LUNCH CREW / PRINTABLE RESOURCE

Cold-lunch packing checklist

Keep this near the lunch supplies. This checklist is for cold packed lunches; hot meals need a different method.

Before packing

- [ ] Clean and dry the insulated lunch bag and containers.
- [ ] Keep perishable food refrigerated at 40°F or below until packing.
- [ ] Have at least two fully frozen cold sources ready.

When it is time to leave

- [ ] Put one cold source below and one above the perishable foods.
- [ ] Keep dry foods protected from moisture in their own containers.
- [ ] Add the drink and utensils; check that the bag closes.
- [ ] Keep the bag out of heat. Use school refrigeration when available.

After lunch

- [ ] Discard perishable leftovers when their safe temperature history is uncertain.
- [ ] Empty and clean the bag; return reusable cold packs to the freezer.

Time matters: Discard perishables left outside temperature control for more than 2 hours, or 1 hour when the surrounding temperature is above 90°F. A sealed package is not automatically shelf-stable.

Sources: USDA school-lunch guidance; FDA time and temperature guidance. Source review: October 27, 2026. This checklist does not guarantee a particular cold-holding duration.