

MSU Extension Publication Archive

Archive copy of publication, do not use for current recommendations. Up-to-date information about many topics can be obtained from your local Extension office.

The Supermarket Game - Expanded Nutrition & Family Programs
Michigan State University
Cooperative Extension Service
January 1981
4 pages

The PDF file was provided courtesy of the Michigan State University Library

Scroll down to view the publication.

Expanded Nutrition & Family Programs



The Supermarket Game (A/V)

THE BIG IDEA (*Your Goal*)

When I (the aide) have taught this lesson, the homemaker will be able to:

1. **Understand** that grocery stores use clever methods to get us to buy more. By being alert to these, the consumer can get the most for the food dollar.
2. **Describe** at least three ways her favorite grocery store encourages her to buy.
3. **Buy** only items on her shopping list, buying other things only when they are a better price.
4. **Plan** for shopping by checking newspaper ads, making a list, and eating something before she leaves for the store.

FACTS BEHIND THE BIG IDEA (*For You to Show and Tell the Homemaker*)

Let's play the Supermarket Game. Each player runs for the nearest grocery cart. The object is to pick out a week's groceries for your family at the lowest cost. Go!

Kid's stuff? Hardly. Slow down a moment and look at the tantalizing obstacle course ahead of you—that irresistible array of goods, both food and nonfood. Let's take a look at the "why's" of this array. It's all planned to get you to buy. **You** make the decisions. When you are aware of the gimmicks, you can save money.

Ever notice how many of the advertised "special" displays are at the end of the aisle? It's not by chance. More traffic passes there. You can't help but look at it. Stores hope you will buy. Prices may or may not be "special." It helps to have an idea of the usual price.

Often the higher priced national brands will be placed at eye level where you look first. Below them you may find the store brand, which is often lower priced.

Displays can wear down your resistance without your knowing it. Notice the checkout line. There you are . . . waiting. Gum, candy, magazines, cigarettes are in front of you. Before you know it, you've dropped a few into your cart.

Pricing is a science in itself. Surveys indicate that shoppers are more inclined to respond to multiple pricings—2 for 65 cents, for example. Often the price is no better; in fact, it may be higher than a single item. Compare prices. If the multiple price turns out to be cheaper, you don't have to buy the set if you don't need all of them. The checker will usually divide the price and round it up.

A "loss leader" is an item that a store marks down or gives a very low markup. These usually are good price deals, but recognize what they're for. These "loss leaders" bait you to come into the store. Then, the store tries to sell you more. Often related items will be displayed nearby. You might find some cheese spreads near the crackers, or salad dressings near the vegetables.

On "special days"—often Thursdays or weekends—the consumer really can save money. On these days, take your newspaper ad with you to remind the checker of the special price on particular items.

Some stores are helping out by placing "unit prices" on items. This means price per measure—how much each ounce costs. If you buy by price, unit pricing can help you save money.

Unit pricing also helps you see past another silent seller. Companies want the most exposure to the eye, so boxes of crackers or cereals, for example, may be large. Actually, they might hold no more than smaller looking boxes.

Another factor in packaging is color. Yellows, oranges and reds are warm colors, most visible and most remembered. Take a look down the aisle and you'll see these colors on packages.

And how can you resist a child's plea for a little treat? Children make a lot of grocery store decisions. Often the "kiddie" displays are set up at the end of an aisle, where children are getting restless. Children remember commercials on TV. They'll want what they can get with box tops, or what's free inside the box.

Trading stamps, giveaways, and prizes can influence your buying. They cost money; you pay in the long run.

EXPANDED NUTRITION & FAMILY PROGRAMS

Stamps, colors, smells, special deals—shoppers are human, and some are gullible. The shopper should:

- Know marketing methods like those we've mentioned.
- Make a list—it helps her resist impulse buying.
- Never go grocery shopping when hungry—everything looks doubly good.
- Shop as seldom as possible. Once a week is better than several times a week.
- Do not take children along.
- Do not take husband or other adults along or send them for groceries. They may not resist the kinds of marketing methods the shopper has learned about.

There's a home base—the checkout counter—just ahead. How did you and your EFNEP homemakers make out with the Supermarket Game? (See handout.) Follow the rules, know the obstacles, and YOU are the winner.

THINGS TO DO BEFORE VISIT

As you do your own grocery shopping, list some ways you notice your own store encour-

ages you to buy more. Where are the children's items? What kinds of things are in displays at the end of the aisle? Which are at eye-level on the shelves? (Are they the same price as the same item of a different brand on a lower shelf?)

If you know the store manager, ask about techniques used to make products more noticeable. How does the store promote new products?

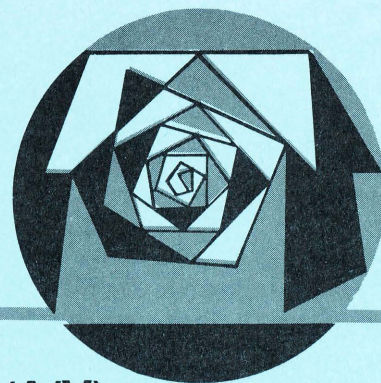
Look through newspaper ads for "specials." Do you think they really *are* specials? How do the ads encourage you to buy more? Do they include any "2 for \$_" items? What gets the most space in the ad? Are there any coupons?

HOW DO YOU KNOW SHE LEARNED?

If the homemaker can list techniques her store uses, she's on her way to getting the most for her money. If she's making a list and buying only what's on it (or substituting only when she can get a *better* deal), you may have a success story!

REFERENCES (Available in Your State)

Expanded Nutrition & Family Programs



2-b

The Supermarket Game (A/V)

(Take this sheet on home visits)

THE BIG IDEA

Grocery stores use clever ways to get us to buy more. By being alert to these, the consumer can get the most for the food dollar.

HOW TO PRESENT THE BIG IDEA

Chat about ways grocery stores encourage us to buy.

Suggest what to do to avoid falling for them. What has the homemaker noticed and how has she "won the game"? (This is an evaluation tip to give you an idea of what she has learned. See your reference sheet for more details.) Has she ever gone shopping while hungry? What happened?

Thumb through the grocery ads she has, or show her some you brought. What might she buy this week? READ the item and price as she writes them down on her grocery list. Can you point out lures such as "loss leaders"?

Play the Supermarket Game on the back of her handout.

If there's time, you, the homemaker, and some neighbors may want to visit a grocery store. Check with the manager ahead of time. At the same time you scout for "lures," you could talk about unit pricing, store brands, open dating, nutrition labeling, packaging, and the like.

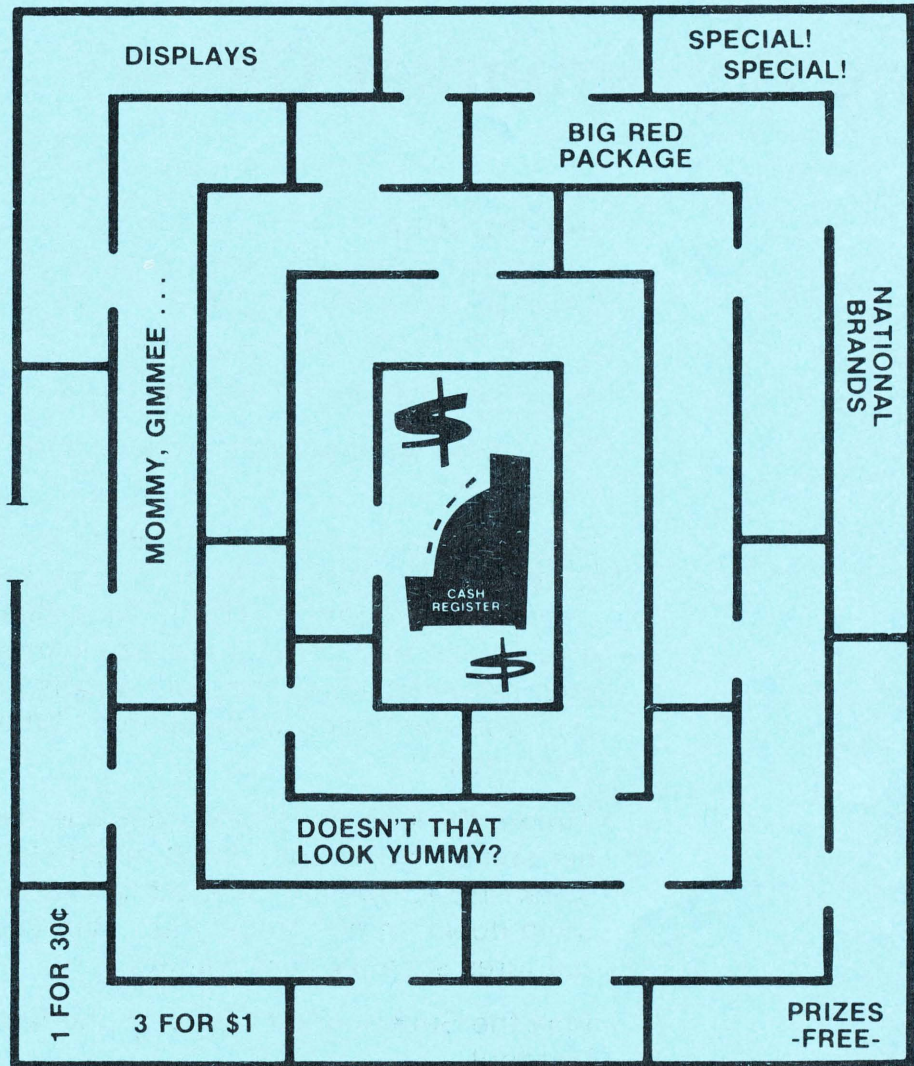
HOW DO YOU KNOW SHE LEARNED?

Today: Can homemaker tell you ways that stores get her to buy more?

For Next Time: Find out if she made and used a list.

EXPANDED NUTRITION & FAMILY PROGRAMS

The Supermarket Game



It's a-maze-ing where the money goes!

Take your list and buy no more

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



MSU is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Institution. Cooperative Extension Service programs are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, or sex.

Issued in furtherance of cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics, acts of May 8, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Gordon E. Guyer, Director, Cooperative Extension Service, Michigan State University, E. Lansing, MI 48824.

This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by the Cooperative Extension Service or bias against those not mentioned. This bulletin becomes public property upon publication and may be reprinted verbatim as a separate or within another publication with credit to MSU. Reprinting cannot be used to endorse or advertise a commercial product or company.

1P-1M-1 : 81-UP

O-12694 Michigan State University Printing