

Beverages Approved by Nutrition Services for Schools

In US schools, approved beverages under USDA Smart Snacks include:

- **water**
- **milk (low-fat/fat-free, flavored/unflavored)**
- **100% fruit/vegetable juice** (diluted or full-strength, no added sweeteners)

Specific portion are limited by grade level (e.g., 8oz for elementary, 12oz for middle/high).

High schools get extra options: calorie-free flavored drinks or low-calorie drinks (≤ 40 cal/8oz) in larger sizes (up to 20oz), plus < 5 calorie drinks (≤ 10 cal/20oz).

Added sugar limits for flavored milk apply starting 2025-26

Water:

Plain (still or carbonated)



Milk:

Unflavored low-fat; flavored or unflavored fat-free (dairy or permitted alternatives)



Juice:

100% fruit/vegetable juice, or diluted with water (no added sweeteners)



Portion Sizes

- **Elementary:** Up to 8oz for milk/juice.
- **Middle & High Schools:** Up to 12oz for milk/juice.
- **Water:** No size limit.

High School Specific Options (Additional)

- **Calorie-Free:** Flavored waters, other <5 cal/8oz (≤ 10 cal/20oz) drinks in up to 20oz portions.
- **Lower-Calorie:** Drinks ≤ 40 cal/8oz (≤ 60 cal/12oz) in up to 12oz portions.

Key Rules & Updates

- **Smart Snacks:** These rules apply to "competitive foods" sold outside of regular meals (vending, a la carte).
- **Added Sugars:** By the 2025-26 school year, flavored milk must meet limits on added sugars (aiming for ≤ 10 g per 8oz).
- **Caffeine:** Generally limited to trace amounts, with stricter rules for high schools (e.g., only after school).