



## You Need a Plan to Shop

How do you shop for groceries? Do you run to the store every day for things you ran out of, or do you shop once a week with a list?

Shop as few times as possible in the month because the less you shop, the less you spend! Grocery stores are designed to keep you in the store as long as possible. "Essential" items such as milk, bread and produce, are located in the extreme corners of the store so you have to pass by other enticing items along the way. The most expensive products are placed at eye level, so look on higher and lower shelves for the best buy. And just because products are located at the end of the aisles, it doesn't mean they are a special buy.

So, what's a shopper to do?

Before you head to the store, you need a plan. Check and see what foods you have on hand that need to be eaten before they spoil. Then read the weekly ads in the newspaper and plan menus to include sale items. Making a list of foods you need to buy, and grouping these foods according to the layout of the grocery store, makes shopping easier. Go through your coupons and take out the ones you will need. Coupons can be useful IF they are for items you usually buy, but make sure the cents-off item is really cheaper than competing brands. Write your grocery list on the back of an envelope and you can put the coupons you will use inside the envelope to take to the store.



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If possible, shop alone so you can concentrate on following your list and comparing prices. If you do take the kids, let them help read labels and learn to make wise food choices.

Another way to save at the store is to make sure you aren't hungry when you shop. Hungry shoppers tend to buy more food and more high-priced food.

Compare prices—store brands and sale items may not always be the best buy. Also, compare prices of similar foods. Usually a larger package costs less per ounce or pound than a smaller package, and foods with less packaging are usually lower in cost too. For example, individual packages of oatmeal cost more than one large container of oatmeal, but a large package may not be a good buy if you can't use it all!

The size of the store makes a difference too. Mini-markets usually have expensive food packaged in small containers. Shop around and find the best buy for your dollar.

So, what makes a difference when shopping? The most important step you can take to stretch your food dollar is to make a list and stick to it!

For recipes: Contact your county extension office in Kansas or visit the website at [www.kidsacookin.ksu.edu](http://www.kidsacookin.ksu.edu)

This institution is an equal opportunity employer. This material was funded by USDA's Food Stamp Program through a contract awarded by the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. The Food Stamp Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. To find out more, contact your local SRS office or call 1-800-221-5689.

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