



Extension News Column

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Did you know that there is a psychology to the way the store is laid out that encourages you to spend? Products that are right at eyelevel are the ones that are most tempting and are those that stores have the largest profit margin on. Think about walking down the baking aisle. What is at eye level? Chocolate chips, cocoanut, and brownie mixes in my grocery store. The staples, such as flour and sugar that I buy every week in that aisle are right on the bottom shelf, where they are harder to access.

Another trick that merchandizers use is the use of the end caps—the stacks of goods at the end of the aisle. We've been conditioned to think that anything on the end caps are special prices. The problem with these special displays is that there are no other like products to compare it to. Go back down the aisle and make sure it is the best buy.

Sometimes those products are stacked up there just to get people to buy them. It may really not be a special price, just that the store has a lot of those items to move.

Also, look at how the store is laid out. Most of staples that we always buy are at the back of the store—meat, milk, and dairy items. That means you have to walk through all those tempting items and not put them in your basket. Again, they are really good at getting you to buy on impulse. And don't go down an aisle that you don't need something on. I'll bet you find something on that aisle that you'll want. If I need milk, I go down the automotive or pet food aisle to get there, not the one that has snacks on it.

Grouping items so you'll purchase more is another time-tested strategy to get you to buy. Croutons and salad dressings are with in the produce aisle, as well as cooked chicken to put on your salad. Dips are displayed with the chips. All these will increase the likelihood that you will buy. If you have to go to a different aisle, you may decide you don't need it by the time you get there.

On one of my trips to the store, I found cooked chicken packaged for your salad in the produce section. I also found the same cooked chicken in the frozen food section for about one third less. You pay a high price for the convenience of having it ready. But think about what 2 minutes of defrosting time in the microwave can save you.

Attractive stacks of presliced melons are displayed where they are easy to grab. But you pay far more than the melons you slice yourself. But there is one caveat to remember. If you are only using a small amount, it may be cheaper and less wasteful to buy the small amount rather than throwing away the rest when it spoils if it isn't used.

Lest you think that I am against the grocery store, that couldn't be farther from the truth. I have a regular store that I shop at where they call me by my name. I have been on a pretty strict budget for a good portion of my life. I've raised four children and have always felt that getting the most for the money I spend is important. The store is intent on helping us buy, I just want to make sure I'm spending my money on what is important to me.