

# Food for a Balanced School Day

Is your child in a school that follows the Balanced School Day schedule? Or is your child's school thinking of making the switch? Since the Balanced School Day involves two nutrition breaks, you might have to plan your child's snacks and lunches more carefully. Here are some tips and meal ideas to get you started.

## What is the Balanced School Day?

The Balanced School Day is a new way of scheduling class time and break time that has been introduced in some Ontario schools.

The traditional school schedule usually includes recess breaks in the morning and in the afternoon, and one hour for lunch at noon.

The Balanced School Day is different because it includes two breaks that are each 40-45 minutes long, with one break in the morning and one in the afternoon. There is no one hour break for lunch. Instead, these two breaks include time for eating and time for physical activity, usually about 20 - 25 minutes for each.

## The benefits of the Balanced School Day System

Here are some potential benefits to having a Balanced School Day system:

### Improved concentration:

Because students are eating later in the day, they are less likely to run out of energy by the end of the school day. This means they are better able to focus and concentrate on their school work for the full day.

### More time to eat:

Instead of rushing to consume snacks at recess, students have more time to just sit and eat. Students

that are nutritionally satisfied are more likely to learn better throughout the day.

**Supervised eating time:**

Most students will be taking their nutrition break in the classroom, which gives the teacher time to talk to students about nutrition and healthy eating. For students with food allergies, such as nuts, eating in the classroom means the teacher can be more aware of what students are bringing and watch out for unsafe foods.

**More time for activity:**

A Balanced School Day provides 20-25 minutes of uninterrupted time for physical activity. Traditional recess breaks are not always long enough for playtime since the kids often use that time to get dressed for outside (especially in winter) and to take a washroom break.

**More time for learning:**

A Balanced School Day schedule provides for blocks of focused learning time and less interruptions throughout the day.

## Making the Balanced School Day work for your family

It may take some getting used to having lunches and snacks spread out over two nutrition breaks. This is a good chance to talk to your kids about the types of lunches and snacks they'd like to get while at school. You can also find out when they like to eat certain foods. Do they like to eat more in the morning or do they get very hungry in the afternoon?

Here are a few different ways to divide up the food throughout the day.

	Option #1	Option #2	Option #3
Nutrition Break #1	Snack	Lunch	½ Lunch + Snack
Nutrition Break #2	Lunch	Snack	½ Lunch + Snack

Involve your kids in the process! Kids can help make their own lunches and snacks. Little kids can put food into containers, while older kids can help make sandwiches. Try to make lunches the night before

so that mornings are a little less busy.

## Some healthy school lunch making tips:

If you're worried that your children will eat all their food at the first break and have nothing for the rest of the day – help them to figure out what to eat and when. You can:

1. Pack the food for each nutrition break in separate containers and label them, “break one” and “break two”.
2. Use dividers in their lunch box. Use a piece of cardboard to divide up the food. Everything above the cardboard gets eaten at the first break. The rest of the food gets eaten at the second break.

Pack food that includes at least three of the four food groups from [Canada's Food Guide](#). Check out these sample meals below for some ideas. You may also find this chart helpful.

Keep foods at a safe temperature. Use a thermos for hot foods like soup, stew and macaroni and cheese. Place a frozen juice box or an ice pack in the lunch bag to help keep other foods cold. And by the time the juice box melts it will be ready to drink!

For more lunch making tips: [Packing Healthy School Lunches and Snacks FAQ](#)

## A week's worth of school meal ideas

Monday	
Break One	Break Two
Hot cereal or congee in a thermos	Tuna sandwich on whole grain bread
Blueberries	Steamed soybeans (edamame)
Milk	100% fruit juice

Tuesday	

Break One	Break Two
Bran muffin	Leftover pasta or stir fry in a thermos
Sunflower seeds	Sliced bell pepper strips with hummus for dipping
Chocolate milk	Cottage cheese cup

Wednesday	
Break One	Break Two
Whole grain crackers	Tortilla rolled with black beans and salsa
Cheese string	Celery and cucumber sticks
<a href="#">Fruit smoothie</a>	Milk pudding cup

Thursday	
Break One	Break Two
English muffin with cheddar cheese	Hard boiled egg
Apple slices	Rice cakes with hummus
<a href="#">Hot chocolate</a> in a thermos	Fruit yogurt

Friday	

Break One	Break Two
<p><a href="#">Whole wheat scone</a> with apple butter</p> <p>Banana</p> <p>Fortified soy beverage</p>	<p>Leftover dahl or baked beans in a thermos</p> <p>Cherry tomatoes</p> <p>100% fruit juice</p>

For more information on [school health](#) and healthy lunches:

[Packing healthy school lunches and snacks FAQ](#)

[Eating right at school](#)

[Simple lunch solutions](#)

[Make a balanced breakfast a habit in your home](#)