



Smart Snacks in School

Since 2014, the US Department of Agriculture's [Smart Snacks in School rules](#) have required all foods and beverages sold separate from school meals to meet new nutrition standards. Often referred to as “**competitive foods**,” because they are sold in competition to the complete reimbursable school meal, these items include entrees, sides, snacks or drinks sold during the school day in vending machines, snack bars and a la carte lines. The rules do not apply to food and beverages brought from home or sold during non-school hours, weekends or at off-campus events (e.g. concessions during sporting events and school plays).

Under Smart Snacks in Schools, competitive foods must:

- Be a “whole grain-rich” grain product; 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; or
- Contain 10% of the Daily Value (DV) of one of the nutrients of public health concern in the *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (calcium, potassium, vitamin D, or dietary fiber).

Foods must also meet several nutrient requirements:

Calorie limits:

Snack items: ≤ 200 calories
Entrée items: ≤ 350 calories

Sodium limits:

Snack items: ≤ 200 mg
Entrée items: ≤ 480 mg

Fat limits:

Total fat: ≤ 35% of calories
Saturated fat: < 10% of calories
Trans fat: zero grams

Sugar limit:

≤ 35% of weight from total sugars in foods

Nutrition Standards for Beverages:

All schools may sell:

- Plain water (with or without carbonation), no portion limit
- Unflavored or flavored fat-free or low-fat milk and milk alternatives (e.g. soy milk, lactose-free milk)
- 100% fruit or vegetable juice and
- 100% fruit or vegetable juice diluted with water (with or without carbonation), and no added sweeteners.

Elementary schools may sell up to 8-ounce portions, middle/high schools up to 12-ounces of milk and juice. Beginning July 2025, elementary school flavored milk options must contain ≤ 10 g of added sugar per 8-ounces, while middle and high school options must contain ≤ 15 g of added sugar per 12-ounces.

High schools may sell additional “no calorie” and “lower calorie” beverage options, including caffeinated beverages. Offerings may include no more than 20-ounce portions of calorie-free, flavored water (with or without carbonation) and other flavored and/or carbonated beverages that contain < 5 calories per 8 fluid ounces or ≤ 10 calories per 20 fluid ounces. High schools may also offer no more than 12-ounce portions of beverages with ≤ 40 calories per 8 ounces, or ≤ 60 calories per 12 ounces.

Fundraisers: States may establish exemptions for items sold at infrequent fundraisers or bake sales.

Local Flexibility: States and/or local schools have the flexibility to maintain or establish their own more stringent standards for competitive foods, if they meet the minimum federal standards.