

8 Sneaky Supermarket Tricks

How to buy only what you need

By Bari Nan Cohen and Christina Sexton

You hit the supermarket armed with a list—yet you leave with a stack of unnecessary extras. It's no accident! "There's a science to supermarket set-ups, and everything about it is designed to draw you in and get you spending," says Sandra Reynolds, author of *The \$120 Food Challenge* (\$29.95; Penguin). These eight strategies put you back in control of your trolley, your health and your bank balance.

1 Shop alone

Leave the kids at home whenever possible, advises Jo Ucakalo, CEO of consumer-advice service Handle My Complaint (handlemycomplaint.com.au). Dragging the kids along can mean tantrums in the lolly aisle, extra food you don't really need or even all-round chaos. "But don't shop with a friend, either. It makes it too easy to say 'Why don't we buy these chips for later?' Shopping by yourself keeps you focused on the necessities and reduces your impulse to buy junk food," says Ucakalo.

2 Look up, look down

When you survey the shelves, scan high and low. Supermarket staff are primed to place tempting impulse buys and more expensive products at eye level, making it easier for you to grab them. If you're hunting for more generic items, such as flour or tinned tomatoes (which are essentially

similar, regardless of packaging), remember to look at all of the choices available, not just at those within arm's length or in your line of sight.

3 Buy what's in season

"We all know that buying seasonal fruit and veg cuts costs, but pay attention to the price of meat and seafood, too," says Reynolds. "When they're in season, they're cheaper and tastier as well. For example, cod and ling are well-priced fish choices in the coming colder months."

4 Scan all prices

Many supermarkets offer lower prices on staple items, such as eggs and toilet paper, thereby giving you the false impression that the whole store is full of bargains. Other items will probably be more expensive, but you'll be less likely to notice, as you're already convinced that you're getting value for money.

5 Go meat free

Having two meat-free meals a week can make a big difference at the cash register. Just don't call those meals 'vegetarian' when you serve them at home! "For people who eat a lot of meat, labelling a meal as vegetarian makes it seem less palatable," says Reynolds. To keep these meals interesting and filling, include alternative proteins, such as cottage cheese, beans, nuts or seeds.



6 Reward yourself ...

... not the supermarket! Shopping-rewards cards don't work for everyone. "To benefit from these programs, you need to collect points by making purchases at multiple outlets, from supermarkets to service stations. If you use these cards only occasionally, it can take an incredibly long time for you to see any 'rewards' from them," warns Ucakalo. "Never let a rewards card dictate your purchasing decisions. If a card gives you extra points for buying a particular item, that's great; but if you don't really need that item, it's a false economy."



Make your next trip to the supermarket a savvy one by dodging those sneaky store set-ups



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7 Shop smarter

Be wary of supermarket layouts, advises Ucakalo. “The flowers and the bakery are always close to the entrance. They smell great and your trolley is empty, so it simply feels good to buy these items.” Even a quick milk stop can be a trap, says Ucakalo. “It’s usually at the back of the store, which forces you to trek all the way there, passing temptation at every turn. And staple foods and supplies are often displayed far from each other, making you walk down the aisles yet again.” An easy fix? Make a list before you go—and stick to it!

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8 Downsize your load

Unless you’re getting ready to feed an army, you don’t need a jumbo trolley! Think of your trolley like a dinner plate: when you eat from a larger plate, you unconsciously fill it with more food than you really need. Having a larger trolley similarly encourages you to unnecessarily load it up. If you need only a few items, carry a basket—you’ll build muscle and burn more energy, too! **P**



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