United States Department of Agriculture

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

A Guide to Smart Snacks in School

Learn About Smart Snacks

Do you...

- ☐ Coordinate school fundraisers,
- ☐ Manage a school store or snack bar,
- ☐ Sell food during the school day on campus,
- ☐ Manage school vending machines, or
- ☐ Want healthier foods on your school's campus?

If you checked any of the boxes above, then the foods and beverages you're selling need to meet the Smart Snacks in School 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 in school, see the resources on page 14.

Why are Smart Snacks important?

1. More than 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 they are Smart Snacks, 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 food 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.

* 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. See if your snack is listed in the Products section of the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's Smart Food Planner (**https://foodplanner.healthiergeneration.org/products**). These products were determined to meet the Smart Snacks Standards based on the product's ingredient statement and Nutrition Facts panel.

2. 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://foodplanner.healthiergeneration.org/calculator**). It is important to note that the standards are for the food items as packaged and sold. Therefore, if the item is labeled as having two servings per package, then the information in the Nutrition Facts panel must be multiplied by two. The Smart Snacks Product Calculator does this math for you.

3. If your snack doesn't have a nutrition label because it is made from scratch, use the MyRecipe feature in the SuperTracker (**https://www.supertracker.usda.gov/myrecipe.aspx**) to calculate the nutrition information. Your school nutrition program may also have nutrient analysis software approved by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA; **http://go.usa.gov/cvNaC**) which can be used to evaluate recipes.

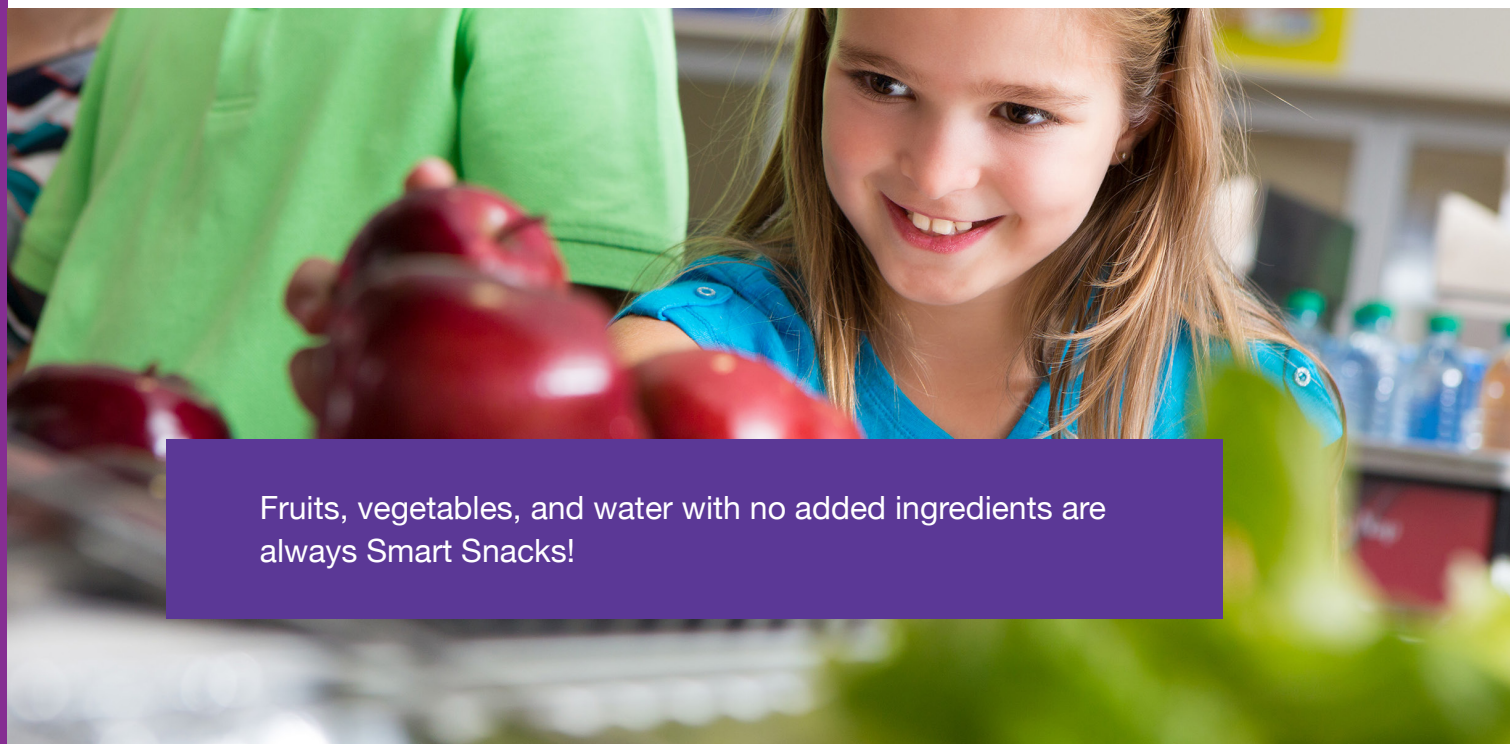
Look for the blue information icons in the Smart Snacks Product Calculator! These helpful bubbles include additional information and regulatory guidance so you can enter product information correctly and get an accurate result.

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. You can find examples of foods and beverages that meet the standards by browsing the Products section of the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's Smart Food Planner (**https://foodplanner.healthiergeneration.org/products**).

3. If you still have questions about a food or beverage, refer to the Smart Snacks in Schools: Questions and Answers (**http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/SP23-2014v3os.pdf**) and consult your State agency (**http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/school-meals-contacts**).



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

How do I find out if my granola bar is a Smart Snack?

Granola bars and other snack bars that have as a first ingredient a whole grain (e.g., whole grain rolled oats), protein food (e.g., nuts), dairy, fruit, or vegetable will meet the general standards. Then, the product must be measured against the nutrient snack standards for calories, sodium, sugar, and fats. You can use the Smart Snacks Product Calculator to assist you with evaluating the product against the snack standards.

Tip:

When checking to see if your snack meets the standards, be sure to consider both 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 sold along with veggies, be sure to count the nutrition information for these condiments when determining if your snack meets the standards.

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 product, or a protein food; or
- Be a combination food that contains at least ¼ cup of fruit and/or vegetable; and
- The food must meet the nutrient standards for calories, sodium, sugar, and fats:

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
Sugar	35% by weight or less	35% by weight or less

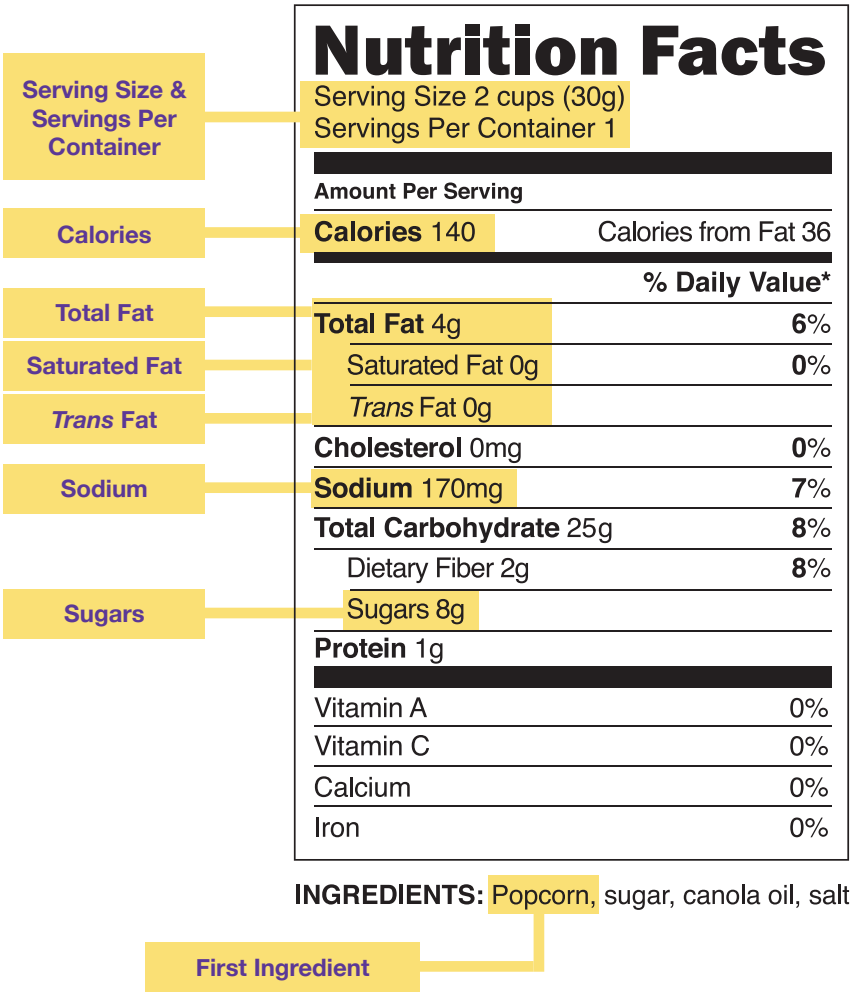
What is an entrée?

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

- meat/meat alternate + whole grain-rich food;
- vegetable + meat/meat alternate;
- fruit + meat/meat alternate;
- meat/meat alternate alone, except for meat snacks (e.g., beef jerky), yogurt, 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.

Finding Information on the Nutrition Facts Panel and Ingredients List

Enter this information into the Smart Snacks Product Calculator (**https://foodplanner.healthiergeneration.org/calculator**) to see if your snack meets the standards.



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. For additional information, refer to the Smart Snacks Summary Chart at **http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/allfoods_summarychart.pdf**.

Food	Smart Snacks Standards Exemptions
Fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables, with no added ingredients 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, with or without carbonation

No Limit

Milk

Unflavored low-fat, unflavored fat-free, or flavored fat-free milk; milk alternatives as permitted by the National School Lunch Program/School Breakfast Program

Elementary School

Middle School

High School

Juice

100% fruit or vegetable juice, with or without carbonation

Elementary School

Middle School

High School

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

"Lower Calorie" Maximum 40 calories/8 fl oz. Maximum 60 calories/12 fl oz. (Equivalent to 5 calories per fluid ounce).

"No Calorie" Less than 5 calories/8 fl oz. Maximum 10 calories/20 fl oz.

Do you have questions about Smart Snacks Standards? Get more information by reviewing the *Smart Snacks in School: Questions and Answers* (**http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP23-2014os.pdf**) or contact your State agency (**http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/school-meals-contacts**).

How do the Smart Snacks Standards affect school fundraisers?

1. 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.

2. Fundraising activities that occur during nonschool hours, on weekends, or at off-campus events are not limited under the Federal policy.

3. Fundraisers selling foods that are intended to be consumed outside the school day are not limited under the Federal policy.

4. Some States 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

http://teamnutrition.usda.gov
Access free nutrition education resources like this Guide to Smart Snacks in School handout.

Tools for Schools

http://www.fns.usda.gov/healthierschoolday/tools-schools-focusing-smart-snacks
Read more about Smart Snacks regulations and policies and get answers to common questions.

Healthy Meals Resource System: Healthy Fundraising

http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/local-wellness-policy-resources/wellness-policy-elements/healthy-fundraising
Get ideas for healthier fundraising activities.

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