USDA Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

A Guide to
Smart Snacks in School

Help make the healthy choice
the easy choice for kids at school

TEAM NUTRITION • USDA

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Learn about Smart Snacks

Do you...

- ☐ Coordinate school fundraisers,
- ☐ Manage a school store or snack bar,
- ☐ Sell food or beverages during the school day on campus, or
- ☐ Manage school vending machines?

If you checked any of the boxes above, then the foods and beverages you're selling need to meet the Smart Snacks Standards. You play an important role in helping kids get the nutrition they need to grow and learn. Use this guide to learn how.

If you didn't check a box and still want to learn more about encouraging kids to choose Smart Snacks, visit **TeamNutrition.USDA.gov**.

Why are Smart Snacks important?

1. Almost a quarter of kids' daily calories may come from snacks.

2. Kids who have healthy eating patterns are more likely to perform better academically.

3. Kids consume more healthy foods and beverages during the school day. When Smart Snacks are available, the healthy choice is the easy choice.

4. Smart Snacks Standards are a Federal requirement for all foods sold outside the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.

Which foods and beverages sold at school need to meet the Smart Snacks Standards?

1. Any food and beverage sold to students at schools during the school day,* other than those foods provided as part of the school meal programs.

2. Examples include à la carte items sold in the cafeteria and foods sold in school stores, snack bars, and vending machines.

3. Foods and beverages sold during fundraisers, unless these items are not intended for consumption at school or are otherwise exempt by your State agency.

* The school day is defined as the midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the school day.

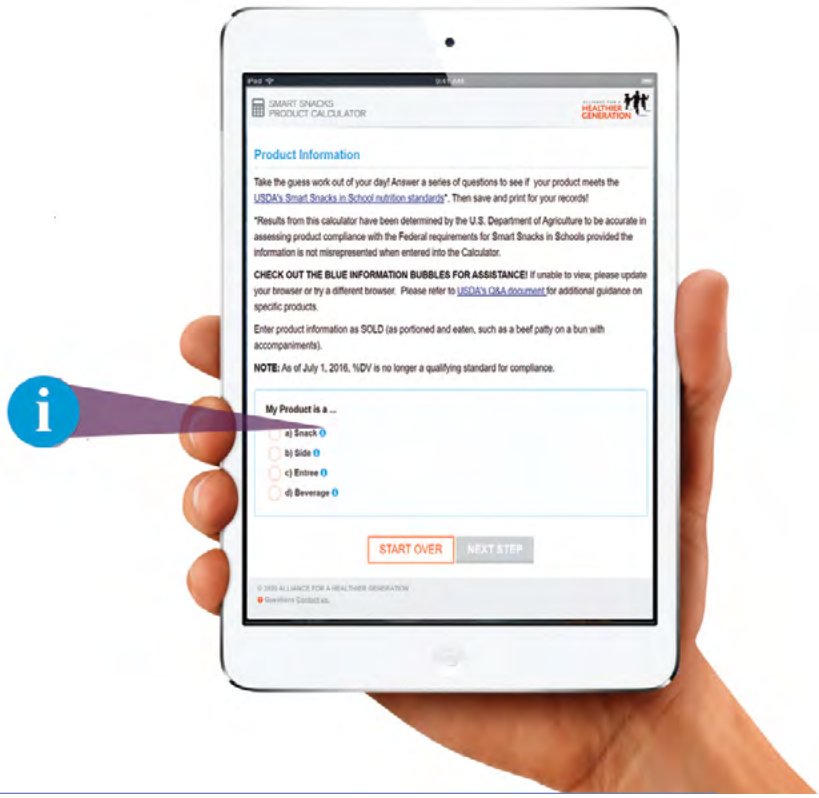
The Smart Snacks Standards apply only to locations on the school campus that are accessible to students. So, this does not include places like the teachers' lounge, although you may choose to vend healthy snacks there, too.

How can I tell if my snack meets the Smart Snacks Standards?

1 Enter information from the food or beverage's Nutrition Facts panel and ingredients list into the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's Smart Snacks Product Calculator (**https://www.healthiergeneration.org/app/resources/81**). For multi-unit packages, you must enter the servings per container as one (1) and the nutrition information for one (1) unit. Do not enter the servings per container for the entire bulk box or case.

2 If your snack doesn't have a nutrition label because it is made from scratch, then you may need to calculate the nutrition information. Your school nutrition program may already use a nutrient analysis software approved by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA; **https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/usda-approved-nutrient-analysis-software**) that can be used to evaluate recipes.

Look for the blue information icons in the Smart Snacks Product Calculator! These helpful bubbles include additional information and regulatory guidance so you can enter product information correctly and get an accurate result.



Does USDA have a list of approved foods and beverages?

1. USDA does not approve individual foods or beverages. Even if a food says “Smart Snacks approved,” you should still evaluate the Nutrition Facts panel and ingredients list.

2. If you still have questions about a food or beverage, contact your State agency that administers the National School Lunch Program (**https://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts**).

Fruits, vegetables, and water with no added ingredients are always Smart Snacks!

Finding information on the Nutrition Facts panel and ingredients list

Enter the highlighted information into the Smart Snacks Product Calculator (**https://www.healthiergeneration.org/app/resources/81**) to see if your snack meets the standards.

Nutrition Facts

1 serving per container

Serving size **2 cups (30g)**

Amount per serving

Calories **140**

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 4g	**5%**
Saturated Fat 0g	**0%**
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	**0%**
Sodium 170mg	**7%**
Total Carbohydrate 25g	**9%**
Dietary Fiber 2g	**7%**
Total Sugars 8g	
Includes 8g Added Sugars	**16%**
Protein 1g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 0mg	0%
Iron 0mg	0%
Potassium 0mg	0%

INGREDIENTS: Popcorn, sugar, canola oil, salt

First Ingredient

What are the Smart Snacks Standards for foods?

To qualify as a Smart Snack, a snack or entrée must first meet the general nutrition standards:

- Be a grain product that contains 50 percent or more whole grains by weight (have a whole grain as the first ingredient); or
- Have as the first ingredient a fruit, a vegetable, a dairy food, or a protein food; or
- Be a combination food that contains at least ¼ cup of fruit and/or vegetable (for example, ¼ cup of raisins with enriched pretzels); and
- The food must meet the nutrient standards for calories, sodium, fats, and total sugars.

Nutrient	Snack	Entrée
Calories	200 calories or less	350 calories or less
Sodium	200 mg or less	480 mg or less
Total Fat	35% of calories or less	35% of calories or less
Saturated Fat	Less than 10% of calories	Less than 10% of calories
***Trans* Fat**	0 g	0 g
Total Sugars	35% by weight or less	35% by weight or less

Are there healthy exemptions to certain nutrient requirements?

The Smart Snacks Standards reflect practical and flexible solutions for healthy eating. A few foods or combinations of foods are exempt from certain nutrient standards. Refer to the table below for examples of these exemptions.

Food	Smart Snacks Standards Exemptions
Fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables, with no added ingredients except water Canned fruits packed in 100% juice or light syrup, with no added ingredients except water Canned vegetables (no salt added/low sodium), with no added fats	Exempt from all nutrient standards
Reduced-fat cheese (including part-skim mozzarella) Nuts, seeds, or nut/seed butters Apples with reduced-fat cheese* Celery with peanut butter (and unsweetened raisins)* Whole eggs with no added fat	Exempt from the total fat and saturated fat standards, but must meet all other nutrient standards
Seafood with no added fat (e.g., canned tuna packed in water)	Exempt from the total fat standard, but must meet all other nutrient standards
Dried fruits with no added sugars Dried cranberries, tart cherries, or blueberries, sweetened only for processing and/or palatability, with no added fats	Exempt from the sugar standards, but must meet all other nutrient standards
Trail mix of only dried fruits and nuts and/or seeds, with no added sugars or fats	Exempt from the total fat, saturated fat, and sugar standards, but must meet all other nutrient standards

*Paired exemptions are always required to meet the calorie and sodium limits for Smart Snacks.

What are the Smart Snacks Standards for beverages?

Water

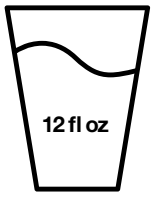
Plain water, with or without carbonation.

All Grades

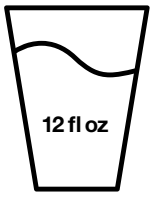
Milk

Unflavored or flavored fat-free milk, unflavored low-fat milk, and milk alternatives as permitted by the National School Lunch Program/School Breakfast Program. Starting on July 1, 2022 for school years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, schools may also sell flavored low-fat milk as a Smart Snack.*

Elementary School



Middle School



High School

Juice

100% fruit or vegetable juice, with or without carbonation.

Elementary School

Middle School

High School

* In accordance with the Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Final Rule: **https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/fr-020722**

What are the Smart Snacks Standards for beverages? (continued)

Diluted Juice

100% fruit or vegetable juice diluted with water, with or without carbonation, and with no added sweeteners.

Elementary School

Middle School

High School

Low- and No-Calorie Beverages (High School Only)

Low- and no-calorie beverages, with or without caffeine and/or carbonation; calorie-free, flavored water.

Low Calorie Maximums:*
40 calories/8 fl oz
60 calories/12 fl oz

*Equivalent to 5 calories per fluid ounce.

No Calorie Maximum:*
10 calories/20 fl oz

*Less than 5 calories per 8 fluid ounces.

Do you have questions about Smart Snacks Standards?

Contact your State agency that administers the National School Lunch Program (**https://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts**).

What is an entrée?

For purposes of Smart Snacks, an entrée is defined as the main course of a meal that has a combination of:

- meats/meat alternates + whole grain-rich food;
- vegetables + meats/meat alternates;
- fruits + meats/meat alternates;
- meats/meat alternates alone, except for meat snacks (e.g., beef jerky), yogurt, low-fat or reduced fat cheese, nuts, seeds, and nut or seed butters; and
- a grain only, whole grain-rich entrée that is served as the main dish of the School Breakfast Program reimbursable meal.

When school meal leftovers are sold à la carte

Sometimes, schools serve extra entrées from school meals as à la carte items (as individual items sold outside of the school meal). These entrées do not have to meet Smart Snacks Standards when they are sold as an à la carte item up to one day after being served at school lunch or breakfast. For example, if a bean burrito is served at school lunch on Wednesday, it may also be sold as a Smart Snacks on Wednesday through Thursday without needing to meet Smart Snacks Standards.

Some schools also serve school meal side dishes as à la carte items. These side dishes must always meet Smart Snacks Standards.

Are condiments part of a Smart Snack?

When checking to see if your snack meets the standards, be sure to consider how it is packaged as well as how it is sold, including all accompaniments. For example, if butter is added to popcorn, or ranch dressing is offered along with veggies, be sure to count the nutrition information for these condiments when determining if your snack meets the standards.

How do the Smart Snacks Standards affect school fundraisers?

- Sales of foods and beverages that meet the Smart Snacks Standards and sales of nonfood items (e.g., wrapping paper and apparel) are not limited under the Federal policy.
- Fundraising activities that occur during nonschool hours, on weekends, or at off-campus events are not limited under the Federal policy.
- Fundraisers selling foods that are intended to be consumed outside the school day are not limited under the Federal policy.
- Some State agencies allow a certain number of in-school fundraisers to be exempt from the Smart Snacks Standards. Contact your State agency for more information.

What if my school district wants to have stricter standards?

These Federal Standards are the minimum requirements. State agencies and/or local school districts can establish stricter standards, if desired. Consult your school's Local School Wellness Policy for more information.

What are some other resources?

Team Nutrition

https://teamnutrition.usda.gov

Access free nutrition education resources like this Guide to Smart Snacks in School handout.

Fueling My Healthy Life

https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/fueling-my-healthy-life

Learn more about added sugars and sodium with these interactive materials for 7th and 8th grade.

Discover *MyPlate*: Snack Time!

https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/discover-myplate-parent-handouts

Get ideas about choosing snack foods and beverages with less saturated fat, added sugars, and sodium with this handout for parents of young children.

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How do I learn more about Smart Snacks Standards?

Find National School Lunch Program policy memorandum at **https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp.**

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