



## WESTERN REGION

### Grocery and Household Items for Free or Close to It

Dish soap, feminine hygiene products (especially panty liners) , shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, razors, shaving cream, toothpaste, toothbrushes, floss, body lotion, body wash, deodorant, air freshener spray, makeup, lip care products, OTC medicines (such as pain relievers, cough drops, antihistamines, cold medicine), vitamins, tissues, napkins, paper towels (Marcal), candles, cleaning supplies, spices, light bulbs, dog treats, cat treats, hand soap, soup, candy, gum, fruit snacks, peanut butter, nut clusters, fruit shapes, cereal, oatmeal, crackers, chips, candy, cake mix (Betty Crocker), frosting, brownie & cookie mix, juice boxes (i.e., TreeTop - 3 to a pack), frozen veggies, yogurt, pasta, pasta sauce, salad dressing (Kraft, Wishbone), Smart Balance eggs, Smart Balance butter blend, BBQ sauce, cooking oil, mustard, ketchup, tuna, salsa, seasonings, instant mashed potatoes and potatoes au gratin, snack items (such as Flipz, popcorn, rice cakes), cheese (although for some couponers: 'cheese' is rarely discounted), postcards.

#### **Experienced couponer:**

Toothpaste: FREE to \$.25

Shampoo: FREE

Floss: FREE

Oatmeal: FREE

Pasta: FREE

Cereal (Kashi/Cascadia/Cheerios/Kelloggs): FREE to \$1.00

Bisquick: FREE to \$.75

Yogurt: FREE to \$1.50 (for 32 oz.)

Deodorant: FREE to \$.75

Toilet paper (Northern, MD or Cottonelle Dbl. 12-Pack): \$1.99 to \$3.50

Juice (One Gallon): \$1.00

Granola Bars (10-ct Box): FREE to \$1.00

Laundry Detergent (50 oz.): FREE to \$1.99

Peanut Butter (17 oz): \$ 1.00

Crackers (Wheat Thins/Triscuit/Kashi/Keebler): FREE to \$1.00

Cheese Sticks (12-16 ct.): \$.99 to \$3.00

Lunch Meat (Land-o-Frost/Hillshire 16 oz.): \$.49 to \$2.00

Soap (Dial/Dove): FREE to \$1.50 for a 6-8 pack

**Experienced couponer from Idaho:** "The following is a list of items that I have received free on several occasions and have not paid for once in the last year and a half (a lot of these items, more often than not, I am actually PAID to buy as they are moneymakers!): Toothpaste, body wash (men's & women's), toothbrushes, floss, salad dressing, lotion, razors, lip care products, pasta, mustard, ketchup, relish, eye



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drops, popcorn, cough drops, juice boxes, air fresheners, deodorant, face wash, household cleaners, panty liners. “

**Experienced couponer from Fresno, California:** “There is not much I able to purchase for free. Typically I can get toothpaste and toothbrushes on clearance and pay \$.25 to \$.50. Deodorant, coupled with a sale, \$1. Typically, if a blog calls for a price to be \$1.99, I can expect \$2.24. In the Fresno area, there is no doubling of coupons. Groceries (food only) for my family of three usually run \$80/week. I have been trying to get that down while, at the same time, keep ‘fresh’ on the menu. Where I save most of my monies is on personal care items... which helps a lot and I don’t feel guilty shaving my legs using expensive razors!”

**Experienced couponer from California:** “I am always able to buy trial-size products for free using coupons. I have gotten Shout wipes, Tide laundry detergent, Herbal Essence shampoo and conditioner, body lotion, and more. I also combine manufacturer coupons with store coupons during a sale, and receive a rebate – making all the products not only free but a moneymaker!”

I never pay for toothpaste or more than \$1.50 for a 14 oz. box of cereal.

### Grocery and Drug Store Chains Most Frequented

Albertsons, Associated Foods, Bartells, King Soopers, Kings, Target, FoodMaxx, Fred Meyer, Fry’s, Grocery Outlet, Haggans, Pavillions, Ralphs, Raley’s, Safeway, Savemart, Vons, Smart & Final, Smith’s, Stater Bros, Super 1, Thriftway, Winco, Walmart, Yokes, Vons, Superior Grocers (good one in Los Angeles), Trader Joe’s, Costco, QFC, CVS, RiteAid, Kmart, Walgreens, KTA (in Hawaii), The Commissary (for military)

### Good Deals – Single or Repeat Offers - & Stores for Deals

**Albertsons, Walgreens, & Walmart:** From an experienced couponer in Idaho – “Albertsons and Walgreens are my two main stores. I will shop at Walmart for produce and perishable items at times and also to pick up freebies and travel items. Albertson’s is my true love, however, as my area has double coupons pretty often so I am able to frequently score free items. A lot of different kinds of crackers (Club, Ritz, Wheat Thins, CheezIts, etc) will often go on sale for \$2 – when paired with a \$1 off coupon in the paper or online and doubled, I can get these free. ”

**Walgreens & CVS:** 90% of the free toothpaste, toothbrushes, shaving cream, and razors come from Walgreens – by pairing available coupons with RR (Register Reward)s. The remaining 10% of free items mostly comes from CVS coupons paired with ECB’s (Extra Care Bucks).

**Walgreens:** Regular deals – using coupons and RR – for shampoo, conditioner, body wash, and deodorant. **Another couponer** – “Free: shaving cream, shampoo, conditioner, floss, vitamins, candy, and



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postcards. Definitely a YMMV store [Your Mileage May Vary – meaning that the deal may or may not work or be in your store]; fortunately, mine is very BOGO (Buy One, Get One Free) friendly, and if I make 12 visits through the checkout lane to roll Catalinas between products, the cashiers don't raise an eyebrow." **Experienced couponer from Idaho** – "I love Walgreens because of all of the great freebies and moneymakers you can get on beauty care and toiletry items like makeup, razors, body wash, and lotion. I heart Walgreens!" **Experienced couponer from Washington** – "Kotex U tampons and liners were on sale – and I used coupons and earned Register Rewards. I now have about seven free packages." **Couponer from Southern California** – "You can often roll your Register Rewards from one promotion to the next with little out of pocket cost. Promotions change each week – I got greeting cards one week, razors the next, pads a couple of weeks ago, etc. It's usually some bathroom item, but the longer you roll your reward from week to week, the more you save."

**Walgreens & RiteAid: Somewhat experienced couponer from Lake Stevens, Washington** – "Walgreens is my new 'deal' place, and I almost never use RiteAid since Walgreens has the same deals or better on more products, and I like the Register Rewards instead of rebate checks."

**RiteAid & Safeway:** I only pay the sales tax when there is a Buy One, Get One Free (BOGO) deal for Herbal Essence shampoo.

**RiteAid & CVS:** Constantly have Buy One, Get One Free (BOGO) sales on makeup. Items, such as toothpaste, hair products, etc., always seem to be on sale. **Experienced couponer from Fresno, California** – "Purex – BOGO for \$9, two \$1/1 manufacturer coupons with ECBs from CVS or \$5 off when you buy \$25 at RiteAid = \$2.10 each."

**RiteAid:** My local store is overpriced and I find that, after coupons, they are typically more expensive than Target. So I go there mainly to take advantage of a scenario in which video rewards, store coupons, manufacturer coupons and SCRs (Single Check Rebates) combine to create a moneymaker. Typically, this will mean free shampoo, soap and diapers. BUT... this is the best place to go for BOGOs – I scored over \$25 in Cover Girl product earlier this year because they are so BOGO friendly. I do like to take advantage of their seasonal discounts – you can score some really great home gifts for 75% off during the post-Christmas season. **Another couponer** – "Using the \$5/20 Rite Aid coupon paired with free after rebate items and other coupons, I can get a free pack of diapers (usually Huggies) about twice per month. Rite Aid has had a \$5/20 coupon valid for almost two years straight. I get A LOT of free merchandise there using this coupon." **Couponer from Southern California** – "RiteAid has video values in ad coupons and its Single Check Rebates. I got a GREAT deal on Claritin using a rebate promotion with in-ad coupons. Enough Claritin for a year, and RiteAid paid me to take it home."

**RiteAid, Walgreens, Kroger, Winco, SuperTarget, & Super Walmart:** "I shop at Rite Aid heavily (at least once per week), Walgreens once every other month, and then my local Kroger store (Smith's) once a



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week for groceries. I also frequent Winco and SuperTarget about once per month each for groceries, and Super Walmart probably once every other month.”

**Walgreens, CVS, RiteAid, & Kroger: Couponer from California** – “I prefer CVS, RiteAid, and Kroger and am getting a little sick of Walgreens because you always need fillers and spend more money than you want to out-of-pocket. As far as repeat deals, you can get as many as you want at Walgreens so long as you make separate transactions – but, as I said, you end up spending more money than desired.”

**CVS: Couponer from Arizona** – “I get most of my health and beauty products for free from CVS, including Dawn Hand Renewal.”

**Kmart: Couponer from Southern California** – “This store has its super-doubles where Kmart doubles up to \$4 every once in a while. Free during super-doubles: household cleaners, cheap/free hotdogs, nail clippers & files, shampoo, body wash, pads, etc.”

**Albertsons:** Free boxes of cereal – or .25/box at most - with Catalinas. Ortega chili peppers are free on Albertsons doubler days. 150 burritos, and I made \$10. **Another couponer** – “I purchase Betty Crocker fruit shapes here when I can take advantage of catalinas and store promos (during the last promo I “purchased” 45 boxes and earned \$.50!). I look for deals on oatmeal also but I’d say for weekly purchases I just wait for doublers and pair these with coupons to score free cheese, yogurt, soup and hair-spray.” **Experienced couponer from Colorado** – “Good deals on Marcal paper towels and toilet paper, frozen veggies, peanut butter, spices, and marinade.” **Couponer from Spokane, Washington** – “I like to get the fruit chillers at this store. They’re new – my kids love them but they cost \$2.19 at the regular price. With \$1 coupon doubled, I pay \$.19! If there weren’t coupons, this would change.” **Experienced couponer from Idaho** – “My favorite repeat deals at this store: 1. Treetop juice boxes (3pk) regularly go on sale for \$1 and you can often find coupons in the paper or on the internet for \$1/2 Treetop products. Pair those with a double coupon (which Albertsons in my area has frequently) and they are free. 2. Ronzoni Smart Taste and Healthy Harvest pasta often goes on sale for 2/\$3. We can often find coupons online for \$.75/1 and paired with a double, they are free. 3. Danimals yogurt products often go on sale for \$2. Use a \$1/1 coupon we often get in the paper and a double coupon and they are FREE!” **Experienced couponer from Idaho** – “Repeat sales at this store on Post and Quaker Oats cereals between February, March, and April each year. Also, Albertsons generally comes out with doublers every three week. Great meal sales too.” **Experienced couponer from Washington** – “At Albertsons, the cereal deals are too numerous to keep track of, and I also use their doublers for free items A LOT.” **Experienced couponer from Washington** – “Sargento’s cheese was recently a great deal at this store. It was 2 for \$4, and I had \$2 off coupons for each so the two packages were free. I also had \$1 off Colgate toothbrushes and toothpaste coupons and they were \$1 each and also free.”

**Albertsons & Super 1: Experienced couponer from Montana** – “I usually shop a local store called Super 1. Since this store doesn’t take Internet coupons, I use Albertsons for coupon shopping because of the



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Twice the Value Coupons and Catalinas. FREE at Albertsons: Lysol Wipes, hot dogs, cereal, crackers, Tree Top Juice Boxes!”

**Albertsons & Target:** These stores always have coupons that are specific to their stores. By stacking a manufacturer coupon on top of a store coupon, you often can get a free item.

**Associated Foods:** There is a branch here in Utah that doubles coupons up to \$1 every day.

**Fred Meyer:** Occasional sales on 14 oz. boxes of cereal for \$2/box (with Fred Meyer coupon) or \$5/3 and I pair them with mfg. coupons. I buy as many boxes as I can to use and stock until the next sale.

**Couponer** – “I opened a credit card with this store which gives me points for every purchase anywhere and give double points on every FM purchase. I receive at least \$50 back in coupons three times a year just for putting the points on this card. Recently, we made a large purchase with this card and received back a coupon for \$121.00! YEAH! Free groceries! We ALWAYS pay off the card each month to avoid paying interest. There is no annual fee on the card, and FM gave me a \$40 coupon just to open the account. **Another couponer** – “This store is the most dependable when it comes to a low-base price. So when I’m getting items that I rarely see coupons for, this is where I shop. Their recently released e-coupon technology has made them an even sweeter option. By stacking store e-coupons, store coupons, cellfire & shortcuts coupons and printed manufacturer coupons, I generally expect to pay between 30% and 50% of original retail. The FM rewards card is great too and allows me to earn (on average) \$56 in rebates annually.” **Couponer from Spokane, Washington** – “This store has great prices on Betty Crocker instant potatoes – with e-coupons and coupons. The regular price is \$.79.”

**Kings: Experienced couponer from Colorado** – “Good for evaporated milk (holidays), canned fruit, spices, marinade, salad dressing, Goldfish crackers, Smart Balance eggs & butter blend, and vitamins.”

**Safeway:** Repeat deals on cereal. If you wait long enough, you can find most anything on sale. 18-count eggs – Buy One, Get One Free, Lucerne cream cheese for \$1.99, Hillshire Farm Sausage for \$2.50, Lean Cuisine or Smart Ones frozen meals for \$2.00, various brands of ice cream for \$2.50, and Classico Pasta Sauce for \$1.99. **Couponer** – “I take advantage of the ‘purchase \$50 in groceries, receive \$10 off’ deals. The last time I did this, I spent just \$17 out of pocket. Like Kroger, Safeway allows me to stack several coupons for some sweet deals. I typically wait for a store promo/Catalina deal to sweeten it further. I’ll stack printed manufacturer coupons, store coupons, e-coupons (PG&E, Shortcuts, Cellfire) and use Safeway doublers on top of that. My all-time best grocery score was at Safeway – the till rang up for \$97.00 and after coupons, Safeway paid ME eleven cents! I generally score most of my Bisquick, baking goods (cookie/cake mixes, frosting, etc.), cereal, Betty Crocker fruit shapes, nut clusters and granola bars here for near-free.” **Experienced couponer from California** – “At Safeway, I regularly combine e-coupons (Shortcuts, Cellfire, Safeway, P&G) with regular paper coupons to get discounted items. These



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vary due to coupons posted or available. At this store (as well as RiteAid, Walgreens, & CVS), I regularly combine in-ad coupons, Catalinas, and manufacturer coupons to get discounted items, such as household cleaning supplies, crackers, cookies, and canned food.” **Experienced couponer from Washington** – “Stack Cellfire with coupons for some decent deals at this store.” **Intermediate couponer from Colorado** – “I get most of my free or close to free deals at Safeway. This store double coupons and I do the Catalina deals. I then use the Catalinas to purchase the things that don’t often have coupons – like produce, milk, and meat.” **Experienced couponer from Colorado** – “Good deals on salsa, canned fruit, salad dressing and pasta. When I have to buy meat, usually chicken breasts, I buy when Safeway has their frozen 4lb bags for \$6.76 and use a \$1.00 coupon—so that’s not full price, just about 45% off.”

**Safeway & Albertsons:** Canned veggies for \$.40 or less; tortillas for \$.99 or less; whole wheat bread for \$1.50 or less; Yoplait yogurt for \$.50 or less (\$.38 or less with coupons); margarine, pancake mix, and cereal for \$.50 or less; frozen dinners and sour cream (16 oz.) for \$1 or less; lunch meat for \$2 or less; cheese for \$1 or less; toilet paper for \$4 or less for 12 double rolls. **Couponer who lives near Seattle** – “Cereal is a repeat deal with Catalinas and coupons at both stores.”

**Savemart: Experienced couponer from Fresno, California** – “This store will clear miscellaneous items, like a box of Finish dishwashing soap, for \$2 with a \$.50 coupon. I still have 10 boxes from last November.”

**Target:** Gillette Body Wash, Reach Floss, pain relievers, light bulbs – FREE; Smuckers Squeeze jam for \$1.40 or less; Band-aids for \$.50 or less; Toothpaste for \$.25 or less (I haven’t found any free deals on toothpaste in my area); Arm & Hammer laundry detergent for \$3 for 35 loads. This is an “awesome” store for household products, clothes, and miscellaneous items. **Experienced couponer from Colorado** – “Good deals on tuna.” **Another couponer** – “Free: J&J Buddies Bars, toothpaste, band aids, and light bulbs. Seasonally, I purchase my Christmas decor (everything from ornaments to bedding) at 90% off. Repeat deals are batteries, crackers, Kashi cereal, and toys – all of which I can purchase for between 50%-75% off retail. Also seasonally, I purchase toys during the post-Christmas sale for 75% off (these items take care of all my birthday and holiday spending for the entire year). Although clearance deals at Target are pretty dependable, the items themselves are random. In recent months I’ve scored free soap, near-free bulk packs of Quaker oatmeal and a bunch of L’Oreal product for 10% retail just by combining clearance with coupons.” **Couponer who lives near Seattle, Washington** – “My main repeat deal at Target is Gillette Razors – normally around \$9 for one, and I can get them for free or at most \$.46. Target often has these razors on sale for \$7 with a Buy Two and Get \$5 gift card. When paired with a \$4 off manufacturer coupon from Gillette, you can’t go wrong.” **Couponer from California** – “You can do repeat deals at Target depending on the number of coupons you have. For example, I did the Scrubbing Bubbles Shower Sprayer deal five times and made money each time. It was \$7.99 minus a \$5 coupon and a with \$5 Target gift card back. I went back to Target with my gift cards (\$25 worth) and purchased





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some clothing items for my kids as well as the Schick razors. I used the \$5 off Schick coupons and the \$5 off \$30 kids clothing coupon in addition to my \$25 gift card. Total was \$.30 out of pocket. Then I got back \$15 in Target gift cards. AWESOME!" **Experienced couponer from Fresno, California** – "Toothbrushes – typical sale at \$2.11 minus \$1 coupon. Toothpaste – same scenario. Deodorant – typical sale at \$2.74 minus \$1 coupon. Body wash – typical sale at \$3.11 and, with a Buy Deodorant and Get Bath Wash free offer, the two items end up being \$2/each."

**Target & other stores: Couponer from California** – "My typical go-to stores are Target, CVS, Walgreens, RiteAid, and Walmart. I buy groceries at Albertsons and Vons as well. I get repeat deals every week at Target and CVS. I use my Extra Care Bucks at CVS during a sale with coupons, and at Target I usually stock up on trial sizes as they are free with coupons."

**Target, RiteAid, Walgreens, & other stores: Couponer from a small town in the West** – "I'm not sure if it's my town or my state but RiteAid & Walgreens often are priced \$1 more per item. I'm seldom able to participate in the great deals shown on Hip2Save because it's not beneficial for me. My stores don't have the same pricing which is posted. Thriftway is a small local chain, and this store offers some great deals on local brand products. Albertsons is hit and miss. Sometimes Target has the national pricing but the local sales vary. Target is a pain with price-matching, and it's difficult to get a coupon cleared."

**Thriftway:** Free or very little cost – eggs, bread, cheese. These are local brands so I can't use coupons, but the deals are good. This store also offers \$5 or \$10 off of a \$40 purchase total.

**Vons:** To get free items, save up Cellfire & Shortcuts e-coupons and use them in conjunction with sale items. I purchased over 100 of the joint juices in November: It took me up to 10 trips but, in the end, it only cost me \$12. Kleenex in October: 75 boxes – two cents/box!

**Vons & Ralphs:** Double up to \$1.00 on one like coupon, and you can only use two like coupons per order. At Ralphs – Pasta sauce: 50 jars for free.

**Vons, Ralphs, & Superior Grocers: Couponer from California** – "I usually use Ralphs and/or Vons for large trips, but for produce I typically go to smaller discount stores, such as Superior Grocers in Los Angeles. Non-food items tend to be higher at bigger grocery stores so I generally avoid them for household items."

**Fry's:** Yoplait yogurt – It will go on sale for \$.40/each – topped with a coupon (doubled to \$1) and Cellfire/Shortcuts, I can get the item for less than \$.25. **Couponer from Arizona** – "I get Bounty paper towels for \$.19. There are always \$.25 coupons in the P&G, and, at our Fry's, every coupon is a buck!"

**Costco:** Good for staples, such as butter and milk



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**Grocery Outlet:** I generally shop at this store first. After that, I hit other stores but shop only for items which are on sale or which I have a coupon for.

**The Commissary:** Overage is allowed – works well for me!

**Walmart:** Generally the cheapest store for diapers paired with high-value coupons. **Experienced couponer from Colorado** – “Good for salsa, mustard, and spices.”

### Grocery and Household Items Not Discounted or Barely Discounted

Meat & fresh produce, baby formula, sippy cups, healthier items, organic fruits & vegetables & milk, baby food & formula, flour, milk, dog food, cat food, cheese, meat/chicken/fish which is not pre-packaged or frozen, bread, eggs, milk, half & half, Swanson chicken broth (only at holiday time), gluten-free foods, certain spices, dishwashing soap – rarely a deal unless on clearance and paired with a coupon. Also, office supplies (with the exception of pens) and specialty foods (one couponer cooks with products from Mexico).

**Couponer from California** – “Not too much is free anymore. Many of the chain stores in my area no longer allow doubling of coupons. **Couponer from California** – “I use holistic/organic/healthy pet foods and treats – coupons and deals are far and few between for these items.” **Couponer from California** – “The only product I can think of that I am unable to get deals on is ink for my printer.” **Couponer from California** – “Generally there are no coupons for bread, eggs, meat, and produce. There are egg coupons available but we don’t have the brand locally. Bread is sometimes on sale, but it’s usually the store brand without a coupon.” **Couponer from California** – “Ice, milk, meat, alcohol, refills (almost all refills have lousy discounts), non-seasonal wrapping paper (i.e., birthday, wedding)...” **Experienced couponer from California** – “Milk, produce, whole grain pasta...”

**Experienced couponer from Colorado** – “I am unable to purchase dog food at a discount. I have dogs with special needs, Lupus and food allergies. Eukauba, Iams, ProPlan, Blue Buffalo don’t put coupons online and rarely in print for more than \$1 off a \$50 bag of food. Also not typically discounted: Honey Maid graham crackers, Kraft mayo, meat or fish, fresh veggies/fruit, dairy products, and lots of personal care items – I have severe allergies and can only use certain brands.”

**Couponer from Idaho** – “Produce is always hard to consistently get a good price on, but if you stock up on what you can when it’s at a great price that helps or during the summer you can even find coupons on fresh produce and meat when you purchase other items (such as salad dressing or BBQ sauce). Other than perishables and dairy products, there is not much that you can’t find coupons for, even if just occasionally. Even with items that only rarely have coupons, you are generally able to stock up on them to last you until the following year when they go on sale again...” **Experienced couponer from Idaho** –





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“For those of you who make banana bread with overripe bananas, speak with the produce manager at your local grocery store to see about buying overripe bananas at a discounted price. The produce clerk at my local Albertsons typically sells me overripe bananas, which have been removed from the shelf, for \$.29/lb (versus \$.69/lb at the regular price).”

**Experienced couponer from Montana** – “I can never get milk for a discounted price. Montana sucks for milk prices: \$3.50+ for one gallon.”

**Couponer from Utah** – “We can generally find ‘small’ savings on just about everything. The things that I REALLY want to save big dollars on include: Bisquick, Pace Picante sauce, veggies. I really miss being able to buy canned beans and veggies for under \$.40 can.”

**Couponer who lives near Seattle, Washington** – “I typically cannot get ‘real’ food for cheap, such as milk, ice cream, meat, veggies, fresh fruit. I sometimes use store rewards or Catalinas to purchase these products. But I find, as a couponer, that you have to be careful not to count that as a deal twice – like oh I got this \$4 Catalina so my cereal must be free – and then oh I got these veggies with my \$4 Catalina too.”

**Couponer from Spokane, Washington** – “It’s frustrating living in the West: Because of the time difference, I miss out on some super good freebies and coupons. Also living in Spokane, I very often don’t receive good coupons in my newspaper – unfair!”

**Experienced couponer from Washington** – “Produce! I buy it when it’s on sale, but I definitely pay more to eat healthy. Also organic flax meal – crazy specific item that I’m willing to pay for because it’s really healthy. Processed food goes on sale all the time. I try to be selective but I’m always stocking up on junk. Finally, I won’t purchase chicken with hormones and additives (like Tyson) so I’ll pay more for Foster Farms – but even that goes on sale fairly regularly.”

## Tips for New Couponers

Focus on the deals for the items which you can use and focus on the stores which are convenient to you.

Start slowly: Focus on one or two stores, and start with only Internet coupon deals. Then figure out how many Sunday papers you want and try buying coupons on eBay and such. Take extra time to plan at home and take your written plan with you for much more efficient and faster shopping trips.

Get organized; know what you’re looking for in the ads and coupons and get a coupon buddy to have fun with.



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Organize a binder system right away. Don't try for every sale, you will go crazy! Pick one store and learn the system well.

Get organized! I have moved to the binder and it's a life saver! I even have a special purse for it. Don't get discouraged! There are always Negative Nancys/Neds. JUST DO YOUR THING! Don't compare your savings to someone else's! When I first started couponing, I would look at all the blogs and feel discouraged... since Sue was getting 30 boxes of cereal for \$1, and I was getting 8 boxes for \$3.

Cut out all coupons you definitely will use sometime during the year. (If you never use Poise pads, then never cut out that coupon.) Keep your organized coupon notebook/box in your car and bring on all shopping trips. Keep an updated shopping list with you always – bring to store, garage sales, etc., and stick with needs versus wants to keep spending under control.

When you prepare coupons for a deal scenario (i.e., purchasing 10 items to get a \$5 Catalina to print), bring a few backup coupons to substitute if the store is out of your first choice item. Run deals separate from other purchases so that you know that they are working – in other words, put the deal on a separate receipt to confirm that any applicable coupons, Catalinas, and/or rebates were used in the transaction. Stockpile for three, six, or 12 months depending on the item – for pantry perishables, keep a three-month supply and track expiration dates on a list inside the pantry door.

Don't worry if you miss a big sale – there are always good deals to be found. It seems like deals come in cycles so, if you miss one sale, it will more than likely be on sale again in a few weeks.

Don't be brand loyal! You are going to save a lot more money if you are willing to use (or at least try) many different brands! If you will only use Pantene hair products, you are going to have a harder time saving as much money as you can because even though it goes on sale and you can get it for cheaper than you normally would just purchasing it at Walmart or something, if Herbal Essence is FREE that week, you're going to save even more than Pantene which might be \$.99 that week. Same goes for many products. The same brand of item won't always be free or dirt cheap, but if you're willing to use all different brands of the same item, you will have more opportunity to get them cheaper or free.

Don't use a coupon just because you have it. Wait until an item goes on sale to use it; however, if the coupon expires before the sale and you need the item, purchase it as it's better to save a little something than nothing at all.

TAKE IT EASY AND PACE YOURSELF. I sometimes find myself so wrapped up in a certain deal I do it more than one time and spend too much money. If there is something free, get as many as you can, but define your definition of FREE. Tax is still money – and fillers, in order to use a coupon, are also wasteful in my opinion.



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I watch for coupons that do not restrict trial sizes and then purchase the trial size: Use the coupon and get the item for free! I keep a bag of donations for use with our soldiers through my church, Pregnancy Resource Center, and a local organization for homeless families.

My best tip for new couponers is to STACK THOSE COUPONS!! I had no idea that you could do that when I started out. My other tip is that you can use one coupon per item. For example, if you have a Buy One, Get One Free coupon and a \$1 off coupon, you can use them both at the same time, I didn't realize that either as a new couponer!

Use stores that stack coupons (Target, RiteAid, CVS, etc.) so that you can stack or pair a store brand coupon with a manufacturer coupon. A lot of times, it will say 'manufacturer coupon' in the store ad, but it's really a store coupon. A good trick to know the difference: If there is no mailing address on the coupon, it's probably a store coupon. If you can use the stacked coupons with a sale, you've scored.

About mid-month, I go through my coupon binder and pull out all the coupons that will expire at the end of the month. I put them in an envelope and try to use them in the last two weeks. This really helps me not pass up an offer.

If you can, shop at night; it's so much more relaxing and the cashier has more time to scan your coupons (and make less errors). If you're afraid of losing out on a deal, go on the night of the first day of the deal. Always have the store coupon policy with you. The cashiers don't always know the policy but make sure to be friendly when explaining it to them!

DON'T TAKE ANYTHING PERSONAL. Some cashiers act as if you are taking the money out of their personal paycheck and some get very jealous that they aren't getting the deals you are getting. I say KILL THEM WITH KINDNESS. Don't let someone else's bad day reflect on your life.

I register with [shortcuts.com](http://shortcuts.com). I love having the coupons automatically come off the total, while I hand over another printed coupon for the same thing.

Take it slow and have fun! Master one store at a time. Take advantage of rebates – especially if you live in a NBPR (No Beer Purchase Rebates) state. See this link for information on NBPR:

<http://couponingtodisney.blogspot.com/2009/10/no-beer-purchase-required-rebates.html>

Read multiple blogs, both national and local. Develop a system of organizing coupons which works for you. My preference: I don't clip the coupon but I file the entire insert by date in hanging files.) Set up a separate email for offers, freebies, newsletters, etc. – Gmail works well.

Read blogs! Bloggers work hard to find great deals and spell them out for you step by step. They save me SO much time, and I appreciate it!



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Grab the fliers and check the blogs to see what's on sale THAT YOU NEED...not that you want to buy because you've got the coupon. Make a list for each store – then pull the coupons you need out of your coupon wallet or your storage unit and attach to the list. Take lists and your coupon wallet with you to the stores buy what on your list first, but if you see some great deals, you've got your coupon wallet too.

Read your coupons! Some stores refuse to double coupons that state 'no doubling/tripling' or 'face value only.' Other coupons have additionally information on what they cover. I recently bought 2.5 lbs of frozen cod for \$1.23 from Safeway with a bunch of Alaska Seafood Insert coupons. The coupons stated that you needed to buy 1lb of fresh or any package of frozen cod. Well the meat department had a bunch of frozen packs of \$1.00 - \$1.30 packs of frozen cod. Voila! Almost free fish—wild Alaskan cod! With this knowledge you will know exactly how much you coupons should total and what they will and will not cover. If your coupons are not scanned correctly, you'll know.

Be courteous to the cashier. Get off your phone, say hello and chit chat (but watch the scanning). This helps if there was an error with the coupons and you need to ask him/her to go over them again. And if you make a mistake, always apologize to the cashier. Remember, they have a tough job dealing with the public and you might end up with them again.

I celebrate even saving \$.50 on a grocery bill! I have made a commitment to actively hunt and find savings, and I picture that money saved as a little ball of victory because I found it. I have made the effort and even saving a little is a HUGE victory. You have to look at it as a 'coupon habit.' Just like exercising and weight loss... every bit counts and that \$.50 I kept in my pocket!

I live in Denver Metro and am a momma to four kids all under the age of 9. A great local blog to follow is [bargainblessings.com](http://bargainblessings.com). Jennie rocks the coupons!

Find ways to get multiple inserts (neighbors, friends, church, etc.).

Go with someone who is experienced your first time to show you the ropes; be kind to the cashier; find out when your store restocks.

You must shop around. Set a budget and don't go over it! Using a coupon just to use it is like never using a coupon at all.

The biggest tip I have is that you don't have to get every deal every time. I limit myself now to one trip per store (CVS, Walgreens especially) per week. If I miss a sale, it usually repeats.

Trade coupons with buddies - even if you have to recruit them 😊 and use your buddies to help you find the best local deals.

Don't try to coupon when you're very tired! This is when I tend to miss the checker mistakes.



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Save all of your newspaper coupon inserts as you may need to use them down the road; take advantage of the printable coupons from website in order to get more coupons – sometimes you can use four of one coupon; buy things with manufacturer coupons when they are on sale – and combine with store coupons to get a better deal!”

I recommend the following website for new coupon users: [grocerysmarts.com](http://grocerysmarts.com), [thegrocerygame.com](http://thegrocerygame.com), and [hip2save.com](http://hip2save.com). I use these sites daily.

I’m a pretty experienced couponer having used coupons for almost all of my nearly 20-year marriage. There is always something new to learn though! I didn’t use a binder to organize until I started Hip2Save. I’ve saved so much more now that I have that system in place.

Don’t have a coupon for something? Visit the manufacturer’s website and look under ‘promotions’ – I am surprised at how often I have found one using this approach.

If you have a truly bad or good experience with a product, don’t be shy about contacting the manufacturer. They depend on customer feedback, and you will receive a high-value coupon in the mail for your effort.

Get a rain check on out-of-stock items!

Don’t buy junk food just because it’s a good deal. I gained a bit of weight when I first started couponing because junk is cheap and I don’t have much will power 😊.

### **New Couponers: Biggest Challenges**

Getting organized.

It’s hard initially with little coupon inventory.

Finding deals without a huge coupon stockpile and saving coupons for use at the best time.

Finding the time to cut ALL those coupons!

My biggest challenge is organizing my coupons so that it doesn’t take forever to use them. I tried filing the inserts but that didn’t work for me because I often find deals in the stores, such as Safeway and Target, and then didn’t know if I had the coupons. I’m now using a small 50-page photo album from the dollar store. I like it because it can fit into my purse – but it does take time to cut and file coupons.

My biggest challenge is keeping my coupons organized. After clipping them, I seem to get lazy and not want to file them away. Then I have a mess to clean up.



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Finding coupons for items that I actually want to buy.

A lot of items are gone when I get to the store – if they are free or close to free. Also, finding items takes too much time.

Two challenges for me are having to go to multiple stores to complete my shopping list and actually remembering to USE the coupon.

I have been couponing for about a month. My biggest challenge was organization until I used your binder suggestion. It is time consuming to sit and cut out coupons even when I pair some pages together because they differ in sequence from one Sunday paper to the other. I have also found myself purchasing unhealthy items (i.e., frozen pizza) just because the item is on sale and I have a coupon for it. I also went way over my food budget for this week because of coupons. On the other hand, I did save and stocked up on cleaning products and toiletries by pairing sale items with coupons.

Expiration dates coming up so quickly. Buying stuff which I may not really need but because it's a good deal.

Having enough time to scout out deals and shop for them. When I have a plan of attack and head out to the store, what I had intended to purchase is not available.

Figuring out how it all works. I see all over the Internet how everyone is saving 70-80-90% and feel like I am missing something HUGE because it doesn't seem like I am doing it.

Getting stores to accept computer printed coupons. This is especially true at Walmart where I can never get anyone to accept those coupons.

The biggest challenge for me is finding the right cashier at checkout. I often have a very frustrating time with getting the cashier to accept my coupons. I print a lot in black ink – to save money – and they often question me about it being 'copied.'

Please have your coupons out, organized, and ready to go. If the store is very busy, try to pick a line that is out of the way, and let people know behind you that your transaction may take a while. It will save a lot of people from being frustrated because, even if your cashier is awesome, coupon problems and beeps arise and it can take an extra 10-15 minutes to ring out a large coupon transaction.

Knowing what a 'rock bottom' price is. I never know if I am getting something for the best deal. Also, I have a really hard time with groceries. I seem to usually only save about \$10.00 off my total, and I don't understand how people get a cartload of groceries for 75% off! I understand the concept of stockpiling, and I have been able to do it with personal care and household goods, not groceries. For some reason,





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toilet paper and paper towels are hard for me too. They are so expensive, and the coupons are usually for only \$.25 off.

### New Couponers: Questions

If you have two coupons for the same item (i.e., \$1 off coupon), can you use both coupons for one item?

How do you experienced couponers do it?!

Experienced couponers just seem to have a network of information beyond the local paper. How do you get that going?

Do you all have a weekly budget? What do I do with all the extra coupons I don't use – before they expire?

How do you keep on track with expiration dates?

How do you stockpile?

How do you organize your coupons so that you can easily use them? By product? Date of expiration?

How do you create your price log? Do you put down the price before or after the coupons? How often do you update the log?

I try so hard to find good deals on meat as my family eats a lot of meat. Any ideas and tips on meat purchasing would be very helpful!

Why do I have to cut my coupons? Is it weird to carry around a notepad to write prices down? What about shopping lists? How do you keep your coupons organized?

When a cashier says 'One coupon per purchase,' does that mean one coupon per transaction or one coupon per item? I've had cashiers that don't care about it and cashiers that have gotten a little snippy with me for not separating my transactions.

What is the best way to get coupons for organic products?

What do you pay for toilet paper? If you can get a deal on it, how do you do it? Also, I wish I could see an example of a full grocery shopping spree to understand how people do it.

Can you be committed to nutrition and still keep your weekly grocery budget low? Produce, meat, and organic coupons seem hard to come by. In contrast, I always see coupons for Hamburger Helper 😊.



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How do you keep yourself from feeling like a failure if you don't get every deal, or keep yourself from feeling that you have to get every deal?

When do you switch over from actively 'deal' shopping to using the stockpile and shopping for necessities or restock?

How do you find balance between buying all kinds of 'stuff' because it was cheap, and only buying what you use? I catch myself enjoying the excitement of getting a good deal, but not cutting my monthly spending because of the great 'deals.' Does it even out as time goes on?

How do you store your items to prevent spoilage, bugs, and waste – especially in the Arizona heat?

What strategies can you give me for doing couponing when children are in tow?

How do you shop quickly with coupons? I get stuck looking for products on the coupons and, even if I have a list, I can't go very quickly (to the dismay of my four-year-old)!!!

Every time I try and use coupons at Target, I find that the store coupon AND the manufacturer coupon never seem to both go through. Seems like one does but not the other. What gives?! I find that I am almost ALWAYS overcharged there.

How to explain with finesse – and get the desired results – when the cashier insists that a coupon is not good for the item that I am correctly pairing it with. I end up getting frustrated after a couple of minutes and give up. I need more confidence and hints on how to explain coupon policies and 'rules.'

Are there certain days of the week or certain months that stores mark down their items on clearance – or do I need to stalk stores a couple of times per week (and who has time for that?!)?

How many stores do you end up going to in order to find all the sales/coupon deals? Do you keep track of how much money you save over a period of time?

My main frustration and question: How do you find the time to max out the deals at all the stores?

Do you shop all over the place? Multiple stores? Or do you mainly stay concentrated – using a few when it comes to couponing? I think it would be difficult to broaden my main coupon places – Ralph's Grocery and Target.

If you only have less than one hour a day to look for deals and shop, how would you best organize your time?

What's the best way to put a price book together – in the shortest amount of time (store field trips, noting prices on receipts, etc.)?



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