Tips for Shopping Wisely at the Grocery Store

For successful planning, be sure to keep in mind:
- The maximum amount you can spend on food.
- The five basic food groups.

Start With A Meal Plan

Plan Ahead
- Prepare a list of meals you’ll be shopping for.
- Determine how much of each item you’ll need.
- Leave room on your list for changes, if necessary.
- Ask your family or day care children for suggestions.

Check Flyers And Newspaper Ads
- Change menus to take advantage of weekly specials, if you’ll save money.
- Clip coupons if you can use the product.
- Use foods that are in season. They’ll be fresher and cheaper!

Be Creative
- Learn different ways to prepare foods.
- Choose varying combinations from the five food groups.
- Plan to use leftovers - cook once, eat twice.

Prepare A Shopping List

List Only What You Need
- Refer to your meal plan.
- Check what’s already in the refrigerator or on your shelves.
- Keep a list in the kitchen and add items as you run out of them.

Be Price Conscious
- Keep on hand a list of low-cost recipes and foods from the five food groups
- Compare prices offered by stores.
- Avoid “junk” foods that only add empty calories and are expensive.

Organize Your List
- Note how much of each food you’ll need.
- List items according to the layout of the store.
- Estimate the cost before you go to the store. Is it within your limit?
Knowing how to be an effective shopper saves time and money - and puts pleasure into shopping, too!

**Before You Leave Home**

**Compare Stores**
- For regular shopping, choose a clean store that offers good selection, quality and lowest prices.
- Also consider the distance you travel, parking, nearby specialty stores (bakery, fish market, etc.)

**Eat Before Shopping**
- Shopping when you're hungry may lead to impulse buying.

**Allow Enough Time**
- Try to shop when the store isn't crowded, and shop by yourself, if possible. Friends or children may slow you down or suggest items that you don't really need.

**Be Prepared**
- Take your list and anything else you need: coupons, eyeglasses for reading labels; and enough money for your food cost limit. An inexpensive hand-held calculator may also be useful.

**In The Store**

**Check The Specials**
- Compare prices of advertised (or unadvertised) specials, coupon items, etc., with cheaper brands on shelf, to make sure you're really saving money.

**Use Unit Pricing**
- Many stores post “unit prices” on or next to goods. They show the price by weight or volume, so you can compare. Larger containers usually cost less per pound, but check the unit price to be sure.

**Read The Labels**
- Labels can tell you each item’s weight or volume, the ingredients, nutritional information and suggested recipes in some cases. Ingredients are listed in order of weight. Check for unwanted “hidden” ingredients, such as excess salt and sugar. Compare labels.

**Compare Brands And Packages**
- Well-known brands aren’t necessarily the best buy for both nutrition and price. Try the store’s brand, or generic products; which are often less expensive and just as good.

**Look High And Low**
- Supermarkets often stock the most expensive brands at eye level. Lower shelves and higher shelves often contain comparable products at a lower cost. When you find a product you want, look at the top and bottom shelves to see if it is sold as a store brand or non-advertised brand.
Choosing From The Five Basic Food Groups

Here are some tips to help you select foods from the 5 food groups with cost in mind. These tips will help you create nutritious meals with “real appeal”.

Meat, Poultry, Fish, Yogurt, Cheese, Dry Beans, Eggs and Nuts

◆ Examine meat carefully. Some inexpensive cuts contain more bone, gristle and fat, so you get less meat per pound.
◆ Whole chicken is usually less expensive than buying parts.
◆ Poultry and fish may contain less fat and calories than red meat. Some frozen and canned fish cost less than fresh.
◆ Lunch meats are expensive. Look for fresh meat alternatives for high nutrition, lower cost, and lower fat and salt.
◆ Chunk or flaked tuna costs less than solid white tuna and works well in most dishes.
◆ Serve meat alternates often. Legumes, such as red beans, kidney beans and garbanzo beans, are high in fiber, yet low in cost.
◆ Avoid grated cheeses. Buy block cheese and grate or slice it yourself.
◆ Large containers or plain yogurt are less expensive than individual fruit yogurts. Buy plain and add your own fruit.
◆ Buy family packs of eggs when the price is cheaper than eggs by the dozen.
◆ Cheese (cottage, cheddar) are often cost effective meat alternates.

Milk

◆ Buy milk in large containers if you’ll use it all. Low fat or skim milk contains the same nutrients, but has less fat.
◆ Fresh milk at the grocery store is less expensive than home delivered milk or milk bought at the convenience store.
◆ Powdered milk is not creditable on the Child and Adult Care Food Program, however it is excellent for use in cooking and can save you money.

Vegetables

◆ Stock up on canned “specials” and large bags of frozen vegetables (don’t thaw what you won’t use).
◆ Purchase plain frozen vegetables rather than vegetables with butter or cream sauce.
◆ Vary your choices to include raw, dark green leafy, deep-yellow and starchy vegetables.
◆ Buy fresh vegetables “in season”.

Fruits

◆ Buy fruit “juice” not “drink” or “ade” (these have fewer nutrients and are not creditable on the CACFP). Concentrates are often less expensive. Remember to purchase 100% pasteurized juice.
◆ If you buy canned fruit, select products “packed in own juice” or light syrup.
◆ Buy only what you will eat before fruits can go bad. Select just ripe or under-ripe fruits. Check each piece for evidence of soft spots indicating over ripeness.
◆ Choose fresh fruits “in season”.

Bread, Cereal, Rice And Pasta

◆ Avoid costly convenience foods that are pre-cooked, instant, individually packaged, pre-sweetened or spiced.
◆ Choose “whole grain” or “enriched” to get necessary nutrients.
◆ Day old baked goods are often less expensive.
◆ Avoid commercial baked goods. They are often high in fat and expensive. Homemade muffins and quick breads are less expensive alternatives.
◆ Select generic brands of cereal whenever possible.
◆ Make your own low-cost, high nutrition cereal snack mix.
◆ Packaged cookies are expensive - consider making your own.
◆ Select store brands of crackers, pasta and breads whenever possible.
◆ Regular and quick cook varieties of oats are less expensive than the “instant” cereals.
### Shopping List

You may use this list to buy the foods needed to serve USDA approved meals and snacks. You can use this shopping list to help you prepare for your trip to the grocery store.

#### How to Use The Shopping List

1. Make copies of this blank original before using. Always keep a blank list to make future copies.

2. Plan your menu for the week.

3. In the column titled, “Need” make a mark to indicate that you need to purchase that item for the meals you are going to make.

4. Make a mark next to the items in the “Staples” section for any of these foods that you will need. Make sure you have all the staples on hand because you will need several of these to make items such as French Toast (bread, eggs, milk) or Cake (eggs, milk, oil).

5. Write in any additional items you will need in the blank spaces provided.

6. As you make out your shopping list, you may want to indicate the quantity you will need. Just write the amount down next to the food item.

7. Take your shopping list with you to the grocery store. Purchase the items that have a mark in the “Need” column. As you put the item in your cart, make a mark in the column titled “Have.”

Remember to make copies and always keep a blank list to make future copies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Staples, Seasonings &amp; Baking Products</strong></th>
<th><strong>Meat/Meat Alternate Products</strong></th>
<th><strong>Fruit/Vegetable Products</strong></th>
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