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Effortless Shopping Guide

Create the perfect grocery shopping list, choose nutritious foods,
and avoid the #1 food-label trap.

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A woman with dark hair tied up, wearing an orange sleeveless top, is looking down at a white mesh shopping bag she is holding. The bag is filled with fresh produce, including a red bell pepper and green leafy vegetables. The background shows a grocery store aisle with shelves of products.

Grocery shopping can leave people frustrated and overwhelmed because supermarkets influence buying habits using behaviour design psychology, often driving ultra-processed foods.

If you enter a store without a plan, the shopping cart can quickly fill with unhealthy, convenience foods.

Discover easy steps in this guide that ensure you leave the grocery store guilt-free, happier, and with the right foods to support a healthy diet.

□ Step 1



Create a shopping list

Studies have shown that a grocery list decreases impulse buying, leading to improved weight control and healthier food choices, prioritising nutritious food.

To get started:

- 1) Make a list of all your cooking staples, most of which you won't have to buy every week.
- 2) Keep the staple list in a notes app or stuck to the fridge.
- 3) Copy the list each week and remove anything you don't need that week.
- 4) Plan your weekly meals.
- 5) Choose several recipes for the week that fit your eating plan and add all the ingredients to the same list as the staples.
- 6) Create different grocery lists for specific stores.

□ Step 2



Shop the edge of the grocery store first

You'll find fresh fruits, vegetables, proteins, and other perishables on the outer perimeters of the grocery stores.

Before entering the aisles, shopping for those foods will help you make healthier choices and keep you focused.

Avoid making the mistake of evading aisle shopping altogether.

You'll find healthy nuts, seeds, whole grain, and frozen foods throughout the aisles.

You'll remain focused and on track if you have a grocery list and cart full of nutritious foods from the outer edge.



□ Step 3



Avoid cartoons

Cartoons on food packaging do two things:

- 1) It targets kids to attract lifelong product fans.
- 2) It targets adult nostalgia, which overrides common sense.

Avoid foods with cartoons on the label. If you don't want to eat junk food, don't have cartoon packaged products in the house.

□ Step 4



Five ingredient rule

Forget packaged foods containing more than five ingredients. The more ingredients, the more ultra-processed it probably is. It likely contains artificial ingredients you can't pronounce, with little to no nutritional benefit.

However, be aware that savvy product marketers know this rule and list some products as "only five ingredients."

But five artificial ingredients are still artificial ingredients to avoid.



The #1 food label trap

Research proves that adding health claims to food packaging makes people believe a product is healthier than it is. For example, 3kg organic certified, gluten-free, plant-based essential sugar is still a bag of sugar.

Here's another example, in the 1920s, the breakfast of America was a small coffee, maybe a bread roll, and orange juice. The US's biggest bacon producer was struggling at this time, so they contacted Sigmund Freud's nephew, Edward Bernays — an American pioneer in public relations and propaganda.

Bernays reached out to 5,000 physicians and asked them if a more extensive breakfast was beneficial. Most agreed (4,500) that a more significant breakfast provided more energy and was good for the health of the American people instead of a small breakfast. Bernays arranged for this letter to be published nationwide. He encouraged articles stating that bacon and eggs should be a central part of a bigger, healthier breakfast. As a result, bacon sales increased exponentially, becoming a staple "breakfast" food.

Manufacturers often use health claims that are misleading to affect consumer choices. Bare that in mind when grocery shopping.



The bottom line

Most grocery stores encourage unhealthy eating through impulse buying of ultra-processed foods. Create a plan and prepare before grocery shopping to keep you focused, healthy, and happy.

Use this quick action list to keep on track:

- Ignore discount signs designed to encourage unhealthy eating.
- Buy mostly whole, nutrient-dense foods.
- Shop off of your list or weekly meal plan.
- Avoid purchasing foods based on the packaging.
- Read the nutrition labels and ingredient lists of packaged foods.
- Stick to your plan to avoid impulse buying.
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Reference & further reading

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