

# Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

This guidance applies to meals for preschoolers (ages 1-4) and grades K-12 in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP.

The NSLP meal patterns for grades K-12 list the meat/meat alternates component in ounce equivalents. The meal patterns for grades K-12 in the ASP and preschoolers in the NSLP list the meat/meat alternates component in ounces. The amount of nuts or seeds and nut or seed butters that provide 1 ounce equivalent or 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component is the same (1 ounce of nuts or seeds and 2 tablespoons of nut or seed butters).



Creditable nuts and seeds in the USDA's meal patterns include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, and soy nuts. Roasted or dried soy beans credit the same as soy nuts. However, fresh soy beans (edamame) credits only as the vegetables component (legumes subgroup). For more information, see the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) handout, [Vegetable Subgroups](#).



## Grades K-12

Nuts and seeds served to grades K-12 must meet the requirements below.

- **Breakfast:** The SBP meal pattern for grades K-12 does not require the meat/meat alternates component. School food authorities (SFAs) may substitute 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component (including nuts and seeds) for 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component, after offering the minimum daily 1 ounce equivalent of grains. A 1-ounce serving of nuts or seeds offered as a grain substitute credits as 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component. For more information, see the [SBP Breakfast Meal Pattern for Grades K-12](#).
- **Lunch:** Nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than half of the meat/meat alternates component. SFAs must combine nuts and seeds with another food from the meat/meat alternates component to meet the full requirement for each grade group. For example, the lunch meal pattern for grades 9-12 requires 2 ounce equivalents of the meat/meat alternates component. A lunch for this grade group cannot contain more than 1 ounce equivalent of nuts or seeds, and must also include 1 ounce equivalent of another food from the meat/meat alternates component. For more information, see the [NSLP Lunch Meal Pattern for Grades K-12](#).

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- **ASP snack:** SFAs may serve the meat/meat alternates component (including nuts and seeds) as one of the two required snack components in the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12. Nuts and seeds may credit as the full serving (1 ounce) of the meat/meat alternates component for grades K-12. For more information, see the [ASP Meal Pattern for Grades K-12](#).

### Preschool (Ages 1-4)

Nuts and seeds served to preschoolers must meet the requirements below.

- **Breakfast:** The SBP meal pattern for preschoolers does not require the meat/meat alternates component. SFAs may substitute foods from the meat/meat alternates component (including nuts and seeds) for the entire grains component up to three times per week. A ½-ounce serving of nuts or seeds offered as a grain substitute credits as ½ serving of the grains component, which is the minimum serving size for ages 1-4. For more information, see the [SBP Preschool Breakfast Meal Pattern](#) and the USDA's handout, *Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast in the CACFP*.
- **Lunch:** Nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than half of the meat/meat alternates component. SFAs must combine nuts and seeds with another food from the meat/meat alternates component to meet the full requirement for each age group. For example, the lunch meal pattern for ages 3-4 requires 1½ ounces of the meat/meat alternates component. A lunch for this age group cannot contain more than ¾ ounce of nuts or seeds, and must also include ¾ ounce equivalent of another food from the meat/meat alternates component. For more information, see the [NSLP Preschool Lunch Meal Pattern](#).
- **ASP snack:** SFAs may serve the meat/meat alternates component (including nuts and seeds) as one of the two required snack components in the ASP meal pattern for preschoolers. Nuts and seeds may credit as the full serving (½ ounce) of the meat/meat alternates component for ages 1-4. For more information, see the [ASP Preschool Meal Pattern](#).

**Note:** Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. To prevent the risk of choking, the USDA recommends that SFAs consider children's age and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer nuts and seeds. This consideration is especially important when serving young children or children with disabilities. The USDA recommends that any nuts or seeds served to these groups are in a prepared food, and are ground or finely chopped.

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## Nut and Seed Butters

Creditable nut and seed butters include almond butter, cashew nut butter, peanut butter, sesame seed butter, soy nut butter, and sunflower seed butter. Reduced-fat peanut butter credits if it meets the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) standard of identity for peanut butter (21 CFR 164.150), which requires that products contain at least 90 percent peanuts.

The serving size for nut and seed butters is based on volume (tablespoons), not weight (ounces). A serving of 2 tablespoons of nut or seed butter credits as 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component for grades K-12 in the NSLP; and 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component for grades K-12 in the ASP and preschoolers in the NSLP.

Menu planners should consider the appropriateness of the serving size for each grade group. It may be unreasonable to provide the full serving of a nut or seed butter in one menu item, such as a peanut butter sandwich. The CSDE recommends providing a smaller portion of peanut butter and supplementing with another food from the meat/meat alternates component to provide the full serving. For example, the lunch meal pattern for grades 9-12 requires 4 tablespoons ( $\frac{1}{4}$  cup) of peanut butter, which is a large amount for two slices of bread. Alternatively, the lunch menu could include:

- a sandwich made with 2 tablespoons of peanut butter (1 ounce equivalent of meat/meat alternates) served with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of yogurt (1 ounce equivalent of meat/meat alternates); or
- three half-sandwiches (made from three 1-ounce slices of whole grain-rich bread) that each contain 4 teaspoons of peanut butter (4 tablespoons total).

**Note:** If the SFA portions nut or seed butters by weight instead of volume, the menu planner must use the appropriate weight conversion listed in the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*. A 1-ounce serving of nut or seed butters does not provide 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component. The FBG indicates that 1.1 ounces (2 tablespoons) of nut or seed butters is required to provide 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component.



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The table below indicates the tablespoons of nut and seed butters that equate to ounce equivalents of the meat/meat alternates component.

| Serving size for nut and seed butters  |                          |   |                                |
|--|--------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Meal pattern serving size of meat/meat alternates <sup>1</sup>   | Tablespoons <sup>2</sup> | Scoop (disher) size <sup>3</sup>                | Weight equivalent <sup>4</sup> |
| $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce equivalent (minimum creditable amount)   | $\frac{1}{2}$            | Closest is No. 100 (2 teaspoons)                | 0.275 ounces                   |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce equivalent   | 1                        | Closest is No. 60 ( $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoons)    | 0.55 ounces                    |
| $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce equivalent   | $1\frac{1}{2}$           | Closest is No. 40 ( $1\frac{2}{3}$ tablespoons) | 0.825 ounces                   |
| <b>1 ounce equivalent</b>  | <b>2</b>                 | <b>No. 30 (2 tablespoons)</b>                   | <b>1.1 ounces</b>              |
| $1\frac{1}{2}$ ounce equivalents   | 3                        | Closest is No. 20 ( $3\frac{1}{3}$ tablespoons) | 1.65 ounces                    |
| 2 ounce equivalents  | 4                        | No. 16 ( $\frac{1}{4}$ cup)                     | 1.2 ounces                     |
| <p><sup>1</sup> The NSLP meal patterns for grades K-12 list the serving size for the meat/meat alternates component in ounce equivalents. The meal patterns for grades K-12 in the ASP and preschoolers in the NSLP list the serving size for the meat/meat alternates component in ounces. The serving size is the same for both measurements.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> One tablespoon equals 3 teaspoons.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> Scoop equivalents are from the Institute of Child Nutrition's (ICN) <i>Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster</i>.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> Weight equivalents are from the USDA's <i>Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs</i>.</p> |                          |   |                                |



# Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP

## Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/AcceptDoc.pdf>

Afterschool Snack Program Handbook (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/ASPHandbook.pdf>

Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents>

Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/mpgpreschool.pdf>

Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning-Guide-for-School-Meals>

Product Formulation Statement for Meat/Meat Alternates (USDA):

[https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS\\_Documenting\\_Meat\\_Meat\\_Alternate\\_Nov\\_2019.pdf](https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Documenting_Meat_Meat_Alternate_Nov_2019.pdf)

Product Formulation Statements (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/PFS.pdf>

Reviewer's Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements for Meat/Meat Alternates (USDA):

[https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/reviewer\\_checklist.pdf](https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/reviewer_checklist.pdf)

Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast in the CACFP (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/tn/CACFPMeatAlt.pdf>

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf>

## Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP



For more information, review the CSDE's guides, *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12*, *Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP*, and *Afterschool Snack Program Handbook*, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditNuts.pdf>.

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Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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