



What is a Free/Reduced Meal?

My Student Qualifies Free/Reduced Meals. What is considered a “qualifying” meal vs a la carte? What is not considered Free/Reduced?

* A reimbursable meal is mandated by USDA and every school participating in the National School Lunch and/or Breakfast Program must offer certain components to students every day. TCSD1 operates a food service program as **Offer vs Serve (OVS)**. This allows students choice, but also means that they may not be selecting a compliant or qualifying meal. Taking a compliant or qualifying meal is important, especially when you have qualified for Free and Reduced meals to ensure you are not incurring additional meal costs.

Goals of OVS

- Reduce food waste
- Allow students to choose the foods that they want to eat

Rules of OVS

- OVS is required for 9-12 students at lunch
- Optional (but encouraged) for K-8 at lunch and K-12 at breakfast.
- OVS signage must clearly indicate what constitutes a qualifying free or reduced reimbursable meal. It must also state that 1/2 cup of fruit or vegetable is required as part of a reimbursable meal. Signage is not required for field trips, breakfast in the classroom, or other venues where signage may be problematic.
- At the point of service, cashiers are trained and informed on what qualifies as a free or reduced meal. This includes understanding foods and/or beverages that are a la carte and/or extras, which do not qualify under OVS. Because cashiers do not know which students are on full pay or free/reduced they are unable to advise students if they have not selected a free/reduced meal which can lead to students incurring charges if they have not selected a qualifying meal or if they selected items considered, a la cart options.

Below are the component requirements set by USDA based on what qualifies as a Free/Reduced Meal for Offer vs Serve

Requirements	Breakfast	Lunch
What Schools must Offer	At least four food items from three food components (grain, fruit, fluid milk)	All five food components (grain, meat/meat alternate, fruit, vegetable, fluid milk)
What students must select	At least 3 food items, one of which must be 1/2 cup of fruit or vegetable	At least 3 different food components, one of which must be 1/2 cup of fruit or vegetable

If a student does not select the minimum requirements of what qualifies as a qualified meal from the chart above, the items have to be charged at **a la carte** pricing.

**** Students must select a full meal this year if their account is negative. Students with negative balances are allowed one round of seconds after their first time through the line which must be a full meal.**

A LA CARTE

Definition of **Seconds**-When a student comes through the line a second time and selects a second full plate of food (multiple components).

Definition of **Single Entree** -When a student comes selects just the entree and nothing else. Ex. slice of pizza, burger, sandwich etc.

All A la Carte pricing the TCSD [charge policy](#).

Other A La Carte AKA-Snacks

All other items sold A la Carte are considered Snacks by TCSD1 and can only be selected and purchased on student accounts with a positive meal balance. We will not deny students any food deemed nutritional regardless of their meal balance but do not consider snacks Aka chips, crackers, granola bars, or coca cola beverages a source of nutrition and do require a positive meal balance to select such items.

Offer vs Serve Breakfast Component Poster



Offer Vs Serve Lunch Component Poster



We leave the choice to parents/guardians and their students on what is selected but do our best to promote qualified meals through signage and fruit offerings at the registers. We can shutdown or place limits on student accounts as sometimes requested if parents/guardians prefer to do so.

Any questions on the information provided, please contact Danny Reed, Food Service Director at dreed@tcsd.org.

Non-Discrimination Statement:

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-

3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

2. fax:

(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.