Last checked 2026-11-20 · Updated November 20, 2026

Lunchbox packing checklist

QUICK ANSWER

Prepare the night before, pack right before you leave, and use **at least two cold sources** (USDA).

FOOD SAFETY

USDA FSIS: use at least two cold sources, and throw away perishable food left out more than 2 hours (1 hour above 90 °F). **When in doubt, throw it out.**

PACKING FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Common choking hazards for children under 4 include whole grapes, hot dogs, nuts, popcorn and hard candy; cut or skip them (AAP).

Before you pack

- [ ] Wash hands and the lunch box
- [ ] Prepare food the night before and chill it
- [ ] Pack right before leaving the house

Keep it cold

- [ ] Insulated lunch bag or box
- [ ] At least two cold sources, such as ice packs or a frozen drink
- [ ] Perishables are thrown away after 2 hours out of the fridge (1 hour above 90 °F)

In the box

- [ ] Main (sandwich, wrap or leftovers)
- [ ] Fruit or vegetables, cut to a safe size for the child's age
- [ ] Snack
- [ ] Drink
- [ ] Napkin and utensils

Last checked 2026-11-20. Sources: USDA FSIS, Keeping Bag Lunches Safe; USDA FSIS, The Danger Zone; AAP HealthyChildren.org, Choking Prevention.

From MunchCooking, https://munchcooking.com/downloads/lunchbox-packing-checklist/