Saving Money on Your Supermarket Shopping

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http://www.bbc.co.uk/consumer/23957167

By Phil Williams BBC

Supermarkets are constantly looking for ways to make us spend more
money.

But you can keep the cost of your groceries down if you stay alert and plan ahead.

Here are eight tips for spending less each week.

1. **Plan**

Writing up a weekly meal plan and shopping list is not exciting but it is effective.

Knowing exactly what you're going to eat can mean fewer shopping trips and impulse buys as well as less wasted food.

If you need some help to get started, **Love Food Hate Waste** (a government backed, non-profit organisation) has a two week meal plan with downloadable shopping lists.

The website also has other useful tips on meal planning.

2. **Go down a brand**

How they make us spend

- Sweets and magazines are near the checkout tempting us to make last-minute impulse buys
- Items we regularly buy tend to be spread around the store so we need to pass more tempting goods
- The items that are most profitable are placed at eye level

The website Money Saving Expert recommends trying out cheaper brands of everything you buy. This goes for toiletries and cleaning products too.

“The next time you shop, swap one of everything to something just one brand level lower,” says the site.

“So if you usually buy four cartons of Tesco’s own-brand orange juice, this time buy three of those and one Tesco Everyday Value.

“If you use luxury aloe vera shower cream, drop to Asda’s own brand.”

You can find reviews of supermarket own-brand products on the website **Supermarket Own Brand Guide**.

3. **Don’t shop when hungry**

You might have worked this one out for yourself. Usually, the hungrier you are the more you will buy.

4. **Don’t put all your shopping in one basket**

Getting the best deals

- Compare prices between products and different supermarkets. Websites like **mySupermarket** or **Compare Supermarket Prices** can help
- Take extra caution with perishables. Often they can just end up in the bin
- It’s easy to think that bigger packs are better value

but it’s not always the case.

Source: **Which?**

To get the best value you’ll probably need to shop in more than one place.

It’s worth considering whether local butchers, bakers or grocers are cheaper.

Discount supermarkets can offer good value but might not have everything you want.

A monthly visit to stock up on their products can be worthwhile but be careful not to end up wasting anything.

Moneywise magazine recommends signing up for loyalty schemes with several supermarkets.

It says retailers will send money-off vouchers when you haven’t shopped with them for a while.

5. **Don’t get done by discounts**

Deal or no deal?

Not all ‘bargains’ are quite what they seem. In December 2011 BBC Panorama investigated special offers in supermarkets.

They found examples of non-discounts like ‘Two for £2’ deals on items that cost £1 each.

The programme also warned retailers sometimes raised the price of a product then dropped it back down.

The supermarket then claimed it had “slashed the price”.

Most of the big chains have now agreed to a set of principles drawn up by the Office of Fair Trading but it’s still important to look closely at anything that looks like a special offer.

It’s worth taking the time to brush up on your maths skills or – if you have a smartphone – downloading a discount calculating app.

When it comes to ‘buy one get one free’ offers, the advice from Money Saving Expert is only to buy when it’s something that you’d normally purchase and won’t go off.

Toothpaste, toilet roll and batteries are good examples.

6. **Look out for shrinkage**

Consumer group Which? has found some big name products are putting less in the packet while keeping the price the same or sometimes even increasing it.

Keep your eyes peeled.

7. **Time it right**

Supermarkets tend to put discount tickets on foods later in the day.

To know the best time for a cut-price deal ask a friendly looking member of staff for advice.

You can always freeze any discount food before the ‘use by’ date. Defrost when you need it and use within 24 hours.

8. **Don’t waste**

Safe to eat?

***Use by*:** Don’t use any food or drink after the end of the ‘use by’ date on the label, even if it looks and smells fine

***Best before*:** Relates to food quality, including taste, texture and appearance. Eating food immediately past that date is unlikely to be harmful.

Display until and sell by: Used by some shops as instructions for shop staff, not shoppers.

Source: **FSA**

According to the UK Government **we waste £12bn worth of food a year**.

Love Food Hate Waste says *incorrect storage* is one of the reasons.

The organisation says that 70% of our fridges are too warm and the contents don’t keep as long as they could.

Your fridge should be between zero and five degrees Celsius.

Keep an eye on the contents of your fridge to see what’s approaching its use by date.