



MENU PLANNING GUIDELINES

1. **Write down what you will eat for the next week (or month).**
Remember to mark special events, birthdays, and meals you will eat out.
2. **Check your pantry, freezer, and refrigerator** to see what you have on hand.
3. **Check newspapers for specials**, especially coupons and loss leaders. Most specials are featured on Wednesday and/or Sunday.
4. **Plan menus using your favorite foods and the USDA Dietary Guidelines and Daily Food Guide.** Plan for a day. Start with the meal that is your family's main meal of the day. Let's say it is the evening meal. For this meal, choose the vegetable first. Next, choose the meat or meat substitute (beef, pork, turkey, chicken, fish, cheese, eggs, nuts, beans, peas, peanut butter), the fruit, the bread or bread substitute (roll, bun, muffin, bagel, tortilla), and milk or other beverage. Next, plan the breakfast meal. Then, plan the lunch. Finally, add snack ideas for between meals. Any nutritious, easy-to-fix food can be a good snack. These choices can help you meet the number of servings in each of the food groups.
5. **Make a shopping list from your planned menus.**
6. **Buy only foods that are on your list.** Don't give in to temptation while shopping unless there is a special that you will use in future menus and you are sure you have enough money for it.
7. **Remember to eat before you shop.** If you are hungry, you may buy more and make more impulse purchases.
8. **Shop without your children and/or spouse**, or train them to be good shoppers, too.
9. **Compare prices and labels** while at the store to get the best buy.
10. **Use your creativity** and invent, invent, invent. Don't be afraid to try something new. It may become a family favorite.

Here are the advantages of meal planning:

- ✗ You buy only the foods you need.
- ✗ You make fewer trips to the store.
- ✗ You do less impulse buying.
- ✗ You save money.



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