

Offer Versus Serve in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs

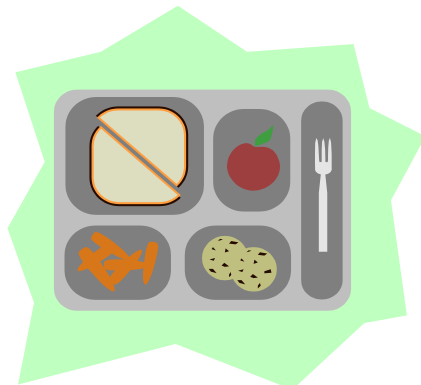
Offer Versus Serve (OVS) is a serving option that applies to menu planning and the determination of reimbursable school meals in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National School Breakfast (SBP) and Lunch Programs (NSLP). OVS cannot be utilized in the Afterschool Snack Program.

The USDA meal patterns include five food components: Meat/Meat Alternate, Grains, Fruits, Vegetables and Milk. OVS allows students to decline a certain number of food components in the meal, reducing food waste and food costs and allowing students to select the foods they prefer to eat. OVS must be implemented in senior high schools for lunch. OVS is optional for junior high, middle schools and elementary schools.

OVS Requirements for Lunch:

For a lunch to be reimbursable under OVS, schools must meet the following criteria:

- All **five food components** (meat/meat alternate, grains, fruits, vegetables and low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk) must be offered to all students.
- Serving sizes for all food components must equal the required quantity for the different grade groups in the NSLP meal pattern.
- Meals must be priced as a unit, i.e., students pay the same price regardless of whether they take three, four or five food components.
- Students decide which foods to decline, if any. Students must be allowed to decline up to two food components.
- All students must take **at least three** of the five food components offered, including **at least a 1/2 cup serving of fruit or vegetable** and **full servings** of the other selected food components. Students may take smaller portions of the declined food components; however, they do not count towards a reimbursable meal.
 - When the meat/meat alternate is provided in two menu items (such as a Cheese Stick and Yogurt), the student must take at least the minimum daily serving size depending on the grade group. For grades K-5 and 6-8: 1 oz.; for grades 9-12 grades: 2 oz.
 - When the meal includes multiple grain items and the student selects more than one (e.g., 1/2 cup of pasta and a one-ounce roll), only one grain counts as a reimbursable component toward the OVS requirements.



A **food component** is one of the five food groups that comprise a reimbursable meal; including meat/meat alternate, grains, fruits, vegetables and milk.

A **food item** is a specific food offered within the five food components.

The chart below summarizes the meal pattern requirements and the number of food components that students can decline.

Must offer Five Components ¹	Student May Decline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One serving of meat/meat alternate • One serving of grains • One serving of fruits • One serving of vegetables • One serving of low-fat (1%) unflavored milk or fat-free flavored or unflavored milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to two food components; however, must take 1/2 cup serving of fruit, vegetable or a combination of the two
¹ Serving sizes must equal the required quantities for each grade group specified in the NSLP meal pattern.	

OVS Requirements for Breakfast – Effective School Year 2014-15

OVS is not required at breakfast but encouraged in order to reduce plate waste. For purposes of OVS, a school must offer at least four food items that meet the required food components. Under OVS, students must select three food items, including at least 1/2 cup of fruit. If OVS is not implemented, students must leave the serving line with all food items. For a breakfast to be reimbursable under OVS, schools must meet the following criteria:

- The meal must be planned to include the three required components: grains, fruits and milk.
- For all grade groups:
 - Schools must offer at least a 1 ounce equivalent (oz. eq.) of grains daily.
 - Schools may offer meat/meat alternate in place of part of the grain component after the minimum daily grain requirement is met.
 - Schools must offer 1 cup of fruit, 100% juice or vegetable daily. No more than half of the fruit or vegetable offerings during the week may be in the form of juice.
 - Vegetables may be substituted for fruits, but the first two cups of vegetable per week must be from the dark green, red/orange, beans and peas (legumes) or other vegetable subgroups.
 - Students are required to take 1/2 cup of fruit.
- Serving sizes for all food components must equal the required quantity for the different grade groups in the SBP meal pattern.
- Meals must be priced as a unit, i.e., students pay the same price regardless of whether they take three or four items.
- Students may decline any one food item.
- Students must take full servings of **at least three** of the four food items offered. Students may take a smaller portion of the declined food item; however, it does not count towards a reimbursable meal.

Must offer Four Food Items ¹	Student May Decline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two oz. eq. of Grains (can be the same food item) OR • One oz. eq. of Grain and substitute a one oz. eq. of Meat/Meat Alternate for a Grain • One serving of Fruit, Vegetable or 100 percent Juice • One serving of low-fat (1%) unflavored milk or fat-free flavored or unflavored milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One food item; however, must take 1/2 cup serving of fruit
¹ Serving sizes must equal the required quantities for each grade group specified in the SBP meal pattern.	