

New York State Consumer Protection Board is on your **SYDE!**

Please **JOIN** our **Stretch Your Dollar Effort:**



Grocery Shopping TIPS

The following suggestions have been received from consumers thus far. Please add your own suggestions by sending an email to my2cents@consumer.state.ny.us.

BEFORE YOU SHOP:

- **CREATE** meal ideas for the coming week based on what is on sale. Keep in mind the days you'll have time to cook from scratch and the days you'll be pressed for time.
- **MAKE** a grocery list and stick to it. This will decrease your chances of purchasing more than what is needed.
- **GO** on store websites to compare prices, find sales and print electronic coupons. Some chains will send you e-mail notices regarding sales. Others may allow you to order ahead for purchase and pickup.
- **SIGN UP** for your grocer's, pharmacy and market's bonus/discount card for additional savings. These offer enormous savings to consumers over time and also afford consumers unadvertised promotions and coupons. Make sure your information is kept private.
- **ORGANIZE** any coupons and look for opportunities to double manufacturer coupons. Tip: public libraries often have coupon exchanges available for consumers, which may be especially helpful for consumers who do not purchase newspapers.
- **COMBINE** manufacturers and store coupons for extra savings.
- **FOLLOW** ads and buy items that are truly on sale as some advertised products are for sale, but for the regular or every day price, rather than a lower sale price. Where possible, buy enough of a staple sale item to last 12 weeks, which is the typical sales cycle.
- **DO NOT** go into the supermarket on an empty stomach, you'll be tempted to over-shop.
- **CARRY** an insulated cooler in your car during the warmer weather to store your dairy and frozen foods from the supermarket to home.

New in July:

- **DURING THE SUMMER**, check out and shop at a local farm stand or produce market to get fresh fruits and vegetables at lower prices.
- **PLAN AHEAD** so that you do not grocery shop more than once a week. This will save time and money for gas as well as for groceries that can be bought in bulk.
- **TALK TO FRIENDS AND FAMILY** about what they may need at the store, and then, if you see bargains or have extra coupons, buy the products for them while you're already in the store.

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New for the Holiday Season:

- **ORGANIZE** a few friends or family members for a shopping trip to a warehouse or wholesale store that sells items in bulk to save on food. Divide the bulk items into containers and resealable plastic bags.
- **Add your own tip!**

IN THE GROCERY STORE:

- **STICK TO YOUR LIST.** When shopping, don't buy on impulse.
- **BUY HEALTHY FOODS.** For the same price as chips and cookies, you may want to buy apples, bananas, carrots, potatoes, peppers, and other healthier foods that fill you up and may even allow you to eat less.
- **LOOK FOR AND TRY** store brands. Note that the most costly brands are often placed at eye-level. Store brands may be cheaper, may be just as good, and are often placed on higher or lower grocery shelves.
- **COMPARE** prices among different brands. There may be a sale on different items of the same value and quality. Look for sales that offer buy one get one or two free.
- **LOOK** for the unit price to compare similar foods. It tells you the cost per ounce, pound, or pint, so you'll know which brand or size is the best buy. Most stores show the unit price on a shelf sticker just below the product.
- **WATCH** produce prices and look for reduced items priced to sell as some vegetables and fruits can be cooked even though their outside appearance is slightly bruised.
- **CHECK** expiration dates on food and other products. Purchase goods that will provide you the best or longest shelf life.
- **BUY** a whole chicken, for example, and cut it into pieces at home or ask the butcher to cut it instead of buying pre-cut chicken that may be more expensive.
- **BUY** milk (fat-free or low-fat) in large containers (gallon or 1/2 gallon), as they generally cost less than quarts. Milk sold at "24-hour" convenience stores usually costs more than milk sold at supermarkets (Non-fat dry milk is the least expensive way to go).
- **BUY** in-season fresh fruits and vegetables.
- **DON'T** get duped by marketing -- stores tend to use everything from sounds to product placement to make you spend your hard-earned money.
- **STOCK UP** on sale items you can use in a timely fashion, store or freeze. For example, often cans of soda and paper towels can be purchased more economically in bulk and stored for extended periods. Buy in bulk for quality and value, but serve healthy, smaller portions.
- **BRING** your own bags or reuse store bags from a previous purchase. Some grocers will give you money (for example, 2-3 cents a piece) for bringing back your store plastic bags. It is also good for the environment.
- **SHOP** on senior citizen discount days or other special promotional days to reap savings.

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- USE a credit card for your groceries on which you receive benefit points or cash back ***IF*** you will pay off your bill in full every month.
- ASK FOR RAINCHECKS if the store doesn't have a sale item that you need.

New in July

- CHECK THE STORE'S REFUND POLICY, and if you find that the product is spoiled or unusable once you get it home, return it. Some stores offer double-your-money-back for such items.
- ***Add your own tip!***