

# Ways you're wasting money at the supermarket



Visiting your local supermarket is like running a gauntlet of temptation. It's so easy to see something that you didn't even realize you wanted and put it in your cart without thinking about it. But if you're not careful, you can end up spending a whole lot more money than you were planning to.

Supermarkets are engineered to get us to spend as much money as possible, and they do a very good job of it. They put pricier items literally front and center; brands pay a lot of money to be positioned at the "endcaps" of aisles, where more people will see them. Pricier items are positioned right at eye level, while less-expensive alternatives are usually down at the bottom of the shelf. And while milk and eggs are usually at the back of the store because that's the area closest to the loading docks, stores are also well aware of the fact that they're making you walk through the entire store (and be exposed to thousands of tempting items) just to find the staples.

If you're trying to save money at the supermarket, keep in mind that supermarkets are specifically designed for the exact opposite of that; they don't want you to try to save money, because if you did, they'd go out of business. Even the coupons are intended to get you to spend more: If you spend \$2.99 instead of \$3.99 on a pack of hot dogs you wouldn't have otherwise purchased, that's still three bucks you wouldn't have spent without that coupon. They're also banking on the hope that you'll make impulse buys—which is why gum, candy, and magazines are there for the taking while you wait your turn to check out.

So don't forget that supermarkets work really hard to get you to waste money. But with a little bit of knowledge, will power, and planning, you can beat them at their own game and not spend a penny more than you need to.

## • 1. By Going to the Store Hungry

It's been proven that when we food-shop on an empty stomach, we're more likely to buy unnecessary things. Hunger is a great motivator, and it also gives you eyes that are bigger than your stomach. Shop on a full belly and you'll be more likely to stick to your list.

## • 2. By Bringing Your Kids

Dovetailing on the above tip, if you bring your kids with you to the supermarket, you'll be far more likely to make impulse buys. When kids see something that they want, they don't give up until they get it, and in many cases it's easier to just spend the few extra bucks to make them happy than to deal with nagging. Either become a master at saying no, or leave the kiddies at home.

## • 3. By Not Making a List...or Not Sticking to It

The easiest way to keep from going overboard at the supermarket is to take a full inventory of your kitchen, make a list of the items that you need, and write them down. When you're at the supermarket, make it your goal to not buy anything that's not on your list, as tempting as it might be.

## • 4. By Buying Name Brands

For most food items, the generic stuff is just as good as the name brands — and a whole lot cheaper. Sure, the taste might not be identical, but you'd be surprised by the quality of a lot of generic or store-brand foods. Even if it's just 50 cents cheaper, the pennies add up.

## • 5. By Buying Pre-Cut Produce

It may save you a couple minutes of slicing and dicing to buy pre-cut fruits and vegetables in their neat little containers, but the added convenience will cost you several dollars more than buying them whole. Also, once produce is sliced, it immediately begins to break down, so if you buy your produce whole you'll save money and end up with a higher-quality product. Use the opportunity to practice your knife skills!

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