

Green Your Shopping Routine

(And save some green while you're at it!)

You don't have to drop tons of cash to make eco-friendly choices at the supermarket. Here are five ways to lessen your impact on the planet and keep money in your pocket—with savings benefits of up to \$3,000 a year! BY PAIGE GREENFIELD

	THE CHANGE	THE WHY AND HOW	THE PAYOFF
	<p>Choose products that yield less waste.</p>	<p>One-third of household trash is packaging. When you shop bulk bins, you skip waste on goods like grains and spices. Also, try to cut back on processed foods, which produce 30 percent more waste than their homemade counterparts, says Kate Geagan, author of <i>Go Green, Get Lean</i>. "Swap individual bottles for mixes or family-size containers, and invest in a water filter," she adds. And seek out recyclable packaging—then make sure it actually ends up in the recycling bin.</p>	<p>Bulk-bin items cost 30 to 60 percent less than their packaged counterparts. And skipping single-serving beverages could save the average household up to \$850 a year.</p>
	<p>Avoid imported produce.</p>	<p>Produce shipped from far-flung countries is three times more likely to harbor illness-causing bacteria like salmonella, and up to four times more likely to contain illegal levels of pesticides than domestic. Yikes! To track down domestic goods, look for the "COOL" (country of origin labeling) sticker. And keep an eye out for locally grown produce, which big retailers like Walmart and Wegmans are stocking now more than ever, says supermarket consultant Joe Hynes.</p>	<p>Seasonal produce typically costs about 50 percent less than out-of-season produce that's shipped in. Plus, local produce generally takes less time to get from farm to table—and is more nutritious, since key nutrients like vitamins B and C degrade rapidly after harvest.</p>
	<p>Make the most of your reusable shopping bags.</p>	<p>About 40 percent of shoppers bring their own shopping bags to the store. Take it to the next level by using them while you shop: Stand totes in your cart and place produce directly inside to eliminate disposable produce bags, Geagan suggests. Just place the produce on the scale at checkout. If you tend to forget your bags, jot a reminder on your shopping list or stash a few in your purse or glove compartment.</p>	<p>Shopping with reusable bags helps foster a green mind-set that could lead to more eco-friendly decisions while you shop, says cognitive science professor Art Markman. Plus, many stores offer cash back for bringing your own bag, and that adds up to about \$50 a year if you're committed.</p>
	<p>Use old-fashioned (and all-natural!) cleaning supplies.</p>	<p>Antibacterial items are more popular than ever—about 75 percent of liquid soaps now contain triclosan, which eventually ends up in our waterways and harms marine life. Instead of reaching for harsh cleaning products, use household items, suggests Annie B. Bond, author of <i>Home Enlightenment</i>. "Vinegar is highly acidic, so it kills germs—swap it in for a disinfectant," she says. "Sprinkle baking soda on a damp sponge as a substitute for soft scrub."</p>	<p>Crossing chemical cleaning products off your shopping list can save more than \$600 per year. You'll also be doing your part to reduce the likelihood of antibiotic resistance and protecting your family from strong fumes that can cause breathing problems.</p>
	<p>Shop less often.</p>	<p>Americans average five trips to the grocery store a month, and end up trashing about 14 percent of that food, says Elisabeth Leamy, author of <i>Save Big</i>. Cutting back by just one trip can slash impulse buys and reduce the amount of food and packaging that's trashed, Bond says. Instead of swinging by the supermarket on your way home, wait to shop until you have a list.</p>	<p>The fewer rotten bananas and stale cookies you toss, the more you save. If you get creative with what you've got in the pantry and keep waste to a bare minimum, you can save up to \$1,800 per year, Leamy says.</p>