

large packages of items in the front of the store. These items may be higher priced per unit than smaller packages of the same item. Large sizes may be the best choice, but the only way to know is to compare prices.

Fiddling with the Package Size. Watch out for the latest trick: keep the price the same, but reduce the amount.

Big Displays Aren't Always the Best Buy. Big displays may offer big deals or no deals. The only way to know is to compare prices.

Brand Name Games. Big corporations spend billions of dollars to convince you that their brand is the best. It is a rare situation where the “brand name” is actually better than the store brand or the generic. Often, they all come from the same food factory, they just get different labels on the way out the door.

Coupon Games. First cousin to Brand Name. Even with a coupon, the item may be more expensive than the store brand. Check the prices.

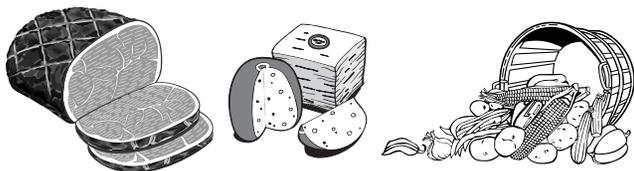
Look High and Low on the Shelf. The high priced items are usually placed at eye level on the shelf. The lower priced items will be either high or low on the shelf.

Meat Goes Down, Canned Goods Go Up. There's no such thing as a free bag of groceries. If you find meat prices are low, the prices of canned goods have probably gone up and vice versa. If you have extra money, buy extra supplies when prices are low on one or the other.

Watch Out for the 1st and the 15th of the Month. Many people get food stamps and checks on these dates. Stores nearly always have some great deals at these times, but other items may go up. Powdered milk may be less expensive at suburban stores.

The Snack Food Game. The biggest money-losing games in the grocery store are the “snack foods”. You pay a big price for fifty cents worth of nuts, popcorn, and sugar, or thirty cents worth of potatoes and salt. It is always cheaper, more tasty and more fun to make your own snack foods.

Be fair to yourself and your family. Genuine deals can be found, but you have to look carefully, with your eyes wide open and your calculator in your hand. If you shop smart and beat the casino shopping game, you win a better quality of life and a more secure future for yourself and your family.



Fifteen Shopping Rules to Save You Money at Grocery Stores

Plan. Plan. Plan. Never go to the store without a list. Plan every meal including your snacks. Add up the list of ingredients and make a shopping list from that plan. Buy only those items on your list. Beware of impulse buys.

Scout the Territory. Check the advertisements for specials; go to at least two stores to check prices on major items before buying. Cherry pick the best deals. You may have to go to two or three stores, but think of the money you are saving as compensation for your time.

Eat Before You Shop. Never go to a grocery store hungry. Shop after a meal or a big snack.

Don't Take The Kids. Unless you have no alternative, don't take the kids with you. Kids who watch television are programmed to say, “Mummy, buy this” during shopping. Share babysitting with a relative or neighbor...they watch the kids while you shop and then you watch the kids while they shop. You'll save money and time!

Keep Track Of What You Buy. Use a calculator and/or pencil and paper, keeping a running total of everything in your basket so you know what you've bought and how much you have left to spend.

Avoid The Name Brand Game. And its first cousin, the Coupon Game. Buy the generic and store brands, unless price comparison or a special sale bring the name brands into competition.

Avoid Prepared Foods. You deserve the best, so “Cook from scratch.” Make your own sauces and gravies, snacks, meals. You pay a big premium price when you buy packaged prepared foods that may be inferior in taste and nutrition to those you prepare yourself for your family.

Meat-Smart Shopping. A most confusing area of the store is the meat market. Be sure to check the “reduced for quick sale” area. An inexpensive roast — slow cooked in water, seasoned with onions, carrots and pepper — is every bit as tasty and as tender as the “big bucks” roast and the high-priced steak. Buy regular ground beef & drain the fat after it's cooked (saving money on the higher priced lean and very lean burger). Buy whole chickens and cut them up yourself, or take advantage of the low-priced bags of leg/thigh quarters.

Cheese Hints. Sliced or shredded cheese is rarely a good buy. The better buys per pound are usually store brand or generic versions of “Velveeta”-style processed



cheese. Use this for casseroles and sauces. For sandwiches, a cheese slicer saves a lot of money. Five pound bricks of sliced cheese are sometimes competitively priced and thus can be a good choice.

Shop at Meat Markets and Delis. A deli or meat market will often have better prices on meat and cheese than the Supermarket deli and meat section. Wholesale stores also often have good prices on meat, cheese and other food items.

Don't Shop In A Hurry. Good shopping takes time. You'll want to compare prices, check out more than one store, etc.

Watch Out For Non-Grocery Items. Do you really need to buy these products at the grocery store? Are they perhaps cheaper at a dollar store or discount center? And consider using alternatives to expensive packaged cleaning products, such as:

- (a) bleach to clean toilets and porcelain sinks;
- (b) baking soda to clean the refrigerator,
- (c) ammonia for floors, walls, ovens.

Warning: never mix chlorine bleach or cleanser with anything other than laundry soap as it can produce dangerous fumes when combined with other products.

Buy Bread At Bakery Outlets.

Avoid the high priced bread section at supermarkets. Drive a few blocks down the street to the local bakery outlet and purchase your bread items there.



It's OK To Save A Few Cents. Save a few cents on every item, and it adds up. Since money is scarce, you can use that “free” money for other necessary items.

Cook With Powdered Milk. You save money on every gallon when you cook with powdered milk instead of whole milk. Add the powdered milk to the dry ingredients and then add water when the recipe says add milk. The least expensive powdered milk is the same stuff as the most expensive, so buy based on price, not brand.

FAMILY FOOD SECURITY—STOCKING THE PANTRY

Keep at least 2 months or more of basic food supplies on hand in your home pantry. Why so much?

To increase the safety and security of your family — to help you be more in control of your circumstances — to make you less vulnerable to crisis and hard times — to increase the quality of your life — to provide great meals for your family — to save money and time. It's like having your own in-home grocery store.

Cooking meals from basic foods cuts your monthly grocery bill and increases family security.

If hard times come your way — if you get fired, get sick,

FAMILY FOOD SECURITY

How to beat the odds in Casino Shopping
How to shop better
How to stock your pantry

CASINO SHOPPING!

It's always easy to spend money in a casino; in fact, that's the easiest thing to do there. But find an exit to leave? Ha! Good luck!

The same is true for grocery stores. Everything in the store is designed to separate you from your money. Suppose you need a gallon of milk and some eggs. Are these items located conveniently at the front of the store? Not likely. To get to them, you walk all the way to the back of the store. You go past displays of "SPECIAL" merchandise. Chances are, you'll end up at the cash register with more than a gallon of milk and a dozen eggs. (Especially if the kids are along for the ride.)

Here's some common store tricks and ways to avoid them.

Wall of Values. The first thing in many stores is a "Wall of Values", a series of displays of items on special for the week. They may or may not be good values. The only way to know for sure is to compare prices.

Mixed Pricing. Higher priced items may be mixed with lower priced items — especially in the meat market. Know what you are buying and how much it costs.

Price Tag Problems. If you see a low price tag, make sure what product it refers to. Lower price tags may be located a few inches away from the item they refer to. The items directly above the lower price tag may be the more expensive choices. This is particularly a problem in deli, freezer, and refrigerator sections.

Missing Tags. The high price item, and alternatively, the low price item may not have a price tag. Selection becomes a price roulette. Put those items in a special part of your basket, and check their prices as you go through the checkout line. If they are more than you want to pay, tell the clerk you don't want them.

Large Sizes Aren't Necessarily the Best Buy. Carry a calculator with you (or do the math in your head, which gets easier with practice). When deciding the best buy, figure the price per ounce, per pound, per pint, quart or gallon. A common trick is to display a

there's a blizzard, your utility bills are too high, whatever the crisis, with food in the pantry, hard times are less hard. **I can barely afford one month's food. How could I ever get 2 months ahead?**

By careful planning and work you can gradually increase your family food supply. The list below suggests amounts to store for a family of four. If you cut your current food budget a bit, you can save \$25 each month on your current consumption and set that amount of food aside each month. Over a year, you will store an extra month's food. If you can set aside \$50 a month, you can build a 2 month's supply in only one year! This list emphasizes foods that store without refrigeration, and is only offered as a guide since families have different tastes.

The more food you grow and process yourself, or buy directly from farmers, the less you spend.

Meats can be bought on sale and frozen or pressure processed in jars. Vegetables and fruits you can grow yourself or buy directly from farmers. Properly managing your budget for meats, vegetables, fruits and juice provides opportunities for saving money

Two Months of Groceries for your Pantry

Oatmeal, 20 lbs
Noodles 12 lbs
Macaroni, 20 lbs
Grits, 8 lbs
Rice, 24 pounds
Flour, 60 pounds
Tomato sauce, 256, 8 oz cans
Vegetables, 200, 15 oz cans
Juice, 24 gallons
Canned fruit, 20 cans
Raisins, 8 pounds
Milk, 60 gal (48 pounds dried)
Peanut butter, 18 pounds
Whole canned chickens, 12
Canned hams, 6
Tuna, 60, 6.5 oz cans
Dried beans & peas, 20 pounds
Oil/fats, 30 quarts
Sugar, 20 pounds
Baking powder
Yeast, 2 lbs
Spices, condiments

To accumulate one extra month's food in 12 months, reduce spending on food for current consumption by \$24.00 and spend that amount on your Family Food Security Plan. To set aside two months food in 12 months, save \$48.00 worth of food each month. Two months staples (not including fruits, vegetables, or meats) requires saving \$20/month.



Text by Robert Waldrop (used with permission)
Oscar Romero Catholic Worker House
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma