

How To Make An Absolutely Fail Proof Order Form For Food Items So You Can Delegate the Task to ANYONE.

If you think that placing your Center's weekly or monthly food order is no big deal and doesn't take that much time, you are fooling yourself. Your time is precious and you need to delegate as many responsibilities as you can. Time is like money and small amounts add up! If you have already delegated this task to your assistant director or the cook, using this system also saves their time (your money) and also limits waste. True story: A cook was preparing 3 boxes of chicken nuggets each time the Center served them. There were approximately 250 nuggets in each box. After counting the nuggets and doing the math, the Director figured that they needed approximately 520 nuggets each time nuggets were on the menu. But three cases would equal 750 nuggets. Where were the other nuggets going? The cook said that she usually just left a big bowl of them in the kitchen so the staff could help themselves during mid-day breaks and then she would serve the leftovers to the after schoolers for snack. Hmmmm. If the Center can afford to do this, the Center should get credit for it in the form of a recognized perk for staff ("The Center provides lunch,"), and should also list it on the snack menu so the schooler parents and potential customers are aware of this delicious kid approved snack! ☺ And if the Center *cannot* afford this generosity, then the cook needs to be told to order two boxes from the food vendor and add one box of 20 nuggets to that month's WalMart shopping list. Do you see what this Director learned by examining just one meal on the menu? That's why this process is a good idea. Yes, it is tedious and will take you several days or longer as you work on it in spurts and wait to hear from your food vendor, etc., but it is worth it because once you've done this you are finished with it *forever*.



Step One – Make a five week menu. Label the weeks "First Monday, Second Monday, Third Monday, Fourth Monday, and Fifth Monday If Needed." This means that on any given month throughout the year, the person preparing the order looks at the calendar and counts the number of Mondays in it. That determines whether it is a four week month or a five week month. Now the menu can be easily read by *anyone* and you do not have to re-print it with actual dates. Hint: At the top of your menu make a one week breakfast or morning snack menu and at the bottom add a one week afternoon snack menu. These do not need as much variation as the lunch menu so one week is fine.

Step Two - Place another piece of paper or open another Word or Excel (I used Excel) page right next to the menu. This is your rough draft Order Page. Divide this page into 4 columns. Label the columns "Food Items", "How It Comes", "That Feeds" and "We Need."

Step Three - As you point to each menu item on the first page, use the second page to write down (list style) what you need in the first column "Food Items." For example: If your menu item is Tuna Casserole, you would write down canned tuna, mushroom soup, celery, noodles, milk, bread crumbs, etc. Don't forget things like ketchup, mustard, Ranch dressing, and saltine crackers or bread.

Step Four - Now on the Order Page and next to each item you listed in the Food Item column write down in the next column "How It Comes", e.g., box or case of 100, 48 oz. can, 10 oz. can, etc. This will take some time and looking in the pantry and freezer, asking the cook, asking your food vendor, etc. You may even have to live it for a month and gather this information after your weekly food deliveries.

Step Five - Complete the next column: "That Feeds." In other words, how many children will one can of tuna or one can of corn or one box of chicken nuggets feed? This is another tedious column because it requires a lot of research and some math. Again, you may even have to live through an entire month and actually count out servings in order to complete this part, but it is worth it because when you are done, your menu is done *forever* and *anyone* (i.e., even the least competent staff member) can place the food order for you! Hint: If you order food from a vendor, your sales rep should be able to quickly answer these questions for you. Be sure to tell him whether or not you are on a food program as that could affect serving size.

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Step Six – In the “We Need” column, item by item, you write down how many you need in order to feed the average number

of children you usually serve. For example, if there are 250 nuggets to a box (sadly, you may have to count them) and you serve one nugget per year of age for each child in a school of 150 children let’s say you’d need about 520 nuggets.

Step Seven - Repeat the entire process for your breakfast/morning snack menu and afternoon snack menu. I promise that this will go much more quickly for you!

Voila! You have now completed the hardest part of this project. Take the information and use it to write out your Food Order lists for First Monday, Second Monday, Third Monday, Fourth Monday and Fifth Monday. Be sure to put the breakfast/morning snack and afternoon snack items first on each week, then the lunch items. If yours is like most Centers, you’ll have a list for your food vendor and another list for shopping at Sam’s or WalMart. Make copies and label one of each week as the Master Copy and place the hard copies in a file. Save them on your computer, too. Now, show your cook or assistant director how to complete the forms and place that food order for you each month or each week! Don’t kid yourself, even if you only spent an hour and half making the food order each week, by delegating it you just freed a minimum of a whole extra day for yourself each month! Not to mention the money you saved by eliminating waste. Good job, Director!

Extra Hints: 1) Use your fax cover sheet to list the name of the food company, the phone number, the contact person, a place for the date the order is placed and a blank for the name of the person placing the order. You can list these on the left side of the page. On the right side list “Items to Check Each Week” such as blocks of margarine, foil, Saran Wrap, baking pans, fruit juice concentrate, etc. and blanks for the number of those that need to be ordered. **Hint # 2)** Get a cardboard box and place it somewhere out of the way in the pantry or kitchen and inside of it place the necessary items for a simple lunch meal that can be prepared by *anyone* – even you running back and forth from the office. This is your “Emergency Meal Box” for days when too many staff members are absent and someone else (like your least competent person) has to fill in for the cook. Mine contains six cans of Ravioli, three cans of corn, three cans of spinach, and three cans of applesauce. You can easily substitute this on any day you need to just be sure to inform all necessary parties such as the parents and your Food Program contact. Make a dated notation on your posted menu as well. YOU, my dear, are one smart cookie!

Figure 1: Menu sample

| | M | T | W | TH | F |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Fifth Monday, if needed | BBQ Beef on Bun TATER TOTS CINNAMON APPLES | SPAGHETTI W/ MEAT SAUCE Bik Eyed Peas APPLESAUCE | MAC & CHEESE RANCH STYLE BEANS CORN PINEAPPLE MILK | STEAK FINGERS MASHED POTATOES TURNIP GREENS CRACKERS KETCHUP & MILK | TUNA SALAD MIXED VEGETABLES MANDARIN ORANGES BREAD MILK |
| | MILK | MILK | afternoon snack | | |
| | goldfish crackers | applesauce & vanilla wafers | graham crackers | Milk & Cookies | cheese & snack crackers |

Figure 2: Order page sample

| items to check each week | order date: |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| margarine block | FAX _____ pages |
| aluminum foil | Attn: Arthur @ Sunshine Foods |
| saran wrap | fax# 555-771-2576 |
| ketchup | phone: 555-771-4086 |
| ketchup in bottles | FROM: _____ @ |
| guppies | Simply Best Child Care |
| cinnamon grahams | 5555 Main St. City, TX |
| KOOKY cookies for Thursday afternoon | phone: 555-771-0009 |
| honey grahams | |
| bulk cereal | |
| bananas | |
| vanilla wafers | |
| American cheese block | |
| fruit juice 7001023 berry | |
| fruit juice 7001018 orange | |
| fruit juice 7001017 punch | |
| saltines | |
| snack crackers | |
| pop ice | |

Figure 3: Cover Sheet sample

| week 5 | Simply Best Child Care | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| BBQ Beef (04001470 (1 tub=64oz. So order 4 if no schoolers; 5 with schoolers) | tubs | BREAKFAST ITEMS |
| hamburger buns or bread | | strawberry cereal |
| later tots | cases | pineapple |
| apple pie filling | CANS | cereal |
| apple slices | CANS | cinnamon swirl french toast 04005880 (144 per case) |
| beef crumbles | | applesauce |
| long thin spaghetti not macaroni noodles | boxes | peaches |
| spaghetti sauce | CANS | blueberry mini muffins 04048426 (240 per case) |
| black eyed peas | CANS | apple cereal bars |
| applesauce | CANS | bananas |
| EZ melt cheese | blocks | apple juice |
| macaroni noodles | | orange juice |
| Ranch Style beans | CANS | |
| corn | CANS | |
| potato bursts | cartons | |
| pineapple | CANS | |
| steak fingers | cases | |
| potato bursts | cartons | |
| turnip greens | CANS | |
| turns | CANS | |
| lettuce | | |
| salad dressing | | |
| relish | | |
| mixed vegetables | CANS | |
| mandarin oranges | CANS | |
| bread | | |