

# Extreme Couponing

*Author – Amanda Christensen*



It is estimated that consumers save more than \$3 billion with coupons on a yearly basis! With TV shows, blog posts and YouTube channels shedding light on people who consider “couponing” a sport, it’s easy to wonder, “Do I have to be an extremist to save that much on my grocery bill?” Some may be scared away at the thought of thick coupon binders, stockpiles that take over your home and carts full of toothpaste; but it is possible to save on your groceries without letting the coupon craze take over your life. This article will take you

through simple steps and tips to help you cut your grocery bill.

### 1. Stay organized.

- Develop a meal plan for your family. You can do this weekly, twice a month or monthly – whatever works best for you.
- Check your grocery store's weekly ad and try to incorporate foods that are on sale into your meal plan. Most items go on sale every 12 weeks, so keep this in mind when determining how much of a sale item you should stock up on; a three-month supply is usually all you should buy.
- Organize your pantry and keep track of what items you already have. Some shoppers even keep an inventory list for their pantry so they know when they are running low on certain items.
- After you plan your meals and organize your pantry, determine what still needs to be bought from the store and make a list. Once at the store, stick as close to your list as possible.
- The number one trick to saving money is matching up store sales with your coupons!

### 2. Find your coupons.

- There are extreme couponers who subscribe to upwards of five Sunday newspapers just to get the weekly inserts. You do not have to do this. If you feel like getting the paper on Sundays go for it. But don't feel like you need to buy 10 papers to save money.
- Coupons can also be found on many websites, including retailer websites. There are a ton of blogs and sites that maintain their own coupon database. Find one that you like and feel comfortable using.
- If your store has a loyalty rewards program, check for downloadable coupons on their website. These electronic coupons will stay on your card and be automatically used when applicable after you swipe your loyalty card.
- After you have your coupons, it is time to organize them.

There is no set rule for how to keep track of them. Find a way that works well for you and stick to it. Some use mini file folders, others use huge binders or envelopes.

- Remember: Just because you have a coupon for something does not mean you need to buy it. There is no sense in buying 10 jars of pickles because they are cheap, then trying to find recipes for the next 6 months that use pickles.

3. Ask your store about their coupon policies.

- Some stores will match retailer coupons. Others will even accept expired coupons. There are time periods when some stores will double or even triple the value of your coupons. Check with your store so you know exactly what to expect when using your coupons.

Don't expect your grocery bill to be cut in half the first time. Couponing is a skill that takes time and practice. The more you coupon, the better you will become at staying organized and saving money. These tips will allow you to cut your grocery bill with just a short amount of preparation time. What tips do you have for beginner couponers?



Amanda is an Extension Assistant Professor for Utah State University. She has a master's degree in consumer sciences from Utah State and is proud to call herself an Aggie! Amanda loves teaching and enabling individuals and families to make smart money decisions.

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