

# Mix It Up: A Quick Guide to DIY Trail Mix

Trail mix can be a customizable, nutrient-dense snack that can help support energy, satiety, and overall health. Since it can be made ahead and easily eaten on the go, it also makes for a convenient snack when life is busy. This guide provides some inspiration to help you build your own mix with balanced ingredients and evidence-based choices.



## STEP 1: Choose Your Base

### Nuts & Seeds<sup>1,2</sup>

- **Nutrition:** healthy fats, micronutrients, protein, & fiber
- **Health benefits:** heart health, satiety, brain function

### EXAMPLES

- **Almonds** – Vitamin E, magnesium
- **Cashews** – Iron, zinc
- **Walnuts** – Omega-3s, antioxidants
- **Pistachios** – B6, potassium
- **Sunflower seeds** – Vitamin E, selenium
- **Pumpkin seeds** – Zinc, magnesium
- **Chia seeds** – Omega-3s, fiber
- **Flaxseeds** – Lignans, fiber

### EXAMPLES

- **Raisins** – Iron, potassium
- **Dried cranberries** – Antioxidants (choose low-sugar)
- **Dried apricots** – Vitamin A, iron
- **Banana chips** – potassium
- **Dried cherries** – vitamin C
- **Dates** – potassium

## STEP 2: Natural Sweetness

### Dried Fruit<sup>3</sup>

- **Nutrition:** fiber, antioxidants, quick energy
- **Health benefits:** digestive health



## STEP 3: Texture or Crunch

### Whole Grains<sup>4</sup>

- **Nutrition:** fiber, B vitamins
- **Health benefits:** heart health, satiety, sustained energy

### EXAMPLES

- **Whole grain cereal** – fiber, B vitamins, minerals
- **Air-popped popcorn** – fiber, antioxidants
- **Oats clusters** – fiber (beta-glucan)

### EXAMPLES

- **Dark chocolate chips** – Antioxidants, mood boost<sup>5</sup>
- **Coconut flakes** – Healthy fats
- **Spices** – Cinnamon, cayenne, turmeric for flavor and various potential health benefits

## STEP 4: Flavor Boosters

Optional - use sparingly

- **Nutrition:** varies, choose lower sugar / fat options when possible
- **Health benefits:** varies by ingredient



## ADDITIONAL QUICK TIPS



Keep portions of total mix around **1 cup** with **¼ to ½ cup** for each ingredient



Use a ratio of approx. **40%** nuts/seeds, **30%** dried fruit, **20%** grains, **10%** treats, to balance protein, fat, & carbohydrates



Use **unsweetened** dried fruit & **unsalted** nuts to minimize added sugar & sodium

## SAMPLE MIX

¼ cup almonds  
¼ cup pumpkin seeds  
¼ cup dried cranberries  
2 tbsp dark chocolate chips  
¼ cup whole grain cereal

### References:

1. Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. (n.d.). The Nutrition Source: Nuts and Seeds. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/nuts/>
2. Ros, E. (2010). Health benefits of nut consumption. *Nutrients*, 2(7), 652–682. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu2070652>
3. U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2020). FoodData Central. <https://fdc.nal.usda.gov>
4. Reynolds A, Mann J, Cummings J, et al. Carbohydrate quality and human health: a series of systematic reviews and meta-analyses. *Lancet*. 2019;393(10170):434–445. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31809-9
5. Reference: Sun, Y, et al. (2018). Cocoa and chocolate flavonoids: Implications for cardiovascular health. *Current Nutrition Reports*, 7(4), 190–196.