

Four Components of a Reimbursable Meal

The reimbursable meal is a valuable tool to help gauge the effectiveness and efficiency of your child nutrition operation. It allows you to equate all meals to a standard and calculate production.

To receive reimbursement from the USDA, meals for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program must meet specific requirements. Based on the type of meal being served (breakfast, lunch, or snack) and the type of menu planning used in the school nutrition operation, a reimbursable meal must contain a specified quantity of the following four food components:

1. Meat or Meat Alternate

- Dry beans and peas may count as a vegetable or a meat alternate, but not both in the same meal.
- A serving of cooked meat is lean meat without the bone.
- A serving of cooked fresh or frozen chicken or turkey includes meat and skin as normally served.

2. Vegetable or Fruit

- At least two different vegetables and/or fruits must be offered.

- Full-strength vegetable or fruit juice may be used to meet no more than half of the total requirement for lunch.
- The serving size must be at least 1/8 cup to count as a full serving of fruits or vegetables.

3. Grain or Bread

- Items must be whole-grain, enriched, or made from whole-grain or enriched meal, flour, bran, or germ.
- Cereals must be whole-grain, enriched, or fortified.
- If an item is enriched, it must meet the FDA's Standards of Identity for enriched bread, pasta, rice, or cornmeal.

3. Milk

- One fluid serving must be provided for each meal.
- Schools are required to offer a variety of fluid, lowfat, unflavored and/or flavored milk for breakfast and lunch.

Source: National Food Service Management Institute. (2008). *Growing your professional skills: Competencies, knowledge, and skills for successful school nutrition assistants*. University, MS: Author.

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