



Savvy Supermarket Shopping

How to make big savings on food costs while eating well and supporting your health and dietary needs. With lots of tips and hacks for meal planning, grocery shopping, and smart food storage, to help you achieve best value for money.

Start with a plan

Here are some planning tips to help you reduce your bills at the supermarket, without resorting to reducing the amount of food you can afford to buy, and helping you afford more food if you are currently cutting back.

- **Plan meals** based around items already in the cupboards and freezer. Don't overlook forgotten tins and packets from the back of cupboards, or items from the bottom of the freezer. Check use by date, then see how much you can save from your supermarket spend as these items can contribute to your meal planning.
- **Plan how much food to purchase** by checking who will be eating and how much they can eat.
- **Set a budget** if you need to limit total spend. Make a priority list that works within your budget. This doesn't mean you can't include feel-good treats but include them on your list so they are budgeted for.
- **Make food at home** as it's much cheaper than buying ready meals or takeout. Home cooked meals and easy-to make sauces, instead of buying

ready-made, and make packed lunches. Plan ahead so you'll have the ingredients ready.

- **Make a shopping list** to avoid impulse buys and over-buying. Instead buy only what you need. Will help to keep you focused on priorities and supports healthy choices and dietary needs.

- **Small changes add up** when you switch to cheaper brands of the breakfast cereal and teabags you use every day, or buy on discount.

Check through your routine shopping list to see if there are any items you buy regularly that you could save on. Try switching to a cheaper brand or buy economy sized boxes, and compare supermarket own label prices. Suggest starting with simple items such as teabags, to begin with, where there are lots of options and you won't need to additionally factor in dietary needs.

- **Health-check** your shopping list to see if you have included food for creating healthy balanced meals.



Free cooking classes

Learn simple cooking skills so you can make home-made meals in future and save money. Sign up to local course run by charities such as Bags of Taste, available in Hackney and Tower Hamlets, visit here to sign up bagsoftaste.org. Or other community hubs and organisations that offer free cooking classes. Ingredients are included, along with recipes cards to take home for cheap healthy meals, and nutritional information.

Choosing supermarkets

Budget supermarkets Aldi and Lidl have increased prices of their own brand budget products until some are now more expensive than premium supermarkets such as M&S and Waitrose. Price gap is closing between budget products and premium ranges or brand labels. Be prepared to shop around.

Price comparison

Shop around to see where you can get best deal and use different supermarkets for different products. Some supermarkets have budget ranges. You can check out the price of specific groceries at different high street supermarkets using supermarket comparison website trolley.co.uk which is also available as a phone app, or writing down when you visit different stores.



Loyalty discounts and cashback

- **Signing up.** All well-known supermarkets except Aldi have a loyalty card, consider signing up for them all. Check for in-store leaflets or supermarket websites to sign up and find out details of their loyalty offers, as these differ from one supermarket brand to another. Remember to take loyalty cards with you, or use downloaded loyalty apps, to scan at checkout. For online grocery shopping, register card to automatically link. Some health food shops such as Holland & Barrett have cards too.

- **Benefits.** Savings on shopping include loyalty price-drop on certain products; money-off discount vouchers off total shopping; and cashback points which convert to money-off total shopping.

- **New customer discount.** Typically £30 off at checkout first time you shop online at supermarket website or their app.

Eligibility discounts

- **NHS discounts.** Sign up for Blue Light Card for various discount offers from major supermarkets.

- **Seniors discounts.** Ten percent off at Iceland on Tuesdays, sign up for their Bonus Card and take ID.

Yellow sticker deals

All major supermarkets put yellow stickers on fresh foods that must be sold that day because it's reached the 'display by' date, and also damaged store cupboard items such as tins.

- **Time of day** when stickers are added varies. Usually added in last hour or two before closing time. Lidl and Asda add stickers in the morning as well. Get to know the routine in your local store as stickers appear at varying times.

- **Location in-store** varies, some stores have special yellow sticker shelves, others do not.

- **Discounts** between 30 and 70 percent, great way to get a half price meal. If these are foods that can be frozen, it's a great way of securing cheap ingredients and meals for the future.

Spend less on household products

TIP: Free up more budget for groceries by making cost-saving purchases on cleaning products and other household items from the supermarket. Look out for refill pouches which are up to 75 percent cheaper than buying a new bottle. Multi-buys of your tried and tested products are good value if you are confident you'll use them up.

Supermarket shelf hack

- **Frozen fruit and vegetables.** They were frozen at peak freshness and will keep in the freezer for a long time so you can use whenever you like. Often cheaper than fresh. Good value considering you are paying by weight for trimmed edible parts and not the bits you would have thrown away. Cook vegetables straight from freezer, add frozen fruit to smoothies.
- **Loose fruit and vegetables** instead of pre-packaged if you only need a small amount.
- **Avoid supermarket salad bags** of torn leaves they are poor value for money, they quickly wilt and go soggy, better to buy a whole lettuce instead.
- **Check drained weight** on food labels such as tinned fish, while comparing prices, to ensure value for money. Don't just look at the total contents weight on label as cheaper brands sometimes add more liquid to increase the contents weight, and you'll be pouring that liquid down the sink.
- **Compare price by weight or volume** using supermarket shelf labels which do the hard work for you displaying price calculation per 100g or 100ml so you can more easily compare value for money and cheapest prices per volume.

This information available for online shopping too.

- **Packaging and branding.** Attractive packaging and boxed selections entice you to spend more. Compare with the cost of buying food in simple packaging and see how much you can save.
- **Compare brands.** Price check well-known brands and supermarket own-brand each time you shop to see which products are cheaper that day.

Supermarket offers

- **Multi-buys.** Discount offers such as '3 for 2' are supermarket promotions designed to get you to spend more. Often a false saving on food and should be avoided unless you know you will use the extra without wastage, such as freezing, batch cooking, or sharing with friends of family.
- **Discount coupons and vouchers.** If these are for specific products, only use if it's something you intended to buy anyway.



Free groceries

If you are struggling to afford food and need a helping hand, there is support available.

- **Food banks.** Vouchers are required for you to get food here, issued from local services you are connected to such as DWP work coach, GP, social prescriber, or local community hub.
- **Food vouchers.** Food bank vouchers (see above) or support vouchers from local council that you spend at participating supermarkets.
- **Free food apps.**
 - [olioapp.com](https://www.olioapp.com) Spare ingredients and extra cooked food offered by local residents.
 - www.toogoodtogo.com Surplus cooked food from local shops and restaurants.



Food deadlines

- **Use by dates** on packaging are important for health safety for fresh food including fish, meat, eggs and milk so that you don't get ill. Ideally should eat all other foods by use by date too.
- **Best before dates** on packaging are a guide. Beyond the best before date for fresh food, use the smell and look test. Often still eatable for a few extra days. For store cupboard food such as pasta, rice and other grains you can eat 1-2 years after best before date if the packet hasn't been opened, and 6 months after if it has been opened and then resealed.
- **Dates are hard to read** and hard to find on packaging. TOP TIP: Copy the date onto the front of the package with permanent marker pen, write it big, either directly onto package or on a sticky label put this on packaging. Makes it really easy to see when you open fridge, freezer, or cupboard.
- **Opened food containers** in fridge generally has to be eaten within 2-3 days of opening. Write the date you opened the food directly on packaging with permanent marker pen that won't smudge off, or put sticky label on. Alternatively count forward 2-3 days and write the date by which you need to finish the food.

Smart food storage to avoid waste

Fresh food is often often thrown away because it has gone mouldy, stale or wilted. Here are tips and tricks for storing food to keep it fresh for longer.

Cheesy

- **Keep cheese cool** at the back of the fridge as it's coolest there. Don't store in the door.
- **Re-wrap** before putting back in fridge after opening supermarket packaging, unless it is resalable. Wrap in cling film or parcel it up in waxed food paper to keep it fresh.

Use your loaf

Freeze bread on day of purchase. Make the most of yellow sticker bread and stock up the freezer. Can be stored for 1-3 months depending on type of bread, label it with use by date. Defrost in kitchen, or toast slices from straight from freezer.

How to keep vegetables fresh for longer

- Keep root vegetable in the fridge - such as carrots, swedes, turnips, beetroots, parsnips, and radishes.
- **Stop them growing green leaves** and shoots by slicing off the top where it sprouts green and the root tip, to prevent them growing new leaves This will stop them shrivelling and losing nutrition.
 - **Wash and dry** to prevent rot.
 - **Wrap in paper**, either brown bag, kitchen paper, or newspaper, to absorb moisture and prevent rot as veggies sweat in the fridge.
 - **Seal up in plastic bag** as a second layer over the paper to stop veggies drying out and shrivelling.
 - **Store in the crisp drawer** if possible.

Keeping leafy greens fresh for longer

The trick to keeping green leafy vegetables - such as salad leaves, lettuce, spring onions, celery, kale, spinach, rocket and parsley - fresh for longer is to keep them hydrated. They can still drink water even though they are no longer growing in the ground. Here are tips for keeping them fresh in the fridge for longer, and also ideally store in crisp drawer.

- **Keep greens with stems fresh** (such as kale, parsley, and spring onions) by trimming off bottom of stems from freshly purchased greens. Then wrap soaking wet bundle of kitchen paper around base of trimmed stems before putting in plastic bag. Store in fridge, ideally in crisp drawer. Leaves will stay fresh for more than a week.
- **Revive wilting greens with stems** (such as kale, parsley, spring onion and celery) by trimming ends of stems with scissors then stand in a jug or glass of water, just like for cut flowers, until they revive.
- **Keep green leaves fresh** by fastening up in a plastic bag lined with kitchen paper in fridge.
- **Revive wilting green leaves** (such as lettuce leaves and rocket) by soaking in a bowl of water chilled with ice cubes. Works for celery sticks too.

Trusted advice online

www.moneysavingexpert.com/shopping/cheap-supermarket-shopping

www.lovefoodhatewaste.com



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