Grocery Shopping Packet

# How it Works

Grocery shopping can be overwhelming, expensive, and wasteful without a plan. This packet includes all the tools you need to have a good trip to the grocery store.

At the beginning of each month, use 1 hour and plan out every meal you want for the month. This will save you both time and money. When you have a plan, all you have to do is follow it. Rather than trying to come up with something at the last minute, you will be prepared. By planning ahead, you can also find ways to use leftovers or reuse the ingredients that you buy. This will save you money. With a little practice you will be excited about trips to the local market. Here’s the steps you need to take:

# Menu Planning

Plan to spend 1 hour per month on menu planning. You will need:

* The meal calendar
* MyPlate diagram at [MyPlate.gov](https://www.myplate.gov/).
* Local grocery store ads
* Recipes – for well-rounded, low-cost meals, check out [Recipes and Tips for Healthy, Thrifty Meals.](https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/usda_food_plans_cost_of_food/FoodPlansRecipeBook.pdf)

First, use the MyPlate diagram. Every day should include meals that are balanced.

Second, look at the store ad. Are there food items on sale? By planning meals with food that is on sale, you are going to save money. For example, you wanted to make a strawberry smoothie, but the strawberries are $4/lb. The mangos, however, are on sale for $1/lb. All you have to do is adjust the recipe and make a mango smoothie. You just saved a few dollars!

Go through the whole month and plan each meal. Don’t overwhelm yourself with a hundred recipes! Remember you can have the same meal more than once during the month. For example, for breakfast you could plan for oatmeal with cinnamon and apples and a glass of milk every other day. That leaves only half the month to figure out other breakfast ideas. Plan to make a full dish of lasagna on Sunday then use the leftovers as a meal for Tuesday.

After you are done, hang this menu on the fridge so your plan is always available.

# Make the Grocery List

This can be done at the same time as the menu planning. While you are choosing each meal, check your fridge and pantry to see if you already have the food needed. If you don’t, add them to your list. To keep a healthy plan, try to limit processed foods. If there are any processed foods you really want, see how hard it would be to make them by hand. This can save you money and is healthier. They could possibly taste even better than store bought. Keep the list up on the fridge next to your menu so that you can add to it throughout the month when ingredients run out.

# Start Shopping

Now you are ready for your trip to the store! Make sure you eat a meal before you go so you are not tempted to buy anything you didn’t plan on. Then grab your list and store ads. Head to the local market. The key thing to remember is to bring your list and stick to it. Bringing your list will help you save time and money. Grocery shopping about 2 to 3 times a month will be most beneficial. Going more than once a month will help spread out federal assistance benefits such as SNAP so you do not run out as quickly. Limiting your trips to 2 or 3 occasions will prevent you from spending more money than you planned.

You did it! That wasn’t so bad, was it? It may be a little tricky to get used to. But, if you stick to your plan every month, you will save time, money, and will be able to provide your family with healthy meals every day. Remember to adapt the meals to what your family really likes. If it’s a tradition to eat out, schedule those family outings on the menu. This will allow you to still eat out sometimes, but it will reduce unplanned trips.

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