offered to meet up to one-half of the weekly fruit requirements. Menu planners may allow students to select more than the daily minimum serving for fruit if the dietary specifications for average lunches offered over the school week are met. The minimum quantity that may be credited towards the fruit component is one-eighth of a cup.

To be credited as a reimbursable lunch for OVS, the minimum quantity **of fruit** that a student must select is:

- ½ cup of fruit, or
- ½ cup total from the fruits and vegetables components (credits as one component), or
- ½ cup of a dish **containing** both fruit and vegetable (e.g., carrot/raisin slaw).

A student may take two ¼ cup servings of either the same or a different fruit to meet the ½ cup minimum requirement for OVS and be credited as the fruit component.

For OVS purposes, if a student can select more than the minimum daily required quantity of fruit (such as from a salad bar), the component is credited only once. For example, if a 5th grade student selects 2 cups of fruit, s/he must still select at least two other components in order to have a reimbursable meal (one of which could be ½ cup of vegetables).

If a student does not select at least a ½ cup serving total of fruits and/or vegetables, the lunch is not reimbursable, even if they have three other components (e.g., m/ma, grains, and milk). Cashiers should allow these students to select fruits or vegetables from the serving line or have these items available at the

point of service. If the student *still* does not select at least a ½ cup serving of fruits and/or vegetables, the meal is not reimbursable. The school may charge the student à la carte prices for the foods selected.

For OVS, if a 10th grade student selects only three components and two of these are a fruit and a vegetable, s/he must select the minimum required daily serving for either the fruits or vegetables **components** to have both credited as components. In other words, a 10th grader who selects ½ cup of fruit and ½ cup of vegetables and milk does not have a reimbursable meal. Either the fruit or vegetable selection must be one cup to credit it as the third component. Alternately, the student could select a grain or m/ma choice as the third component, instead of more fruits or vegetables.

Grains Component

Grades	Daily Minimum Requirement	Weekly Requirement
K-5	1 ounce equivalent	8-9 ounce equivalents
6-8	1 ounce equivalent	8-10 ounce equivalents
9-12	2 ounce equivalents	10-12 ounce equivalents

Schools are only required to meet the daily and weekly minimum requirements for this food component. This policy is found at 7 CFR 210.7(d) (1) for eligibility to receive additional reimbursement and at 7 CFR 210.18(g) (2) (vi) for the purposes of administrative reviews. State agencies would consider SFAs compliant with the weekly ranges for this component if the FNS-developed or FNS-approved Certification Tool and required supporting documentation indicate the menu is compliant with the daily and weekly *minimums*.

The grains component is credited for OVS if the total **amount** selected equals at least the minimum daily ounce equivalent (oz eq) requirement for the grade group. In addition, there is a range over the school week with a minimum number of oz eq that must be offered. This means that on some days, schools must offer more than the minimum daily amount to meet the weekly requirement. The *minimum* quantity that can be credited towards the grains component is one-quarter of an ounce equivalent (0.25 oz eq). The grains component may be offered in combination with another food component (for example, an entrée with grains and m/ma) or separately (such as a roll or serving of rice). **All grain offerings over the course of the week must be whole grain-rich. (Temporary exceptions allowed in school year 2015-2016 per memorandum SP 20-2015 dated 2/10/15.)**

As shown in Example 5 below, the burrito with chicken and brown rice option contains all of the grains in one food item (entrée), while the spaghetti with marinara sauce (entrée) and roll (side item) option splits the grains component into two food items. The rice pilaf is a grain side item.

EXAMPLE 5

Food item choices containing grains:

- Burrito with chicken and brown rice (2.5 oz eq grains total)
- Spaghetti w/marinara sauce (1.5oz eq grains) and whole wheat roll (0.75 oz eq grain) [2.25 oz eq grains total]
- Rice pilaf (1 oz eq grain)
- Oatmeal raisin cookie (1 oz eq grain)

If the grains component is offered in two or more food items, for OVS, the grains component is credited if the student's selection has at least the required daily minimum quantity for her/his grade group. Therefore, if more than one oz eq of grain is offered in grades K-5 and 6-8 to meet the weekly requirement, for OVS, the student may decline part of this offering and still have a reimbursable meal by taking only one oz eq.

Again using Example 5, a student in grades K-5 or 6-8 (minimum daily requirement of 1 oz eq) could select just the spaghetti with marinara sauce (declining the dinner roll). The spaghetti would credit as meeting the grains component. However, since the daily minimum grain required for grades 9-12 is 2 oz eq, a 10th grader must select *both* the spaghetti with marinara sauce and the dinner roll (2.25 oz eq total) to meet the grains component. Alternatively, the 10th grader could select both the spaghetti (1.5 oz eq) and the cookie (1 oz eq; a total of 2.5 oz eq) to meet the minimum required 2 oz eq.

Similarly, no student would be able to select just the whole wheat roll (0.75 oz eq), decline the spaghetti with marinara sauce, and meet the grains component. This is because it does not meet the daily minimum grains quantity required for any age/grade group. The student would have to select other food items containing grains to receive credit for the grains component.

Up to 2 oz eq of grain-based desserts may be credited towards the grains component per week. If the student selects a grain-based dessert which meets the daily minimum requirement of 1 oz eq, it is creditable for this component. Therefore, since the oatmeal raisin cookie in Example 5 is 1 oz eq, it could credit as meeting the daily required serving for the grains component for grades K-5 and 6-8 (but not grades 9-12).

Milk Component

For all grade groups, one cup of fluid milk must be offered daily as a beverage. Students may decline milk under OVS. The weekly minimum amount of five cups of milk may be met by offering the daily minimum of one cup. There is also a daily requirement to offer a variety of (at least two) milk choices. For the student to receive credit for the milk component, s/he must select at least one cup of fluid milk.

While water must be made available to students during meal service, SFAs shall not promote or offer water or other beverage **as an alternative selection to fluid milk** on the meal service line. Water is not a food component or food item for the reimbursable meal (see SP 28-2011 "*Revised Child Nutrition Reauthorization 2010: Water Availability During National School Lunch Program Meal Service*" (July 12, 2011) at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/water-availability-during-nslp-meal-service>