

SCHOOL LUNCH PLANNING PACKET

DON'T LET LUNCHES STRESS YOU OR YOUR KIDS



PLANSIMPLE
Meals

KIDS' LUNCH

The goal for any kid's lunch is to keep it easy to eat and full of nutritious food that helps them be present and productive during school day. I find the simpler and more repetitive lunch is, the more successful my kids feel in general.

For children, lunch is a time to learn how to eat a meal away from parents. For smaller children, this starts with simple things like understanding the order in which to eat different foods, and how to open containers. For older children, this is about how to feel awesome about their homemade meal when others may be eating highly-processed foods.

Time is also a big factor at all ages. Lunch is an opportunity to be social and schools generally don't give it enough time, so navigating how to sit and get to eating and chewing is big! The more you can preview and talk through lunch at home, the more comfortable your kids will become.

And do remember it is a learning process. Don't punish uneaten lunches. Use them as an opportunity to understand what is going on and empower your child to do it differently next time, or for you to pack it differently. (Uneaten lunches do make a good snack.)

HOW YOU PACK LUNCH CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Food can change over the course of the three or four hours it sits in a lunch box! If you are in doubt, test on weekends, and try it yourself.

I love post-it notes for lunch box reminders and notes. You can write a love note or explain which container to eat from first.

For older children, 7+, add age-appropriate chores and get support with packing lunch.

REALLY UNDERSTAND WHAT IS BEING SERVED AT SCHOOL.

Remember, lunch is a time to really step into healthy eating, rather than to slip into what's easy or convenient.

Always feel OK replacing a planned lunch that is not made yet with good leftovers that the kids loved from the night before.

SCHOOL

LUNCH CHECKLIST

What do you need to do to make school lunches successful for your child? Highlight the items that resonate and take action towards them this week.

- ☐ **Get all the supplies – lunch boxes and containers that will make your child successful eating lunch at school.**
 - ☐ **Get rid of containers that do not serve you, so they are not filling drawers.**
 - ☐ **Do the worksheet to generate food ideas.**
 - ☐ **Create a rhythm for lunches, dip day, pasta day, leftover day etc.**
 - ☐ **Send a note with your child – explaining the food, or just saying “I love you.”**
 - ☐ **Practice eating lunch on the weekends.**
 - ☐ **Streamline your morning ritual to make lunch making feel easier.**
 - ☐ **Make lunch-worthy sweet treats on the weekend.**
 - ☐ **Move lunch forward before you go to bed.**
 - ☐ **Mentor older kids to make their own healthy lunch.**
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GOOD PRODUCTS DO HELP KIDS EAT AT SCHOOL!



Kids Konserve nested stainless containers are awesome for snacks.



We love Klean Kanteen for water and smoothies. The insulated model keeps smoothies cool, and we try to always cultivate the habit of drinking water — my kids sleep with their bottles!



LunchBots also makes this great divided container that we use for snacks that need compartments — veggies, crackers and hummus or a few kinds of fruit.



We love EasyLunchBoxes.com for divided containers and lunch sacks.



I love LunchBots thermos for warm meals because of its wide mouth. Remember to pour warm water into a thermos to heat before adding hot food.



LUNCH RHYTHM

DIP DAY

Dip is a great item to build lunch around.

Think bigger than hummus. If you love hummus, consider making it from scratch. Really any bean, and many seeds and nuts, make great dips when blended in a food processor. If you follow the formula on this page and mix those with herbs, citrus and a little bit of salt, you'll end up with a huge variety of dips made out of all types of different things. Then you can dip vegetables into them, or healthy crackers. You can even steam the vegetables a little bit and you have a healthy and easy lunch that travels well and stays fresh.

CUT A VARIETY OF COLORFUL VEGGIES INTO DIPPABLE FINGER FOOD SHAPES FOR KIDS.

Matchsticks or coins work great. Veggie ideas include cucumber, celery, broccoli, carrots, baby tomatoes, bell peppers, radishes, green beans, snap peas, or cauliflower.

If your kids have been doing carrots and cucumbers for a while, see if you can add a new veggie to the mix. If you are transitioning from lots of crackers and not many veggies, start with carrots and cucumbers, which are generally kid-approved.

You could also quickly steam broccoli, cauliflower or green beans, which makes them easier to chew.

PACK VEGGIES AND CRACKERS ALONG WITH DIP IN A BENTO-STYLE LUNCH CONTAINER.

We love Easy Lunchboxes as pictured. Pair with fruit and one of the sweet treats from Sunday – if there are any left!

Mary's Gone Crackers are one of our favorite crackers, and kids also love brown rice crackers, rice cakes, sweet potato chips, or gluten-free bread for dipping.

MAKE A KID-APPROVED DIP FROM THE FOLLOWING PAGES, OR BUY ONE FROM THE STORE.

Dip is really easy to make — it is almost like a smoothie and can be made on a Sunday for sure.

Read labels to make sure there are no weird extra ingredients if you go the store route.



LUNCH RHYTHM

UNSANDWICH DAY

I have nothing against a sandwich (well except all the bread we eat!) but I feel like all too often we default to meat and bread or PB&J. On sandwich day we playfully make sandwiches more interesting and nutritious. Sautéed or grilled veggies in a sandwich or almond butter and honey with fruit — eliminating sandwich meat and sugar. Or move beyond bread, which I have found very freeing when trying to be gluten-free.

THINK BEYOND THE AVERAGE DELI SANDWICH

Sliced red pepper, avocado and
Cheeze

Hummus, grilled zucchini

Cream Cheeze and cucumber

Avocado, raw veggies, and sea
salt (or just avocado)

Pesto, tomato and lettuce

Almond butter, fruit and honey

THINK BEYOND BREAD

Sure you can find gluten-free sliced
bread, but think of all the other
options too.

Hummus and seasonal veggies
wrapped in
collard leaves

Bean or nut salads wrapped in
lettuce leaves

Corn Tacos

Nori

Brown Rice Tortillas

WHAT TO SEND WITH A SANDWICH

Sliced Veggie Sticks — cucumber,
celery, carrots, radishes.

Fresh fruit — pick two fruits that are
different colors.

Nuts

A smoothie

NOTES ON SANDWICHES

It helps to toast bread in the morning if sandwich is being eaten 3 hours later. **Pay attention to what you put next to the bread.** Cucumber or tomato directly against bread leads to soggy bread, where avocado or a “cheeze” spread fares fine.

Children could put together the sandwich themselves at school if all your ingredients seem soggy! Just remember to show them how and make sure it is possible in the time allotted.

SCHOOL LUNCH FORMULA

Kids' lunches can be way more repetitive than other meals. If the goal is to get healthy food into your child so he or she can thrive in school, then the goal is to provide him or her with good food they will actually eat. If dips always disappear, pack dips three days a week. If soup is a big hit in cold months, then make two kinds of soup each week and alternate them. You can always get creative with the extras — different chopped fruits, different types of veggies, muffins, homemade cookies, or a granola bar.

CRAFTING SCHOOL LUNCHES

BRAINSTORM 5 MAIN LUNCH ATTRACTIONS THAT YOUR CHILD WILL EAT. (DIP, SANDWICH, PASTA, SOUP ETC.)
MAKE SURE IT IS ITEMS THAT WILL PACK WELL, AND JUST PICK 5, EVEN THOUGH YOU MAY THINK OF 20.

1

2

3

4

5

**NOW THINK OF THE LITTLE THINGS THAT YOUR CHILD LOVES AND WILL SUPPORT YOUR WELLNES GOALS.
FILL IN EACH COLUMN.**

FRUIT

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

VEGGIES

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

TREATS

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

MIX AND MATCH

CREATE 20 DIFFERENT LUNCHES BASED ON THE PRIOR PAGE. FILL IN EACH BOX WITH A MAIN ATTRACTION AND TWO SUPPORTS. IT IS FAIR GAME TO CHANGE PIECES OF THE MAIN ATTRACTION, IN OTHER WORDS, PASTA WITH RED SAUCE, PASTA WITH PESTO, OR PASTA WITH VEGIIES, IF YOU WROTE DOWN PASTA.
