General Grocery Shopping Tips

# Tips and tricks for the grocery store

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1. Stick to the edges of the grocery store: The less processed and fresher foods are located on the edges of the grocery store. The more processed, unhealthier items are on the inner aisles.
2. Do not shop hungry: If you shop hungry, you are more likely to impulse buy unhealthy items. Avoid shopping tired or angry. Emotions always play into our food choices.
3. Go to the grocery store during slow times: Avoid going right after 5 p.m. or near major holidays. When you go shopping on a busy day, you are less likely to spend time looking at prices and nutrition labels.
4. Avoid overly processed foods: Avoid foods that contain more than five ingredients, artificial ingredients or ingredients that you cannot pronounce. That’s not to say that these items don’t have their place but try to buy them less often than healthy food.
5. Identify which foods you really want: It’s hard to resist fresh-baked donuts or salty chips. To try to lessen buying unhealthier items, put impulse buys in the cart’s child seat. Before checking out, hold each item and ask yourself if you really want or need it.
6. Always compare prices: The generic brand is not always cheaper (although it usually is). Make sure that you are checking the unit price, not the price per container. The unit price is usually per ounce and can be found in smaller print on the bottom of the price tag.
7. Look high and low: The highest priced items are usually on the middle shelves at eye level. Try looking at the top and bottom shelves for cheaper options.
8. Make a grocery list: Keep a running grocery list throughout the week. When you run out of something, don’t leave it to your memory. Write it down right then. This will help you avoid running back and forth to the store for things that you forgot. Prepare your grocery list by aisle. If you regularly shop at the same stores, organize your list so that you can easily find and check off items as you walk down the aisles.
9. Make a meal list for the week: Consult MyPlate when making a meal list to ensure that you are eating all the food groups. By planning the meals you are going to have for the week, you can avoid trying to plan while you are in a crowded grocery store. This will lessen panic and buying too much or too little. A list of meals reduces stress when it's dinnertime. Convenience is the number one factor that people think about when buying food. A list of meals for the week will increase convenience. It means spending less time at the grocery store. If you plan meals, there is less chance that you will want to eat fast food or pre-packaged dinner. You have already purchased food, some of which is perishable. No one wants to waste money, especially if you are on a budget.
10. Make a budget: Have a clear budget before going to the grocery store and stick within your limit. If you don’t know how much you can spend, you’ll likely spend too much. To help stay within your budget, keep track of the cost of items in your cart.
11. Be flexible: Although you should have a plan when entering the grocery store, still be flexible. If you usually buy russet potatoes, but sweet potatoes are on sale, consider using those instead. Remember that variety is the spice of life. Don’t be afraid of trying new foods, especially if they are on sale.
12. Pick up a flyer: Grab the flyer or advertisement at the front of the store. These advertisements have weekly specials and coupons.
13. Use coupons carefully: Look for coupons on shelves or on products. These sometimes offer discounts on items when purchased together. For example, a discount on lettuce with the purchase of salad dressing. These coupons could also offer discounts for multiple item purchases. For example, buy 5, get one free.

However, be careful with these specials. If the coupon fits well into your shopping list, then go for it. If the coupon requires you to purchase more or different items than you had planned on it is best not to use it. Apply the same rules to coupons clipped from advertisements or the newspaper.

Keep the coupons that are printed out with your receipt. These coupons are usually for items you buy often. They could save you money next time you need to go to the store.

1. Buy in bulk when it is worth it: For certain imperishable items, buying in bulk can save money. Some stores offer lower prices when you buy items by the case. Items that are good to buy in bulk include canned goods, some baking goods (like flour and sugar), some condiments, and other foods you use frequently.
2. Read the fine print: When foods have deals like 10 for $10, it doesn’t mean you need to buy all 10 to get the deal. You could buy two or three and still get them at $1 a piece.
3. Watch for items on the ends of aisles: Food manufacturers pay more to have their items on the end aisles. This means that certain food is usually the only one on the shelf, so it is hard to check prices. Any item on the ends of aisles can be found on the shelves where it is easier to look at other options.
4. Know about special discounts offered: For example, some stores offer discounts if you use reusable bags instead of plastic.
5. Watch for price-match deals: Many stores, like Wal-Mart, offer price match deals. This means that if you find an item at a different location that is less money than the store you are shopping at, you can bring in the advertisement. Then the store will match the price found in the advertisement.

1. Get a grocery store rewards card: Many stores offer food and gas discounts to members. These cards usually have no commitment. They only require a name, phone number, and address. They might make you qualify for the sale prices.
2. Know when specific items are on sale: Many stores plan their best sales around certain times of the year. Usually, baking items are on sale around the end of the year when people do a lot of holiday baking. Spices, condiments, and certain meats have the best prices in the summer when people are barbecuing.

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