

# **Volunteer Leader Training Guide**

## **Stretching Those Food Dollars**

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### **Introduction**

Grocery shopping can be a real challenge, especially if you are on a limited budget. A trip to the grocery can be more of a challenge when you are trying to make your money last to the end of the month. Entering a grocery store can be like walking through an advertisement. Displays and packages may tempt you to buy foods you do not need. One of the best ways to control spending and avoid impulse buying at the grocery store is to make a list of the items needed for your weekly menu. Once you have planned your menus, the rest is easy. Keep an ongoing list and jot down items as your supply gets low. If you find that you are continually exceeding your food spending plan, evaluate your menus and shopping list for ways to cut costs. Serving low-cost main dishes is one of the best ways to economize. Another is substituting lower cost or on-sale foods for planned foods on your list. If entertaining is taking too much of your grocery money, you need not become less sociable – just simplify the foods you serve. Underline the items on your shopping list that are basic to the family diet – buy those foods first. Include other items as your food spending plan permits.

### **Target Audience**

- EHC leaders
- Adult audiences

### **Objectives**

Participants will learn to:

- plan ahead for meals and snacks to save money and time.
- state why a shopping list can save money.
- use unit pricing to determine the best buy between products.

### **Main Teaching Points**

- Why Plan Meals?
- Why Make A Shopping List?
- Unit Pricing – To Compare Prices
- Smart Shopping Tips for Food Groups

## Handouts and Activities

- Handout 1: Stretching Your Food Dollars...Strategies at Home
- Handout 2: Making Your Own Master Mixes...Bread and Rolled Oats
- Activity 1: Stretching Those Food Dollars Pre-Test
- Activity 2: Plan a Main Dish
- Activity 3: Unit Pricing Label Challenge
- Activity 4: Stretching Those Food Dollars Post-Test
- Optional Activity – Master Mixes: Using the recipes, make the master mixes and demonstrate one or two of the recipes.

## Suggestions for Teaching

- Review the lesson introduction and study the major teaching points.
- Make copies of :
  - Handout 1: Stretching Your Food Dollars...Strategies at Home
  - Handout 2: Making Your Own Master Mixes...Bread and Rolled Oats
  - Activity 1: Stretching Those Food Dollars Pre-Test
  - Activity 2: Plan a Main Dish
  - Activity 3: Unit Pricing Label Challenge
  - Activity 4: Stretching Those Food Dollars Post-Test
- Optional Activity – Master Mixes: Using the recipes, make the master mixes and demonstrate one or two of the recipes.

**Activity 1:** Conduct Activity 1, ***Stretching Those Food Dollars Pre-Test.***  
(Have all participants do the activity and discuss as a group.)

## Why Plan Meals?

Juggling all of your daily commitments and cooking balanced, nutritious meals on a budget isn't easy. But you can make it much easier by planning and, in some cases, preparing your meals in advance. Doing so will:

- Save time.
- Save money.
- Produce healthier, better tasting meals.
- Reduce waste.

## Save Time

Though it may seem that setting aside time to plan meals adds one more chore to your list, the hour or two you spend planning meals each week will actually save time by ultimately reducing or eliminating unnecessary extra steps from your daily routine.

- **Consolidate shopping trips:** Planning your meals allows you to create a master shopping list for the week, eliminating the need to make last-minute supermarket trips when you're pressed for time.

- **Fit cooking into your schedule:** Planning what to cook allows you also to plan when and how much to cook. Rather than prepare an entire meal every night, you can dedicate blocks of time a few days a week to doing prep work that will make your nightly cooking tasks much less time-consuming.

### Save Money

Planning your meals will help you spend less on groceries by allowing you to:

- **Buy and cook in larger quantities:** Cooking several days' – or even weeks – worth of food ahead of time allows you to buy ingredients in bulk at lower prices.
- **Cook with seasonal produce:** Food that's in season is generally less expensive than food that's out of season.
- **Use cheap staple ingredients strategically:** Combining pricier ingredients, such as meats and produce, with cheaper staple ingredients, such as pasta, in soups, stews and stir-fry will allow you to stretch your food over more portions and meals.
- **Eat takeout and frozen meals less often:** When you plan and prepare meals in advance, you won't have to resort to more expensive options, such as ordering in or purchasing frozen dinners, when you're in a pinch. And the extra dollars that might ordinarily go to a waitperson or delivery person can instead be put toward a special dessert – or back in your pocket.

### Create Tastier and Healthier Meals

Planning your meals ahead of time practically guarantees better-tasting, more nutritious meals.

**How to Make Tastier Meals** – Meals cooked at the last minute often suffer from missing or inferior ingredients. Rushing also increases the likelihood that you'll prepare the food improperly. Planning and coordinating your meals ahead of time will give you better control over your cooking. In addition, when you plan meals in advance, you'll be more likely to try new recipes and expand your cooking repertoire.

**How to Make Healthier Meals** – Planning your meals ahead of time – when you're not scrambling just to get something on the table – will give you the opportunity to create meals that:

- Contain a balance of different nutrients.
- Consist of sensible portion sizes, neither too large nor too small.
- Take your family's dietary restrictions into account.

### Reduce Waste

Every home cook occasionally faces the unenviable task of removing moldy, forgotten foods from the depths of the refrigerator. Though some food spoilage is unavoidable, often it's the result of last-minute shopping or cooking, which makes people buy more food than they need. If, rather than buy a grab bag of groceries each week, you plan your weekly menu and buy ingredients specifically for each meal, then nearly every item in your refrigerator will have a designated purpose. The food you buy will be less likely to go to waste, and you won't have to throw away nearly as much spoiled food.

Managing food dollars wisely involves planning before and during your grocery shopping. Some knowledge of nutrition plus careful meal planning, skillful shopping, proper food storage, handling and preparation will help you to serve satisfying meals while remaining within your food budget.

**Activity 2:** Conduct Activity 2, *Plan a Main Dish*.  
(Have all participants do the activity and discuss.)  
**Note:** Pass out grocery ads to the participants.

**Distribute Handout 1 and discuss:** Handout 1, *Stretching Your Food Dollars...Strategies at Home*.

### Why Make a Shopping List?

One of the best ways to control spending and avoid impulse buying is to make a list of the items needed. Having already planned your menus, the rest is easy. Some helpful hints to making a shopping list follow:

- Keep an ongoing list and jot down items as your supply gets low.
- Look over the recipes you plan to use. Be sure you have the necessary ingredients.
- Check the cupboards, the refrigerator and the freezer for foods on hand. Are there staple items – flour, sugar, coffee, salt, rice – that should be added to the list?
- If storage space permits, stock up on sale items used regularly.
- Organize your list according to the store layout. This will save you time and reduce the temptation to buy foods not on your list. This method is especially helpful in larger supermarkets or warehouse stores where backtracking is time-consuming.
- You don't rely on memory.
- Less likely to buy things you don't need.
- Less time in the store.
- Less tempted to buy impulse items.

### Create a Shopping List

- Write down all the foods you will need to fix the meals and snacks you have planned.
- Go back over your list and cross out any foods you already have on hand and plan to use.
- Remember to list any staple foods such as sugar, flour, vegetable oil and seasonings that you will need to buy.
- If you need a certain size package or can for a recipe, write the size on your list by the item (for example, tomato sauce – 8 oz. can).
- If an item is advertised at a special price, write the price next to the item on your list.

If you find that you're continually exceeding your food-spending plan, evaluate your menus and shopping list for ways to cut costs. Serving low-cost main dishes is one of the best ways to economize. Another is substituting lower-cost or on-sale foods for planned foods on your list. If entertaining is taking too much of your grocery money, you need not become less sociable – just simplify the foods you serve. Underline the items on your shopping list that are basic to the family diet – buy these foods first. Include other items as your food spending plan permits.

## Unit Pricing – To Compare Prices

Grocery shopping is a hard job. You have to provide healthy foods your family likes, find time to shop and prepare the foods and stay within a budget. Using the unit-price label can save a few cents on each item. This can add up to big savings on your total grocery bill.

For example: If you save 7¢ on every ounce of cereal you buy and you buy a 24-ounce box of cereal each week, you would save \$87.36 a year just on cereal!

$$7¢ \text{ savings per ounce} \times 24 \text{ ounces of cereal} \times 52 \text{ weeks per year} = \$87.36 \text{ saved per year}$$

Compare the cost of food products in different forms (for example, canned, fresh and frozen). Compare competing brands including store brands. Many of the store brands are from the same processors as the national brands but usually sell for a lower price. Compare cost per unit of competing products.

Comparing prices can help you find the best buy. Unit prices for foods are sometimes displayed on the store shelves below the foods. A unit price tells you how much the food costs per ounce or per pound. You can use the unit price to compare the cost of different size packages.

Take a close look at the unit-price label below:

This is the unit price. Use this number to compare food items and to determine the best buy. The lower the unit price, the more you get for your money.



<b>Unit Price</b> <b>10¢ per ounce</b>	<b>Total Price</b> <b>\$.60</b>
<b>Blue Bird Rice</b>	<b>6 ounces</b>



This is the total price of the item.

This is the name of the item.



This is the size of the item.

**Activity 3:** Conduct Activity 3, *Unit Pricing Label Challenge*.  
(Have all participants do the activity and discuss as a group.)

## Smart Shopping Tips for Food Groups

### ***Fruits and Vegetables***

- Buy fresh produce in season for best prices.
- Compare prices of frozen and canned fruits and vegetables.
- Buy juice in large containers.
- Buy plain frozen vegetables instead of ones with special sauces or seasonings.

### ***Grains***

- Buy generic and unsweetened cereals. Adding a little sugar yourself costs less than buying sweetened cereal.
- Check unit pricing. Usually the heaviest size cereal will cost less per ounce – but not always. Look at the unit pricing label. Knowing the price per unit (ounce, pound, etc.) will help you compare brands to get the most for your money.
- Plain pasta shapes like macaroni are cheaper than fancy shapes.
- Brown rice, regular white rice and converted rice cost less than instant rice.

**Meats**

- Cut up your own meat. Buy a boneless chuck roast to cut up for soup, stew and stir-fry. Whole chicken usually costs less than pieces, and you can cut it yourself.
- Cut down on the amount of luncheon meat and sausages you buy. Pick store brands to save money.
- Buy dried beans, peas and lentils to make hearty, low-cost soups and casseroles.
- Chicken, turkey and chuck cuts are usually good buys.
- Light tuna is one of the least expensive kinds of canned fish.
- Eggs make good main dishes.

**Dairy**

- Use nonfat dry milk or low-fat evaporated milk for cooking.
- Buy yogurt in larger containers rather than a single-serving container.
- Save money by buying a block of cheese and slicing or grating it yourself.

**Desserts and Snacks**

- Fix simple and nutritious desserts and snacks from fruits you buy in season.
- Buy fewer snacks and desserts that are high in sugar and fat and cost a lot of money.
- Bake cookies from recipes instead of buying mixes or ready-made cookies.
- Make goods from the Master Mix Recipe.

**Activity 4:** Conduct Activity 4, ***Stretching Those Food Dollars Post-Test***.  
(Have all participants do the activity and discuss as a group.)

**Distribute Handout 2 and discuss:** Handout 2, ***Making Your Own Master Mixes...Bread and Rolled Oats***.

**Optional Activity:**

***Master Mixes:*** Using the recipes, make the master mixes and demonstrate one or two of the recipes.

**References**

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