

HOW TO SAVE MONEY AT THE GROCERY STORE

11 HELPFUL TIPS

1. Create A Monthly Budget and Stick To It- Creating a monthly budget can be a little intimidating at first. What I recommend is tracking your grocery bills for an entire month to see exactly how much you are currently spending on groceries. You can also separate it out week by week if that helps. This will give you a baseline of what you are currently spending and you can analyze it and decide if you need to cut back or not. You will have to look at your finances and decide on a reasonable amount for you to spend per month on groceries, it will be different for everyone. Setting a grocery budget can be really eye opening and will help you feel more accountable for your spending. If you do this and realize you're spending way too much and want to cut back, the following tips will really help!

2. Make A Grocery List Before Going Grocery Shopping (and remember to bring it with you! :) - I find that it's much easier to not get side tracked by grocery items I don't need if I have a list with me. I'm able to get in, pick up everything on my list and then get out quickly. If I don't have a list with me I tend to just go down every aisle and pick out products that look good even if I have no need for them. A grocery list will also help you stay organized while grocery shopping and hopefully decrease the time you spend in the grocery store because nobody wants to grocery shop for hours! Less time in the grocery store means buying less products you don't need.

3. Meal Plan- I've recently started meal planning more and it's been so helpful. It not only helps you save money but also saves you extra trips to the grocery store. I like to go grocery shopping once a week, usually on Sunday, and before I go I plan out all the meals we're going to eat for the week, plus snacks. I then make a list of all the ingredients I need for my meal plan recipes that I don't already have. If I don't meal plan I end up going to the grocery store a few times per week and I usually spend more overall because it's a few separate bills instead of one big bill. Meal planning does take some time but once you get a system down it's pretty easy and really helps to save time and money.

4. Eat Seasonally- Seasonal produce is always going to be cheaper! When things are in season they're much easier to grow and more sustainable.

Seasonal produce is also more likely to be local which means it doesn't have to be trucked all the way across the country, making it cheaper. I also find that when grocery stores have their weekly sales, it's usually the seasonal produce that is on sale. Another great thing about eating seasonally is that the food will taste much better because it's so fresh and growing conditions are optimal. I'm working on a seasonal produce guide that I hope to publish on the blog soon!

5. Join Your Local Grocery Store's Rewards Program- Not all grocery stores have one of these unfortunately, but if you shop at a grocery store like Safeway, Smiths, or Albertson's they will have one. All you do is sign up and then you get a card that's connected to your phone number, in case you misplace your card. When you're grocery shopping you will see a little tag below some of the products that give a discount if you use your rewards card. You can save a lot of money this way! Sometimes it's just a few cents but other times it can be quite a few dollars. Some grocery stores even partner with gas stations so you can accumulate points every time you use you buy groceries. You can then use those monthly points to get discounted gas at the partnered gas station.

6. Look For Weekly Grocery Store Ads In Your Local Newspaper- These ads are usually in the coupon section of the newspaper and each included grocery store has an ad that's a few pages long that shows photos of all the products on sale. I find that these ads usually highlight seasonal produce as well as a bunch of other shelf products. Sprouts, one of my favorite grocery stores, will often have a buy one get one free sale advertised in the newspaper or a special sale like all frozen food, all gluten free products or all organic products. When I see sales like this I take advantage and stock up on products that I usually buy on a regular basis.

7. Price Shop- As much as I love my favorite grocery store, it's not always the cheapest. I don't love shopping at Walmart but I have to admit that sometimes the same product at Walmart can be much cheaper than at

8. Buy Generic Brands (sometimes) - This is something that I've finally started doing and it really does save money. It's totally a personal preference though and sometimes it may mean a product with less quality. When I buy generic products, or store brand products, I always look at the ingredients first. If the ingredients are the exact same, or very similar, to the more expensive product I always go with the cheaper generic brand. This is usually true for things like canned beans or pasta. I have noticed that sometimes the generic brand has additives and ingredients that the more expensive brand doesn't have, so if that is true I spend the extra money on the more expensive brand. Examples of these would be things like generic ketchup that has tons of sugar and high fructose corn syrup or cream cheese that has a bunch of strange additives rather than just the pure ingredients. I know people have brands that they love so this tip might not be what everyone wants to do and I totally understand that!

9. Buy In Bulk- Buying in bulk may seem like you're actually spending more money but if a store has a special sale on a product that you use on a regular basis, it can be totally worth it. Costco is the king of bulk products and I don't personally shop there (we don't have one close by) but I know a lot of people who regularly stock up on large quantities of products they use regularly and save money. For me, buying in bulk usually looks like stocking up on good olive oil when the grocery store has a buy one get one free sale. I may end up spending \$30 on olive oil but the bottles will last me for a few months and it will save me money in the long run. I always keep an eye out to see if there are big sales on my favorite pantry safe items and then stock up big time when there are. If you are keeping a monthly grocery budget, this would be the one time it's ok to go over a little because it will save you money in future months.

10. Shop The Bulk Section- Unfortunately not all grocery stores have bulk sections but if you find one that does it can save you some money! At Sprouts, where I usually shop, they have a bulk foods section and a bulk spice section, which is amazing! The bulk section usually consists of the generic store brand products and aren't necessarily cheaper by weight than if you bought the store brand packaged version of the product.

But, what I love about the bulk section is that you can get however much of each item that you want. For instance if a recipe calls for 1 tablespoon of ground flax and ground flax isn't something you will probably use again, you don't want to buy a huge bag of it. In the bulk section you can just scoop a tablespoon into the bag and it will save you a ton of money. The bulk spice section is so great for instances like that! Spices can be expensive and sometime a recipe will call for just a small amount of a spice that you don't currently have and probably will never use an entire bottle of. If you can find a bulk spice section you can buy just what you need for a fraction of the price of the entire bottle.

11. Don't Go Grocery Shopping When You're Hungry- This may seem like a silly thing to suggest but it really works! If you're like me and you go grocery shopping when you're hungry you end up buying way too many things you don't need and most of them are unhealthy snacks. If you're not starving while grocery shopping it's much easier to stick to your list and only buy what you truly need.