

# How much food is your family wasting?

Is your child eating all the food that you pack or buy for them at school? A new [World Wildlife Fund report](#) estimates U.S. school food waste totals 530,000 tons per year and costs as much as \$9.7 million a day to manage, which breaks down to about 39.2 pounds of food waste and 19.4 gallons of milk thrown out per school per year, based on the results from the 46-school sample across nine cities.

## How to help:

1. Investing in quality food containers that do not leak and are light and convenient to carry can help. Making extra portions of evening meals to keep in the fridge as ready-to-go packed lunches can eliminate the need to spend extra time making lunch before work or school in the morning.
2. Consult with your kids. Kids are more likely to throw away food they do not want to eat. Giving your child a voice in the lunch-packing process helps you give them food they will eat. Put in a small amount of food that you know your child will eat.
3. Address picky eating. Changing picky eating habits can be very difficult, but getting your kids to embrace more foods will reduce waste and make them happier and healthier in the long term. You want to pack food your kids will actually eat, but if you can, avoid giving in to wasteful preferences, like cutting the crusts off of sandwiches.
4. Make food fun! Adding a little bit of creativity or excitement to your kid's lunch can go a long way in making sure they eat what you've packed. Students are more likely to eat fruits and veggies when they are cut and sliced.
5. Tight time constraints in cafeterias. Although you do not have control over the length of your child's lunchtime, packing foods that are quick and easy to eat may help your child feel less rushed. Avoid meals that have a lot of components or require preparation at lunch time. Simple changes, like peeling an orange for your child before packing it, can increase the amount of food your child can eat at lunch and cut down on waste.
6. Encourage your child to bring lunch leftovers back home. You don't know if you are having an impact on food waste if your child doesn't feel empowered to be honest and ends up throwing away food at school without saying anything. If your child brings home their leftovers you can see what they are eating, and how much food is potentially going to waste.
7. Use school lunches to cut down on overall food waste at home. Consider using leftovers from previous dinners in school lunches.