**10 Extreme Coupon Tips for Normal People**

Would you believe it's possible to save more than 90 percent on your [grocery bills](http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/family/average-american-grocery-bill.htm)? It takes measures many people would consider extreme, but while most of us just glance remorsefully at receipts from the grocery store -- accepting that the total came out so high yet again -- there are some who leave the supermarket with a skip in their step and a lot more money in their wallets.

The secret to their success is coupons. Well, coupons, a little bit of planning and extra storage space! That's because [buying in bulk](http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/family/5-tips-buying-groceries-in-bulk.htm) usually goes hand-in-hand with extreme coupon use, so you can stock up when deals align to make products super cheap. Items don't go on sale every day, after all; you have to get products while the getting's good. So if you feel like saving some cash -- and you have some space in the garage or an extra-large pantry, plus some free time for the effort -- then here are some extreme coupon tips that even normal shoppers can get on board with.

**1: Acquire Advanced Couponing Techniques**

You might think simple Sunday morning [coupon](http://money.howstuffworks.com/personal-finance/budgeting/question426.htm)-cutting sessions get you most of the good deals out there, but there are more aggressive ways to go about collecting coupons if you want to get extreme savings.

Don't settle for one [newspaper](http://people.howstuffworks.com/newspaper.htm). Get weekend subscriptions to several (provided they carry quality ads and aren't too expensive). You can also ask friends and coworkers to give you any ad inserts they aren't planning to use. Local businesses might let you have any unsold Sunday papers they have leftover come Monday. Multiple copies mean multiple coupons.

Don't forget online resources, either. Lots of Web sites have printable coupons, so surf those sites regularly. You can also look for promo codes to use during [online transactions](http://money.howstuffworks.com/personal-finance/online-banking/online-shopping.htm), and you can sign up for daily deal alerts from a variety of Internet sources.

# 2: Join in on the Jargon-fest

The next step is to get familiar with coupon lingo and policies. Are your [coupons](http://money.howstuffworks.com/personal-finance/budgeting/question426.htm) stackable? (Meaning you can use a manufacturer's coupon in tandem with a store coupon.) Do stores in your area offer double coupon deals? (Meaning at certain times you can use a coupon and it'll be worth twice its face value.)

Next, brush up on the acronyms. OYNO? MIR? BOGO? You need to learn terms like these in order to maximize savings. We'll give you these three for free: On Your Next Order, Mail-in Rebate and Buy One Get One. But there are many more you may run across as you navigate the world of extreme couponing. Learn to talk the talk before you try to walk the walk.

You'll also want to get a handle on pricing. A "sale" doesn't always mean significant savings, so start keeping track of how much products typically sell for. There are also price-comparison Web sites which you can reference to tell whether you're getting the best rate. With a little practice, you'll get better at recognizing real savings.

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Tip - Name Brand Versus Store Brand

[Store brands](http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/family/10-store-brand-products-same-as-name-brands.htm) aren't always cheaper than name brands if you're diligent with your couponing. By combining coupons when prices are low, name brands often come out far ahead of their generic

# 3: Turn Couponing into a Cottage Industry

So now you have your incoming stream of coupons and you have a handle on how to interpret them. Next step? Get [organized](http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/home/how-to-organize-coupons.htm)! An extreme [coupon](http://money.howstuffworks.com/personal-finance/budgeting/question426.htm)-cutter never lets sweet deals expire because his or her coupons are sitting in a heap on the kitchen counter. One expert recommends using baseball card holders or sheet protectors in a binder. It's a flexible solution that can help you keep tabs on which products should be added to your [shopping list](http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/home/how-to-organize-shopping-lists.htm), and you can take it with you each time you're ready to hit the aisles in case an unexpected sale pops up.

You can organize your collection any number of ways, such as by expiration date or by product category. Both have pros and cons. Organizing by category, for example, will take more time upfront, but your coupons will be easier to find when you come across a deeply discounted product begging for a $1.00/1 or B2G1 (One Dollar Off or Buy 2 Get One) coupon to defray the cost down to a only a few cents.

# 4: Get Familiar with Navigating the Marketplace

You might want to dive into couponing headfirst, but easing in is probably the better route.

Start with a single store while you're getting your feet wet; you can branch out later as you get used to bargain pricing and coupon policies. Find a couple of favorite cashiers to frequent who don't mind the drill. Make sure to thank those cashiers and compliment them often. Warn people who get behind you in line that they may want to choose another aisle. Smile whenever a situation seems like it's starting to sour.

The point is that it's important to remember that while you're learning an exciting and cost-saving new practice, other people are just trying to pick up a few things for dinner after a long day at work. Which reminds us of another tip: Avoid shopping during peak hours and trips to the store will tend to go a lot more smoothly.

# 5: Know Your Rights for Smoother Sailing

Shoppers who use [coupons](http://money.howstuffworks.com/personal-finance/budgeting/question426.htm) in an extreme fashion are going to come up against brick walls on an annoyingly regular basis. Maybe it's a cashier who insists you can't use a manufacturer's coupon with one you got from the store, or a manager who is adamant that the [coupons you printed online](http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/family/buy-coupons-online.htm) are unacceptable.

The trick to dealing with this sort of situation is to have the store's coupon policy on-hand and ready to go. Some stores' coupon policies are listed online, while others you have to ask for. Once you obtain hard copies, it's a good idea to keep them in your binder. Then if there is disagreement over the details of a transaction, you can show whoever is checking you out the relevant portion of that particular policy.

And again, always remain respectful and polite. You might find cashiers and even managers who are simply unfamiliar with their store's coupon policy, and by being friendly and helpful about it, you're much more likely to achieve positive results.

# 6: Give Time, Save Money

Putting expert couponing techniques -- even the ones for normal people -- into practice will require your time and attention. For example, it's going to take a bit of research to find good deals on the items you want, so go ahead and put grocery store ads on your weekly reading list. You also have to be willing to spend a few hours sorting through and organizing your coupons before each trip to the supermarket.

If you're busy (like most of us), try to find ways that you can fit your couponing activities into your schedule. Instead of reading a novel before you go to sleep, peruse and clip coupons. Finding the time to locate and organize your coupons might be difficult, but you can feel good knowing that your hard work will save you money.

# 7: Buy in Bulk

Extreme couponers don't buy an item when they need it -- they buy it when they can get it at the lowest price. These savvy shoppers then stock up when the going's good (and cheap), so they save money in the long run. Think about it: if you run out of toilet paper, you'll be stuck paying whatever the retailer is charging to get this much-needed essential. Extreme couponers, however, plan ahead by purchasing numerous rolls when the cost is low so they avoid such expensive emergency trips to the store.

If you buy in bulk, though, you need to have space to stockpile your reserve items. The free space available in your home may determine how "extreme" of a couponer you become. Only buy what you can fit in that extra pantry, closet or garage. Otherwise, your home itself might start to look like a supermarket!

To save big at the grocery store, you need to forget brand loyalty. You want to get the best deal for your money, and the items that go on sale or that you have coupons for may not always be made by the same company. For example, one week it might be best to purchase a certain kind of pasta, while the next, you buy a different brand because you're able to stack coupons and get a sweeter deal. If there's an item that you adore and can't imagine switching to another brand, keep a lookout for sales and coupons for your beloved product and buy it in bulk at a low price.

# 8: Forget Brand Loyalty

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# 9: Go Where the Sales Are

Just as you need to be willing to purchase different brands of goods at the grocery store, you should also be OK with shopping at different stores. Extreme couponers go where the sales are instead of always shopping at the same place. Getting the best deal might require going to three different supermarkets.

This, however, can be easier said than done. Trips to multiple stores during the week or in a single day can take up precious time and [gas money](http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/family/get-better-gas-mileage.htm), so plan you’re shopping accordingly and see if you can combine trips. The shrewdest couponers save themselves money when they buy from different stores, but they do have to set aside to time to make those savings possible.

### Tip - Doubling the Deal

Some grocery stores double the savings value of coupons when you use them. For example, if you have a coupon for 50 cents off a package of lunch meat, the store will give you $1 off when you check out. See if any stores in your area offer this perk and take advantage.

# 10: Buy Items You Use

As you become an extreme couponer, it's important to remember to only purchase items you'll use. Don't buy 15 cans of tuna because you can get a great if you like tuna and will never eat what you bought (unless you want to donate the cans to a good cause -- then go ahead). Use your couponing skills for items you need. Besides, if you buy a plethora of products you won't use, you haven't actually saved any money. You've just wasted precious funds on things you don't need, so be a wise shopper and look for sweet deals on stuff that you'll actually enjoy