



School Lunch Guide

Creating a Balanced Packed Lunch

It's hard finding the balance between making a nutritious lunch and a child's preferences! Try the following tips to ease your stress . . .

Try breaking down lunch into 4 main groups. Then pick a specific food from each group to build your meal. This can help you create a healthy balance and take the stress out of what to include. Think of a packed lunch as the opportunity for your child to experience new foods.

Try using the following groups for lunches - protein, grains, fruit and vegetables. Keep in mind, sometimes you may combine the grains and protein parts of the lunch. For example, you might do cheese (protein) on top of pasta noodles (grains) or make a sandwich (grains) with peanut butter (protein).

Every so often, you could also include something fun like a cookie, pudding or fruit snack.

Start by including at least one of your child's favorite foods. The idea is that the favorite food will get them started eating and enjoying their meal. This can help your child feel comfortable and make the transition to eating in a new environment happen smoothly.

Of course packing a great lunch does not guarantee that your child will eat it. That is ok! A child's appetite will vary from day to day. Just stay consistent and over time your child may learn to love new foods!

Check the list below for foods to mix and match to build a lunch. Please keep in mind appropriate food safety measures. This is a general list and is not taking into account the age of your child and modifications that your child may need.



Drinks

Basic dietary guidelines for children include limiting juice to 4-8oz daily.

Sending a water bottle to school can help your child stay hydrated during the day and reduce intake of added sugars.

This may also be important to send if the school doesn't have water fountains available due to COVID restrictions.



1

PROTEIN

- Peanut butter
- Yogurt cups or tubes
- Deli meat
- Cheese sticks
- Chicken nuggets
- Meatballs
- Shredded cheese on pasta
- Nuts
- Beans
- Hard boiled egg

2

FRUIT

- Apple slices
- Grapes
- Watermelon
- Strawberries
- Cutie oranges
- Raspberries
- Blueberries
- Pineapple
- Bananas
- Fruit cups (peaches, pears, pineapple, oranges)
- Applesauce Pouch

3

VEGETABLES

- Carrot sticks
- Peas
- Cauliflower rice
- Green beans
- Sliced cucumbers
- Pickles
- Cherry tomatoes
- Celery
- Peas & Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Broccoli
- Veggie Pouch

4

GRAINS

- Whole grain bread
- Goldfish
- Pretzels
- Popcorn
- Crackers
- Pasta noodles
- Dry cereal
- Tortilla rollup w/ meat or cheese
- Graham crackers