

Meal-Assembly Worksheet

Build one meal at a time, food group by food group. For each meal, write what you will use from each food group, then run through the quick checks. A meal does not need every group: the guidelines put protein foods at every meal and vegetables and fruits throughout the day. There is no calorie or serving target on this sheet.

Food groups in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030

Food group	What counts	Serving-size examples
Protein foods	Meat, poultry, eggs, seafood, beans, peas, lentils, nuts, seeds and soy	3 oz cooked meat, poultry or seafood; 1 egg; ½ cup beans, peas or lentils; 1 oz nuts or seeds; 2 tbsp nut or seed butter; 3 oz soy
Dairy	Milk, yogurt and cheese, including lactose-free products and fortified dairy alternatives	1 cup milk; ¾ cup yogurt; 1 oz cheese
Vegetables	Vegetables of all types, fresh, frozen or canned, cooked or raw	1 cup raw or cooked; 2 cups leafy greens
Fruits	Fruits of all types, fresh, frozen, canned or dried	1 cup raw; ½ cup dried
Whole grains	Whole-grain foods and products made with whole grains, such as oats, brown rice, barley, quinoa and buckwheat	½ cup cooked oats, brown rice, barley, quinoa or buckwheat; 1 slice bread; 1 tortilla
Healthy fats	Fats in whole foods such as seafood, nuts, seeds, olives and avocados, plus oils such as olive oil used in cooking	1 tsp olive oil or butter
Drink	Water (still or sparkling) or another unsweetened beverage	

Hypothetical example meal (invented to show how the rows work): Dinner

Food group	What I'll use	How I'll make it (optional)
Protein foods	Salmon fillet	Baked with lemon and dill
Dairy	Plain yogurt	Stirred with garlic as a sauce
Vegetables	Green beans and carrots	Roasted
Fruits	Sliced peaches	Fresh, after the meal
Whole grains	Brown rice	Cooked in water
Healthy fats	Olive oil	Tossed with the vegetables before roasting
Drink	Sparkling water	With a slice of lime

General education for adults, not individual nutrition advice. The calories you need depend on your age, sex, height, weight and activity. If you have a health condition or follow a diet prescribed by your health care team, use the instructions they gave you. Made by Cardio Guardian. Not a USDA or HHS product and not endorsed by either agency.

Sources: Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025–2030 and its Daily Servings guide (HHS and USDA, [realfood.gov](https://www.realfood.gov)). U.S. Food and Drug Administration, How to Understand and Use the Nutrition Facts Label. From the Cardio Guardian Editorial Team. Online version: getcardioguardian.com/nutrition/myplate-worksheets/

Meal 1

Meal: _____ Day and time: _____

Food group	What I'll use	How I'll make it (optional)
Protein foods		
Dairy		
Vegetables		
Fruits		
Whole grains		
Healthy fats		
Drink		

Quick checks

- ☐ Is there a protein food in this meal?
- ☐ Are there vegetables or fruits in this meal?
- ☐ If there is a grain, is it a whole grain?
- ☐ For packaged foods, did I check the serving size, sodium and added sugars on the Nutrition Facts label?
- ☐ Is my drink water or another unsweetened beverage?

Meal 2

Meal: _____ Day and time: _____

Food group	What I'll use	How I'll make it (optional)
Protein foods		
Dairy		
Vegetables		
Fruits		
Whole grains		
Healthy fats		
Drink		

Quick checks

- ☐ Is there a protein food in this meal?
- ☐ Are there vegetables or fruits in this meal?
- ☐ If there is a grain, is it a whole grain?
- ☐ For packaged foods, did I check the serving size, sodium and added sugars on the Nutrition Facts label?
- ☐ Is my drink water or another unsweetened beverage?