

The First Lady of Freebies™

**Guide to Getting Free
stuff and saving \$Money\$**



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Where to Find Free Product Samples

Best Places on the Web to Get Something for Nothing

You're used to free samples when you buy something. But what about getting products at no charge, for doing...absolutely nothing?

Where to Find Free Stuff on the Web

- **Procter and Gamble** This company offers free samples of Tide laundry detergent, Pro V Expressions hair care products, as well as Prilosec OTC and Oral B. You'll have to register with an e-mail address and a password to get your free stuff. But you'll also have access to coupons and discounts. If you already use these products, this is a great deal. You can even sign up for e-mail alerts for when one of your favorite products becomes available.
- **Total Cereal** Sign up to get a [free sample](#) of Total Cranberry Crunch cereal. All you have to do is fill out your name, address, e-mail address and birth date to get a box in the mail. You'll also receive an e-mail newsletter with recipe ideas, along with online coupons and special offers. You can always cancel the newsletter if your inbox is getting too crowded.
- **Dove.us** Get a sample of Dove's new "Therapy System" products. Simply fill out a form with your home address, e-mail address, birth date, gender and marital status, and you'll receive two products in the mail. You can also take part in a hair analysis on their web site to determine which products are right for your tresses.
- **McCormick** The company web site offers free samples and coupons on a regular basis. You just have to join the "My McCormick" Club. McCormick is known for its spices and sauces.
- **Revlon** If you register at Revlon.com, you'll receive free samples on a regular basis as well as advance notice about new products and contests. They ask for your name, address and date of birth.
- **Pantene** At the company web site, you'll receive free samples of their latest product, "New Expressions" for color treated hair.
- **Splendid Delites** If you like cookies, especially those of the sugar-free Belgian chocolate variety, this site offers a free sample of "Crownies," which contains no artificial flavors or additives. It is a \$2.99 value. Just fill out the form and you should receive your sample within a couple weeks. You have to answer a few questions like, "Have you tried other sugar-free desserts?" and "Where do you usually shop for this type of product?"

Warning: Be careful about giving away too much personal information. You might want to set up a separate e-mail account for these promotions.

Finding the Cheapest Foods at the Supermarket

Where to Look for the Lowest Priced Groceries in the Store

You can save big at the grocery store...if you know where to look. How to find the best deals at the supermarket. Look high; look low...but don't search in the obvious places. Manufacturers pay a premium to place their products in the best locations at the supermarket. That's why you want to peruse the top and bottom shelves at the grocery store for the best deals. Products at eye level may be the worst values in the aisle.

How to Find the Cheapest Foods at the Supermarket

- **Don't necessarily buy quantity at the supermarket.** Save those mega-purchases for the warehouse clubs. Purchasing more at the grocery store doesn't necessarily mean you are getting a better deal. You need to do the math. Bring along a calculator or pull out your cell phone and figure out how much you are paying per ounce. And if a sale

says, "Buy 10 cans for \$10," nine times out of ten, you can get the exact same deal even if you only buy five cans. When you take those items to check-out, you'll see that you are only being charged \$5 for those five cans.

- **Buy in season.** The produce will not only be cheaper, because local farmers have less distance to travel, but they will most likely be fresher as well. Also, buy whole apples instead of the packaged ones that are already cut and ready to eat. The labor it takes to slice all those apples adds to the price.
- **Trade coupons.** Sites like [coupon forum](#) offer a way for you to get rid of unwanted coupons and find the ones you really need, all for free! Save those valuable coupons that you may not need or want, like baby formula. They are worth a lot at trading sites.
- **Pay attention to grocery store sales flyers.** And plan meals around those sales. You can pick up free recipes at places like Food Network. Say tuna is on sale at your local supermarket, but you don't have any idea what to make with it. Do a google search for "free tuna recipes," and you'll be amazed at what you can find.
- **The less processed, the cheaper the food is.** Making a meal from scratch may not be your idea of a perfect evening. But if you involve your partner or the kids, it might actually be fun. And you'll save a bundle. Those ready-to-eat frozen foods may be convenient, but they are a lot more expensive than buying the ingredients and cooking yourself.
- **Take advantage of double coupons.** Different supermarkets have different policies. They may double coupons on certain days, or even everyday, but there might be a price limit. Get to know your store's policies, and don't be afraid to [price match](#) those coupons!

Save Money on Produce

How to Buy Fresh Fruits and Vegetables for Less

You can find the freshest, juiciest fruits, and the most tasty crisp vegetables without spending an arm and a leg. You just need to think beyond the supermarket.

Experts agree, eating plenty of fruits and vegetables everyday is part of a healthy diet. But what nutritionists don't tell you is...how to buy them without breaking the bank.

Where to Find Inexpensive Fruits and Vegetables:

- **Head to a farmers' market.** Here, you'll meet the people who actually grow the plants that end up on your table. You can ask them questions, handle the vegetables, squeeze the fruit...without the whole experience squeezing you. You see, the produce at a farmers' market is actually fresher, and often cheaper, than buying the same fruits and veggies at a supermarket. That's because transportation costs are lower. All of the produce is locally grown. Plus it will last longer once you get home. Don't let making an extra trip or driving a little farther put you off. Once you see how much you'll save and the freshness of the produce, you'll keep coming back. Plus, the entire experience of visiting a farmers' market on a Saturday morning is something you can share with the entire family.
- **Shop warehouse clubs.** They have some of the freshest produce, because they sell it fast. Don't be afraid to buy in bulk even if you have a small family. You can always freeze what you don't eat, or think about [canning and preserving](#) as a new hobby!
- **Buy in season.** If you must buy your produce at the grocery store, at least buy when local fruits and veggies are at their freshest. You'll save a bundle. And take advantage of supermarket specials and sales. Pay attention to signs that say, "locally grown." And don't be afraid to try new varieties when they are on sale. If you've never tried a tangelo or a kiwi, now is the time.
- **Plant your own vegetable garden.** Seeds literally cost pennies. Start with tomatoes and bell peppers and expand from there. Even if you don't have a yard, you can grow many varieties in containers. And if you have some land, consider planting a few fruit trees.
- **Only shop gourmet food stores on special occasions.** You may end up paying more, and the produce might actually be inferior. Because the turn-over often is not as high as a lower priced supermarket, the products could actually be sitting longer. But if there is a special variety that you just have to have, and it is only available at a high-end grocery store, it doesn't hurt to treat yourself once in a while. Just do your research, and check [supermarket sales flyers](#) before heading to the store.

Save Money with Grocery Store Sales Flyers

Spend Less by Taking Advantage of Supermarkets' Weekly Ads

You can save a lot of money just by looking at your local supermarket's sales flyer before you ever set foot in the store. You run low on food; you head to the store. That's the expensive way to grocery shop. By perusing your supermarket's weekly ads and planning your meals around them, you could save big.

How to Save Money with Grocery Store Sales Flyers

- **Combine sales with coupons.** Say your grocery store is offering a sale on Gatorade sports drinks for 50 cents each, and you can find a manufacturer's coupon for 25 cents off. You'll only end up paying 25 cents for a bottle of Gatorade. But you need to do the research before you leave the house. Grocery stores place their ads in the local newspaper every week. But even if you don't subscribe, you can also find those flyers on supermarket web sites. Be sure to go to the grocery store the day those ads come out. And plan your meals around the items that are reduced. Before you head to the supermarket, do a coupon search for the items you're looking for. Then you'll be armed and ready before you even hit the grocery aisle.
- **Remember that grocery store sales are cyclical.** Most supermarkets put certain items on sale at regular intervals say every four to six weeks. After a while you will get good at predicting sales, so you can plan your meals around those reduced prices.
- **Buy in bulk.** Don't be afraid to [stockpile](#) non-perishables. You won't run out of room! Be creative. Store cans and boxes under beds, in closets...think beyond the kitchen. Also, now is a good time to invest in an [extra freezer](#). Find one that is inexpensive at a [scratch and dent store](#). Even a small, dorm-size freezer will allow you to buy more frozen foods on sale.
- **Compare supermarket ads.** By downloading the sales flyers from competing stores, you can decide where you'll save the most money that week. Determined to shop at a certain store? Bring the ad from the competing supermarket, and see if the store will honor it. In these trying economic times, merchants will do a lot to keep your business.
- **Pay special attention to meat sales.** Meat is expensive. So, even if you don't normally buy pork tenderloin, but your supermarket is offering an incredible price on it, search for a free pork recipe online, and you might surprise yourself at what kind of a meal you could come up with. Also, you save a lot by purchasing the entire chicken, instead of quarters. You can always freeze the rest.

And if you forget to look at the weekly store ads before you head out, you can always pick up a flyer at the front of the store.

Eat Grocery Store Deli Food instead of Going out

Save Money by Eating Ready-Made Food from the Supermarket

The next time you plan a date night or a family evening out at a restaurant, think about eating in instead. Also, how to find coupons and specials on deli food.

Dinner at a moderately priced restaurant for a family of four will probably run at least \$30. That same meal, fully cooked eaten at home will likely cost as little as \$9.99. The difference? Grocery store cooks prepare your food instead of a restaurant chef.

How to Save Money by Eating Ready-Made Food from the Supermarket

- **Choose the special of the day.** You might see empty bags sitting in front of the deli counter at your local grocery store, with a sign that says, "Eight Piece Chicken Dinner for \$9.99." You simply fill the bag with your favorite chicken parts, pick two sides, and throw in some dinner rolls. You walk out of the store saving a bundle and now you don't have to worry about cooking. If you're looking for a healthier alternative, ask for baked chicken instead of fried.

- **Don't buy more than you'll eat that night.** Many ready-made deli salads and hot dishes won't last more than 24 hours. And they don't taste the best re-heated the next day. So only buy what you know you'll eat. Those containers look like they hold a lot less than they actually do. So if you ask the person behind the counter to fill up the smallest container, you'll probably have enough of that dish for your whole family.
- **Try something new.** If you're a meat-and-potatoes person, try Eggplant Parmesan or catfish and hushpuppies. Since you're not spending as much at the deli as you would at a restaurant, there's room to experiment. Feel like turkey, but it's not even close to Thanksgiving? Buy pre-cooked turkey and gravy and add some deli-made cranberry relish. With deli food, you'll have a wider selection than you would at a normal restaurant. So one person can eat Chinese while someone else chows down on barbecue brisket. And if you don't see what you like in the deli case, order it for next time. Special requests normally don't cost extra. And the money you save on restaurant tips, you can spend on dessert!
- **Look for coupons and specials.** Before you head to the store, go to all your local supermarkets' web sites within a five-mile area. Each one should feature their sales flyer online. Peruse them to find out which store has a coupon or special that day on ready-made foods.
- **Pretend like you're eating out when you're at home.** If you normally go out to dinner on Saturday night, but instead you're eating in to save money, make the dinner a little more special than a regular week night meal by lighting candles, putting out a nice table cloth and breaking out the good china. You'll relish in your family's company and feel good about how much money you're saving by not eating out!

Finding Coupons on Grocery Store Receipts

How to Take Advantage of Coupons You Receive at Check Out

Instead of throwing your supermarket receipt away, use it to save money on future purchases!

You expect to spend money (these days, a lot of it) when you go through the check out line at the grocery store. But if you pay attention to the back of your receipt, you may end up saving money when you return to the store.

How to Take Advantage of Coupons on Grocery Store Receipts:

- **There are two kinds of coupons on those receipts.** Ones that are related to what you have just purchased, and those that advertise nearby businesses. You can save money with both. Say you have just bought canned soup. If the soup company has just launched a brand new variety of soup, your receipt could contain valuable savings, if you are willing to try a new product. Some grocery stores print the same coupons for everyone...discounts at local merchants like hair salons and tire centers. Often you'll receive "buy one, get one free" deals as well as substantial savings on everything from one-hour massages to a free or discounted tire rotation. Most of these businesses will be close by, or they wouldn't advertise at your supermarket. So if you are looking for a new hair stylist, or you need an oil change, you might want to pay close attention to the backs of those receipts.
- **Combine grocery store receipt coupons with other promotions.** Unless the coupon states, "not valid with other offers," hold on to the coupon and wait for another one in your local newspaper. Also do an online search and see if you can find another manufacturer's coupon for the same item. And then check the sales flyer for different grocery stores in your area to see which has the product on sale. Those flyers are usually posted on the store's web site and updated weekly.
- **Ask the cashier if he/she has any coupons.** If you don't see what you are looking for on sale, and can't find a coupon, it wouldn't hurt to ask the check out person for any extra coupons you may have overlooked. Even if you are in the self-check area, there is always someone available to help. And that person is usually "in the know" about impending sales and specials. If you get to know the people who work at your local store, they will often go out of their way to help you. Everyone is in the same boat when it comes to rising grocery prices.

Finally, remember the coupons located on the back of your receipt usually don't expire. So hold on to them and pull one out the next time you need [new tires](#) or an [oil change](#).

Find Cheaper Groceries at Drug Stores

Many Pharmacies Carry Lower Priced Food Items than Supermarkets

Next time you're at Walgreens, CVS or Rite Aid stock up on groceries as well as pharmaceuticals. With their coupons and discounts, you can often find better deals.

With grocery prices going up faster than you can say, "what's for dinner?" you might want to start buying dinner where you normally get your prescriptions filled, the drug store. No, pharmacists aren't replacing meat cutters. But what is happening, is that drug stores are getting more and more into the grocery business. Sure, you could always buy paper towels or mouth wash at the pharmacy. But now, you can walk out of the store with frozen dinners, ice cream and even canned tuna, salmon and macaroni and cheese. And the deals are often better than at the supermarket. But you need to watch for those [coupons](#).

How to Get the Best Prices on Food at the Drug Store

- **Clip coupons from the Sunday paper.** You'll find flyers chock full of two-for-one deals, 50% discounts, and other terrific bargains. If you don't buy the Sunday newspaper check with your local drug store's web site. Often the sales and coupons are listed there and ready to print out. Try to combine manufacturer's coupons with sale items for extra savings. You might even be able to use two coupons for the same item. Check the small print to see if the discounts are valid with other offers.
- **Take advantage of [price matching](#).** If your local drug store isn't offering these specials, but one farther away is, bring the drug store coupons into your local supermarket and see if they'll match the price. Often, grocery stores will try to accommodate you in order to keep your business. If the cashier won't honor the competition's discount, talk to a manager. You never know what you can accomplish unless you try.
- **Check the prices online before you go shopping.** With your drug store coupons and sale prices in hand, go to your supermarket's web site and pull up their weekly flyer. You should see the entire week's sales and specials listed on the site...the same information that you'll find in the flyer located at the front of the store. Then compare prices and see where you'll get the best deals. You might be surprised to find that your local pharmacy has a better price on gourmet spices than the grocery store. Or that baked beans are on sale for 99 cents at Walgreens, but your closest supermarket offers the same product for twice as much

Planning a Meal around Coupons

How to Save Using Grocery Store Discounts, Sales and Specials

Eat only what's on sale and only buy foods you have a coupon for? It can be done.

If it's not on sale, don't buy it. If you don't have a coupon for it, don't put it your cart. Words of wisdom...or just plain not doable? You decide. But if you can plan a meal around coupons and sale items, you can save yourself a bundle.

How to Plan a Meal around Coupons:

1. **Gather grocery store sales flyers.** To do this, you don't have to run to every store in town. Simply go to each supermarket's web site and print out their sales circular, the same one located at the front of the store. Then compare all the sale items for the week. If you find rump roast on sale at one store, but boxed mashed potatoes are half price at another store, you don't necessarily have to go to each supermarket. Simply bring the competition's flyer to your closest store. They should match the price. If the cashier won't budge, ask to talk to the manager. [Price matching](#) is common practice. After all, grocery stores want to hold on to loyal customers.
2. **Check for coupons in the Sunday and Wednesday newspapers.** If you don't subscribe to either one, you don't have to go out and buy a paper. Many of the same manufacturer coupons are available online. Simply do a search for the

product you are looking for. Also check the manufacturer's web site. If they don't offer a coupon for your favorite product at the time, you can get on an e-mail list, and the company will notify you when one's available.

3. **Go shopping!** Once you've gathered up your coupons and you know which items are on sale, it's time to hit the road (but make sure you go on [double coupon day](#).) Try to combine manufacturers' coupons with store sales. You'll realize some big savings. It might be a challenge to come up with a menu based on nothing but these items. But if you're creative, it will be easy. Once you have all your groceries, but you're not certain how to use them all in a recipe, do an online search for recipes using those ingredients. You might be surprised at what you'll find. Also, try to use items you already have, like spices. They are really expensive and can run up your grocery bill very quickly.

Finally, if you are completely stumped and can't find the items you need on sale at the grocery store, broaden your search. Try other places like farmer's markets where produce is often cheaper, and [drug stores](#), where frozen, boxed and canned foods are often discounted.

How to Negotiate a Better Deal

Haggling Your Way to a Lower Price

Don't like the price, ask for a better one! On certain items you can negotiate and win. You, too, can become an expert negotiator.

Haggling over a price doesn't just apply to cars anymore. You can bargain down the cost on just about any high ticket item. All you have to do is ask. The tactic may not always work, but it never hurts to try.

How to Negotiate a Better Deal:

- **Do your homework.** If you see a recliner you just love at your local retailer, but found it cheaper at a store 100 miles away, tell the manager. Often, if you come armed with the competition's sales flyer, they'll give you the lower price just to keep your business.
- **Look online.** The world wide web offers not only a huge selection, but also a world of competition for retailers. Often just a quick search will land you a better deal. Print out the offer and see if your local store will either match it or beat it. And consumers forget that online retailers do have 800 numbers. It wouldn't hurt to call and ask for a deal. Even if that's not in the cards, the person on the phone may be able to tell you when the item will go on sale or other specials coming up.
- **Look for imperfections.** If you see a small scratch on an appliance, or a button missing on a dress, ask the salesperson to give you at least a 10 percent discount, but try for 20. And if you bought an item at full price and the next day, it goes on sale, bring it back and demand to get the sale price. A sharp retailer will give you the sale price up to a week later.
- **Shop where they know your name.** Sometimes you can get a better deal at a local independent store rather than a nationwide chain. If you're a good customer, and you're buying a high ticket item, or several high ticket items, you're likely to have some bargaining power. If you're getting nowhere with the sales person, ask for the manager. Be polite, but firm. Remember, you can always walk out.
- **Use the competition's coupons.** If you're trying to get a graduation diploma framed, bring in any framing coupon you can find from anywhere. Often stores will honor their competitor's [coupons](#). And if you don't have one, ask if the store is running any coupon specials. Often, they will give you a break, even if you don't hand them any paper.

Remember, it never hurts to ask. Really, what do you have to lose? And with retail markups often at least 50 percent, you have a lot to gain.