

Quick Bites

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Searching for Savings

No matter how tight the budget gets, you can count on one thing – you'll always need food. Saving big on food can be easy if you have all the information you need to make good purchases. This fact sheet will provide you with some tips for filling your stomach without emptying your wallet.

Mapping Out Savings

Know the layout of the stores you visit often. Make sure you check out the clearance area in each department, but stick to your grocery list. Look for clearance items that can be used with your menu for the week. A good clearance buy should keep you under your food budget dollar. If you can't use it with the menu you planned for the week or if it causes you to go over budget, don't buy it, no matter how cheap it may seem. However, don't be afraid to substitute one food on your list for another food that is a good deal. For example, you may see that pork roast is cheaper than the ground beef you were going to purchase for meat loaf. Being able to make changes to your menu easily can help you find big savings at the store and your family will probably never know the difference!



Clipping Coupons

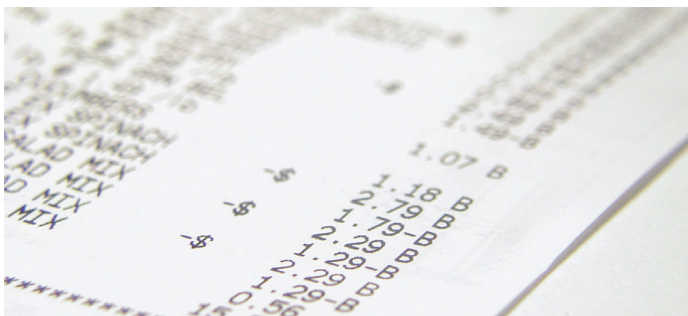
Use coupons, but use them wisely. Ask yourself these questions:

- If the product is more expensive than your usual brand, will the coupon still save you money?
- If you have to buy several of an item to use the coupon, will you be able to use it all before it goes bad?
- Will you have to drive out of your way to take advantage of the offer?
- Do any of the supermarkets near you have a day when coupons are worth even more?



Be a Savings Tracker

Make a note of prices on items you buy often. When you start seeing a trend in the prices, you have a better idea of what is actually a "good" price for that food. You can create a Price Tracking Chart using any notebook or paper pad. Just create a list of foods you buy frequently. Make sure you write down at which store you purchased the items at and the price you paid. Track the price of the foods you buy for several weeks and you will start to see a price trend. Those grocery store flyers will become much more useful when you have a good idea of what you think is a good price for a food. You can then go to that grocery store and purchase only those items, which will start saving you time and money in the long run.



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Web of Savings

If you have access to the Internet and can cheaply print coupons, it may be worth your time to get familiar with some online coupon sites. Here are some tips to using them safely and efficiently:

- Aim for Web sites that can be used without entering any personal information.
- If a site requires you register or join their site, make sure you read the privacy policies carefully before entering any of your personal information.
- If you have any doubt about the site, don't join. Having your identity stolen is not worth saving a few dollars on coupons.
- Don't waste your time or ink on printing coupons for products that you rarely use.
- Check your favorite grocery stores' Web sites. Many provide e-coupons that are specific to their chain that can be linked to your customer card.

Other Ways to Save

- Calculate the cost of gas for each trip you make to the store. You may save more by making one trip to a store that matches a competitor's advertised prices. On your shopping list, write down the sale price and which store is running the special. That will save you from flipping through the fliers as you move down the grocery aisles.
- Wherever you shop, look for in-store specials. Some stores make their 'sale' tags and 'everyday low price' tags look nearly identical.



Access more information at:
<http://fcs.tennessee.edu/tncep>

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