



Food Label Quick Guide

A simple way to compare packaged foods without turning grocery shopping into a math assignment.

Start with your purpose

The 'best' choice depends on your needs, preferences, budget, allergies, culture, and the role the food will play in your meal. Use the label to make an informed comparison - not to judge a food as good or bad.

THE FIVE-STEP LABEL SCAN

Read the label in this order.

1. Check the serving size

All numbers on the label are based on the listed serving. Compare that amount with how much you expect to eat or use.

4. Look at sodium

Sodium can add up across the day. Compare the sodium in similar products, especially sauces, soups, frozen meals, snacks, and breads.

2. Notice what supports fullness

Look at protein and dietary fiber. Their importance varies by food, but they can help you compare similar choices.

5. Scan the ingredient list

Ingredients are listed by weight, from most to least. Check for allergens, ingredients that matter to you, and whether the product fits your needs.

3. Review added sugars

Total sugars include naturally occurring sugars and added sugars. The Added Sugars line tells you how much was added during processing.

Use % Daily Value as a shortcut

As a general FDA guide, 5% Daily Value or less is low and 20% or more is high. Your personal needs may be different.

Quick reminder about front-of-package claims

Words and images on the front are marketing. Turn the package around and compare the Nutrition Facts label and ingredient list when choosing between similar foods.

Compare two similar products

Pick two versions of the same type of food. Compare what matters most for your goal, then choose the option that also works for your taste and budget.

Serving size		
Protein		
Dietary fiber		
Added sugars		
Sodium		
Ingredients or allergens I noticed		
Price and servings per package		

MY DECISION

I am choosing _____
because _____.

KEEP IT PRACTICAL

- ☐ I compared similar foods.
- ☐ I checked the serving size first.
- ☐ I focused on the nutrients relevant to my goal.
- ☐ I considered taste, access, and budget too.

One question I still have:

Educational note

This guide provides general wellness education and is not individualized nutrition or medical advice. If you have a medical condition, food allergy, swallowing concern, kidney disease, diabetes, or another condition requiring a specialized eating plan, consult an appropriate licensed clinician.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES

U.S. Food and Drug Administration: How to Understand and Use the Nutrition Facts Label - [fda.gov/food/nutrition-facts-label/how-understand-and-use-nutrition-facts-label](https://www.fda.gov/food/nutrition-facts-label/how-understand-and-use-nutrition-facts-label)

U.S. Food and Drug Administration: The Lows and Highs of Percent Daily Value - [fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/how-understand-and-use-nutrition-facts-label](https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/how-understand-and-use-nutrition-facts-label)