

Cool Lunch Ideas for the Balanced School Day

Packing meals for the balanced school day can be an easy and fun task. Meals can be balanced in a variety of ways. You can organize your child's meals for their school breaks according to any of the three examples:

	Example One	Example Two	Example Three
Break One	Snacks	½ of lunch + snack	Breakfast
Break Two	Lunch	½ of lunch + snack	Lunch

Each child has his or her own unique eating habits, likes, dislikes and appetite. Talk with your child to see what approach they would prefer when planning their meals for school. If your child does not eat breakfast before school, this can be a time to add breakfast into their daily routine.

Try to include **foods from AT LEAST three of the four food groups** from *Canada's Food Guide* for each break. The four food groups are:

- Vegetables and Fruit
- Grain Products
- Milk and Alternatives
- Meat and Alternatives



Easy tips to help pack school meals your child will eat:

Label and separate

- Label each bag: Break One, Break Two¹ OR
- Put dividers in the lunch bag so the child eats everything above the cardboard in the first break and then eats the rest at the second break¹

Planning and preparing lunch

- Send leftovers, like cold pizza, stew, macaroni and cheese or soup in a thermos for one lunch break. Use the other break for snacks
- When making weekend meals, make extra and freeze leftovers in individual portion sizes
- Bake muffins, banana bread or cookies on the weekend to use during the week

¹ Toronto Star, August 30, 2003

Cool Lunch Ideas for the Balanced School Day (cont'd)

Keeping foods hot and cold

- To keep foods hot, use an insulated bottle or thermos. First, fill the bottle with boiling water and let it stand for a few minutes. Then empty the bottle and fill it with steaming hot food
- To keep food cold, use an insulated lunch bag and pack a frozen drink that will thaw by lunch, or use a freezer pack
- Great food items to freeze are bottled water, juice boxes, reusable beverage containers or yogurt

Healthy drinks for a healthier lunch

- Add two beverages. Choose from the following beverages most of the time: 100% unsweetened fruit juices, white or chocolate milk (2% MF or less), fortified soy beverage or water
- On pizza and sub days, make sure your child has either milk or juice to drink along with his or her sub or pizza. Send healthy snacks for the other break

Involve your child in planning and preparing his or her lunch. This could be done the night before.

Below are nutritious menu ideas for your child's breaks. Mix and match menus or substitute with food items your child prefers. You can add more food or reduce portions depending on how much they eat. Use *Canada's Food Guide* for examples of serving sizes.

MONDAY			
Break One		Break Two	
Oatmeal raisin muffin	Grain Products: 1	Sliced turkey on whole wheat bread or bagel	Grain Products: 2 Meat and Alternatives: 1
Banana	Vegetables and Fruit: 1	100% fruit juice Baby carrots	Vegetables and Fruit: 2
Milk	Milk and Alternatives: 1	Milk pudding cup	Milk and Alternatives: ½

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TUESDAY			
Break One		Break Two	
Container with whole grain cereal	Grain Products: 1	1 whole wheat tortilla or pita with salsa and cheese	Grain Products: 2
Milk	Milk and Alternatives: 1	Milk	Milk and Alternatives: 2
Banana	Vegetables and Fruit: 1	Cucumber slices	Vegetables and Fruit: 2
Handful of nuts or seeds	Meat and Alternatives: 1/2	Chickpeas	Meat and Alternatives: 1/2
WEDNESDAY			
Break One		Break Two	
Cheese	Milk and Alternatives: 1	Chicken fingers and plum sauce	Meat and Alternatives: 1
Whole wheat crackers	Grain Products: 1	Breadsticks Low-fat fruit cereal bar	Grain Products: 2
Grapes 100% fruit juice	Vegetables and Fruit: 2	Salad with dressing	Vegetables and Fruit: 1
		Fortified soy beverage	Milk and Alternatives: 1
THURSDAY			
Break One		Break Two	
1 to 2 cold waffles Applesauce	Grain Products: 1-2 Vegetables and Fruit: 1	Homemade soup (with lean meat, vegetables)	Meat and Alternatives: 1/2 Vegetables and Fruit: 2
Vanilla yogurt	Milk and Alternatives: 1	Pear	
Water		Whole wheat crackers	Grain Products: 1
		Chocolate milk	Milk and Alternatives: 1
FRIDAY			
Break One		Break Two	
1 rolled roti or chapati filled with vegetables & hummus; cut in half	Grain Products: 1 Vegetables and Fruit: 1/2 Meat and Alternatives: 1/2	Other half of roti or chapati Fig bars Strawberries	Grain Products: 2 Meat and Alternatives: 1/2 Vegetables and Fruit: 1/2
100% fruit juice	Vegetables and Fruit: 1	Yogurt drink	Milk and Alternatives: 1
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