

## Saving at the Supermarket: Tips that Can Total Big Bucks

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It's possible to save money shopping for groceries without cooking everything from scratch or packing your purse with coupons. Here are some easy tips that can result in big savings:

1. Make a shopping list. Avoid going to the store several times a week. This saves money, time, and gas, as well as cutting down on impulse buying. Keep a shopping list where it's easily accessible, such as on the fridge, and remember to take it with you to the grocery store. Stick to your list for added savings, but do stay flexible if you encounter a sale or store specials.
2. Avoid over buying. We lose money whenever we toss food because it spoiled before we got around to eating it. If leftovers get the "heave ho" because they're left too long, we're putting money into the garbage. Make it a priority to plan your purchases and meals to avoid tossing food.
3. Avoid shopping when hungry. Everything looks good on an empty stomach. Eating before shopping helps to avoid impulse buying, and it may save calories. If you're shopping with your kids, feed them, too.
4. Exercise common sense when using coupons. Use them only for foods you normally would purchase, and use them only if you really can save money. Many times the cost of a nationally-advertised brand with a coupon is still more than the cost of the store brand.
5. Check expiration and "use by" dates. Avoid buying a food that is past its prime. If it's near its expiration date, be prepared to use it soon.
6. Consider switching to store brands. They are comparable in nutrition to name brands and in some cases are preferred over the name brands. Some store brands may vary more in size, color, or texture than name brands, but this may be unimportant, depending on their use. A less than perfect-appearing vegetable may be just fine if used in a casserole or soup.
7. Avoid food flops. If you're trying a new food, buy the smallest size package, in case your family doesn't like it. If you're going to be preparing an unfamiliar food, check preparation methods before you buy it, or at least know where to look for the information. You don't want to have something spoil because you don't know how to prepare it.
8. Shop the specials. Plan your menus around sale items and specials, especially more expensive purchases such as meat. Buying packages of meat on sale and freezing them can save you quite a bit. You can find information on packaging, freezing and defrosting meat safely at [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov), the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service.
9. Think carefully about buying in bulk. If you actually do save money by buying a larger package, make sure that you can use it before it goes bad. Be aware that sometimes the smaller package can be a better buy than the larger size. The use of the Unit Pricing label can help to identify the lowest cost package size. Storage

- space is another consideration. Sometimes there just is not enough space to store large amounts of food or items that come in large boxes or bags.
10. Beware of snack attacks. Enjoy snacks such as chips, candy, cookies, etc. in limited amounts. Snacks can easily add up, both in terms of money and calories. By limiting these items, you may find yourself shedding unwanted pounds while also saving money.

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