

8 Simple Ways to Spring-Clean Your Grocery Buying Habits

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Do you frequently head to the supermarket for “just a few items”—but end up leaving with the better part of your paycheck spent?

It doesn't have to be this way.

Since spring is traditionally prime time for deep cleaning and decluttering at home, why not also do some spring cleaning when it comes to your grocery shopping habits?



The goal: Buy only what you need—no filling your pantry with items that will just collect dust, or your fridge with foods that will spoil before you eat them—and save some significant green in the process.

To help you with this seasonal mission, we rounded up food experts across the country to divulge their top tips for cleaning up your grocery-buying act.

Tip #1: Skip scouring the circular.

Those “buy two, get two free” and “10 for \$10” deals can certainly be enticing, but they're only a steal if you really need what's on sale.

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“Using a circular will very likely lead you to buy things you wouldn't otherwise buy, and possibly more than you would otherwise buy,” says Aner Tal, Ph.D., a researcher at Cornell University's Food and Brand Lab.

This is particularly problematic if you're not good at managing a stock of supplies—and actually using them at some point in the not-too-distant future. Otherwise, you could end up with a lot of waste.

Tal's better habit advice: Stick to your list. “Use it to bind yourself to the mast, like Ulysses,” he says. “If you really stick to the list, all those temptations won't make a difference—like ‘losing out’ on the sale.”

Tip #2: Grab a cart, not a basket.

Yes, a cart is bigger, which means you'll probably buy more items in a given trip—but over time, you'll spend less.

Say, what?

Research published in the [Journal of Marketing Research](#) found that the act of flexing your arm to hold a basket makes you more likely to purchase unnecessary extras because they seem convenient—things like candy and other

“vice” items that are strategically placed near the cashier.

Because you’re so eager to put that basket down and get out of the store, you’re more apt to focus on instant gratification than long-term goals. As a result, you make more repeat trips to the store to get what you need—and end up spending more moola in the process.

Tip #3: Recalibrate your coupon strategy.

Think coupons are available only for packaged items? It turns out that several produce companies are now offering them as well.

“You can find coupons for fresh fruits and vegetables on some major produce company websites or in their e-mails and e-newsletters,” says Jackie Newgent, R.D.N., a chef, nutritionist and author of “The With or Without Meat Cookbook.”

To find stellar produce deals, she suggests signing up for [Organic Bound](#), joining the [Berry Community](#), and subscribing to the newsletter through [Fresh Express](#).

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