

# PACKED LUNCH GUIDANCE





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This resource has been developed for easy, healthy and budget-friendly packed lunch inspiration. You will find packed lunch recipe ideas, top tips, and links to other useful sites and resources. Your school or setting can share the recipe ideas in this guidance with families.

**Did you know...**  
Food for Life schools can access Packed Lunch Training! If you would like to find out more, speak to your Local Programme Manager/Officer.

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# PORTION SIZES

The following photos provide a variety of fruit and veg in portion sizes suitable for primary aged children.

To keep it simple: a portion of fruit or veg is roughly the size of a child's hand. All children are different in size so go by their palm size as a 'handful'. One handful is one portion.

For nursery age or secondary aged children, you can follow the rule that one handful is one portion.

Aim to have at least three portions of fruit or veg in your child's packed lunch, with a 'rainbow' of foods.



# 1. YUMMY WRAPS!

What's included in today's packed lunch?  
• Cheese salad wraps • Pepper sticks • Grapes

**TOP TIP!**  
Fruit and veg snacks are healthy and contribute towards your child's 5-a-day. See how many your child can eat in a week to 'eat the rainbow'.

**TOP TIP!**  
These wraps are a mix of white and wholegrain flours, which are better for you and taste great. Wholegrain foods provide a good source of energy for growing children and fill up tummies.



**TOP TIP!**  
These wraps include cheese as a vegetarian option, but you could use meat, fish or egg in wraps or sandwiches. You can find low fat hard and soft cheeses in supermarkets, too.

**TOP TIP!**  
You can pop an icepack in your child's lunchbox to keep items fresher for longer.

# 2. LOVELY LEFTOVERS!

What's included in today's packed lunch?  
• Tuna sweetcorn pasta • Carrot sticks • Grapes and blueberries

**TOP TIP!**  
Using fruit that is UK grown and in season in your packed lunches will help to reduce air miles and can help local producers to thrive – e.g. Blueberries are in season in the UK between June and September.

**TOP TIP!**  
Wholewheat pasta keeps tummies fuller for longer.



**TOP TIP!**  
Pasta is such a versatile lunchbox ingredient. Using up leftovers in lunchboxes provides a tasty option, whilst reducing food waste. Try adding proteins such as chicken, ham, egg or cheese to pasta, or yummy sauces with hidden veg. You could even add kidney beans or butter beans.

**TOP TIP!**  
Salad and vegetables provide healthy, tasty and budget-friendly snacks for your child. 'Wonky' veg or packs of veg are cheaper than pre-cut sticks. Look out for special offers in the supermarket, local market or at the greengrocer.

**TOP TIP!**  
No need for fancy Tupperware, old takeaway boxes can work just as well! Eating leftovers is not only budget-friendly, it is a great way to support the planet too – we waste 40% of our food in the UK.

# 3. TASTY CHAPATTI!

What's included in today's packed lunch?

- Chapatti
- Raita (made with low-fat plain yogurt, garlic, mint, cucumber and coriander)
- Cucumber slices
- Tomatoes

## TOP TIP!

Using small pots instead of cling film or other single-use packaging reduces waste and is better for the environment.

## TOP TIP!

If you don't have chapattis, a wholegrain pitta would be delicious too.



## TOP TIP!

Use seasonal vegetables, these are often cheaper to buy and haven't travelled as far. Try including carrot sticks in the autumn term and peppers and cucumber from June to September.

## TOP TIP!

Raita is great to add to a lunchbox as a leftover too.

# 4. SCRUMPTIOUS SANDWICHES!

What's included in today's packed lunch?

- Ham salad sandwich
- Sliced cucumber and carrot
- A selection of fruit

## TOP TIP!

Why not get your child involved in making their packed lunch? They are more likely to eat and enjoy their lunch if they help to make it.



## TOP TIP!

Run out of fresh fruit? You can use tinned fruit in a small pot instead! Tinned fruit in fruit juice, not syrup, is a great addition.

## TOP TIP!

Add lettuce, cucumber, peppers or any crunchy veg to a sandwich or roll to make it more interesting for children, and healthier too!

## TOP TIP!

If your child does not like wholegrain bread, try making a sandwich from one slice of white bread and one slice of wholegrain bread.

## TOP TIP!

Try keeping a variety of bread, pittas or wraps in the freezer so you can vary each week's options and reduce food waste.

# 5. CRACKING CRACKERS AND CHEESE!

What's included in today's packed lunch?

- Crackers and cheese
- Tomatoes, cucumber and grapes
- Malt loaf

**TOP TIP!**  
Cheese and crackers make an interesting packed lunch for children, especially paired with fruit and veg for their own mini cheeseboard.



**TOP TIP!**  
Treats don't have to be food! Why not add a note to your child's lunch box to make them smile?

**TOP TIP!**  
If you are including a treat in your child's packed lunch, once a week is recommended. Examples can include: a slice of malt loaf or banana bread, a teacake, a scone, or a flapjack.

**TOP TIP!**  
Remember to chop up fruit and veg such as grapes or tomatoes for smaller children.

# BUILD YOUR OWN MIX AND MATCH PACKED LUNCH

## THINGS TO FILL YOU UP

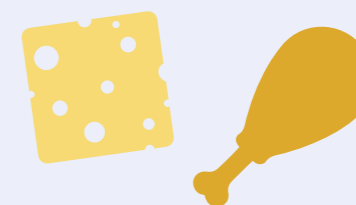
Bread, wraps, chapattis, fufu, pasta, noodles, pitta, cassava, potatoes, crackers, breadsticks, cous cous, rice, roti.



**TOP TIP**  
Choose wholegrain where you can.

## THINGS TO KEEP YOU FULLER FOR LONGER

Chicken, cheese, fish, hummus, soy chunks, turkey, lentils.



**TOP TIP**  
Choose lower-fat fillings like lean meat or reduced fat cheese.

## VEG TO ENERGISE YOU

Halved cherry tomatoes, carrot, celery, cucumber, peppers, sugar snap peas.



**TOP TIP**  
Adding a small pot of reduced-fat hummus or other dip can help children to eat vegetables.

## FRUIT TO REFRESH YOU

Satsumas, apple slices, pineapple, halved grapes, berries, melon.



**TOP TIP**  
Add a squeeze of lemon juice to stop sliced fruit going brown.

## TREATS TO LOOK FORWARD TO

Malt loaf, teacakes and fruit bread.



**TOP TIP**  
Try to choose low plastic items, reusable items, or recyclable packaging.

## DRINKS TO HYDRATE YOU

Water and milk.



**TOP TIP**  
Flavour water with fresh slices of fruit. You can also use a frozen water bottle to keep food cool and as a refreshing drink later in the day!

# POSITIVE DINING TOP TIPS

Here are some suggestions for your school or setting to support healthy packed lunches and a positive lunchtime environment:

- Allow pupils eating packed lunches and pupils eating school dinners to sit together.
- Trial a plate system where the packed lunch pupils queue along the servery and collect a plate for their packed lunch. This reduces the status associated with having the latest character lunch box and means that lunch boxes can easily be monitored.
- Allow packed lunch pupils to have drinking water from cups in the dining hall. This can dramatically reduce the number of sugary drinks coming into school.
- Allow pupils enough time to eat their packed lunch.
- Rewards for healthy lunches such as certificates or stickers can work really well, alongside praise from a teacher or midday supervisor if a pupil has a healthy lunch or tries something new for the first time.



## A Note on School Meal Uptake

School meals provide a balanced and healthy option for pupils and keep tummies fuller for longer. Alongside promoting healthy packed lunches in school, have you thought about increasing your school meal numbers as part of your whole-school approach to good food? Some things to think about...

- Are pupils who are entitled to free school meals taking their entitlement?
- Do the pupils with packed lunches sit with pupils eating school dinners so they can see what's on the menu?
- Are pupils entitled to opt-in for a school dinner on special theme days and festivals?
- Do you cater for the dietary needs of the school population?
- Do you invite parents and carers into school so they can enjoy your school meals with the pupils?



# DEVELOPING A PACKED LUNCH POLICY AND FURTHER RESOURCES

Food for Life have developed a Packed Lunch Policy template to help you shape your own Packed Lunch Policy. It can be amended and tailored to your school's needs as appropriate. Visit the Food for Life website to download your copy of the template:

## **Packed Lunches - Food for Life**

### **FURTHER RESOURCES:**

- Food for Life Packed Lunch Audit Tool (a template your School Nutrition Action Group can use to audit packed lunches):  
**Packed Lunches - Food for Life**
- Healthy packed lunch ideas: Lunchbox ideas and recipes –  
**Healthier Families - NHS (www.nhs.uk)**
- School Food Standards: School food standards: **resources for schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)**
- School Food Standards: **School food standards - School Food Plan**
- The Eatwell Guide: **The Eatwell Guide - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)**
- The African and Caribbean Eatwell Guide: **The African and Caribbean Eatwell Guide**
- Information about the South Asian Eatwell Guide:  
**The South Asian Eatwell Guide**
- MyNutriWeb and accompanying PDF: **Eat Well Guide (mynutriweb.com)**
- First Steps Nutrition for under 5-year-olds: **First Steps Nutrition Trust**

#### **TOP TIP**

If your packed lunch policy is co-designed by pupils or your School Nutrition Action Group, pupils will be more engaged and the policy is likely to be more effective.

For more information about Food for Life or to enrol your setting, please visit

**[www.foodforlife.org.uk](http://www.foodforlife.org.uk)**

  **@SAFoodforLife**

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