

A vibrant graphic featuring various fruits and vegetables like strawberries, broccoli, bell peppers, avocados, pumpkins, carrots, and eggplants scattered around the central text. The text is arranged in two stacked rounded rectangular boxes. The top box is green with white text, and the bottom box is red with white text. A vertical green vine with leaves runs down the center of the page.

# GROCERY SHOPPING

# TIPS

# GROCERY SHOPPING TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



Discovering grocery store accessibility can enhance the shopping experience and allow individuals with disabilities to make healthy, informed decisions about what goes into their shopping cart. Planning your trip, navigating the store, and checking out can be a seamless process with a few items in mind. Check out our grocery shopping tips for people with disabilities:

## BEFORE YOU GO

### Make a List

- Create a list of ingredients and food items to help you stick to your budget and plan meals ahead of time. Download a [pantry inventory smartphone app](#) to assist with planning.
- Group items together based on their location in the store, so you can gather products more efficiently.

### Choose Your Store

- Choose stores where you can purchase all or most of your items in one trip. Sign up for store emails to get promotional offers, discounts, and coupons.
- Complete research online or on a grocery store app ahead of time to find coupons and discover low prices.

### Plan When to Go

- Be intentional when you plan to go shopping. Is it less crowded at certain times and easier to navigate with less people? This could include planning to go shopping when the store may not be as crowded, such as avoiding busy Saturday mornings, Sundays after church, or a few hours before televised sporting events. Consider going Mondays and Tuesday mornings.

- Many grocery stores may also open one hour early on specific days for those with disabilities or those older than 60.
- Call the manager to ask when the best times are to shop and access staff. The manager may have a better idea of when employees are more available.

## **Pack Your Essentials**

- If needed, pack a reacher. Reachers, also known as grabbers, are assistive technology that have a long neck and the ability to grab items that are low to the ground or higher out of reach. These can assist with grabbing items on high and low shelves at the store.
- Bring your own reusable bags to use once you are ready to purchase and support zero waste!
- Consider eating a snack before you go or packing a healthy one in your bag. If your blood sugar gets low, a low-fat granola bar or a handful of almonds can support this. Plus, having a satisfied stomach can also help avoid impulse purchases!

# GETTING TO THE GROCERY STORE

## **Transportation**

- Plan how you are going to get to the grocery store the day before you go. If you do not drive, is there someone you need to coordinate with so they can drive you? Is there an accessible public transit system that drops off close to the store? Consider checking transit times and routes.
- If transportation is unavailable, place an order through an online delivery service.

## **Parking Lot Tips**

- Choose an accessible parking spot if needed and observe the parking lot for hazards such as potholes, ice, and leaf build-up for your path of travel.
- Consider pulling forward into the spot instead of backing in. This way, you can still access your trunk to load bags instead of potentially having it blocked.



## **Entrance**

- Most grocery stores have automatic doors and universal design. Entryways should include curb cuts but be aware in case you face any temporary hazards or construction.



# IN THE GROCERY STORE

## Navigate the Store

- Consider how you will carry your groceries through the store. Will you push the cart, place the basket in your lap, or bring your own bag?
- Use an available scooter to assist with moving throughout the store and carrying items. Ensure that there is enough charge on the battery before using.
- Often, most are familiar with the “shop the perimeter” tip which suggests only shopping the perimeter of the store for fresh fruits, vegetables, and other fresh items. While this can be a helpful tip for beginners, there are still healthy choices that you can find within the aisles. Beware that some fresh items in the perimeter may not be in the most accessible spot.
- Remember to refer to your list of items while you are in the store.

## Pick Your Items

- When choosing fruits and vegetables, assess produce for bruises and softness or also ask for an employee’s help in picking a ripe item.
- Try to choose produce that are in season as these may be cheaper and are more likely to be ripe.
- If you have difficulty cutting fruit, consider purchasing pre-cut items. This will minimize the food prep at home and save time.
- Make informed healthy choices about what you choose and know how to store and consume food safely. Use smart phone apps to assist with reading boxes and nutrition labels. For shoppers with low vision or vision loss, there are apps that will enlarge text or also read aloud nutrition labels. Apps like [TapTapSee](#) or [Seeing AI](#) assist with understanding labels by simply scanning the barcode and reading the ingredients.
- Beware of being targeted as some food products are oftentimes marketed at the eye level of a target shopper. Shoppers who use a wheelchair or are short-statured may encounter marketing strategies that are directed towards children. These food items may be higher in sugar, fat, and salt.

## Get Assistance

- Store employees and customer service can be great tools for answering questions about products and discussing recipes. Utilize employees who can assist with choosing produce and reading nutrition labels.
- Ask employees or other shoppers to grab items for you that are out of reach.



## CHECK OUT

### Buy Your Food

- When purchasing at check out, be sure to use any of your SNAP or WIC vouchers to assist with payment. If you are using a smartphone app, have your coupons or barcode ready to scan to help with additional savings.
- Self-checkout stations have a low counter that is easily accessible; however, note that the screen and payment system may be difficult to use if you have low vision.
- Instead of using paper bags without handles, consider using plastic or a reusable bag with long straps. These can hang on the back of a wheelchair or fit over the shoulder.
- If needed, ask an employee to carry items to your car and load them.

## OTHER TIPS

### Grocery Pick-Up or Delivery

- Utilizing grocery pick-up or delivery options may be beneficial for a variety of shoppers, especially those who require more time to read nutrition labels or make healthy choices. This may also save time from maneuvering a grocery store and possibly facing barriers. Pick-up entails ordering online and then parking in front of the store in a designated spot for an employee to bring your items out to your car.
- Delivery services work by ordering online and having an employee deliver the items directly to your front door. At times, you can also request the person to bring the items inside and unload them. Examples of grocery delivery could include [Instacart](#), [DoorDash](#), [Shipt](#), [Walmart](#), and [Amazon Fresh](#).

As you plan your trip to the grocery store, be sure to check out additional nutrition resources for recipe ideas and healthy options. Planning and being prepared for what to expect at the store will guide you to build better meals and support overall wellness!

## RESOURCES

- [5 Meals 1 Bag](#): This toolkit includes a series of weekly meals that require basic ingredients and minimal preparation.
- [Shop the Rainbow](#): This video highlights the importance of filling your cart with a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables.
- [Meals for One](#): This toolkit includes recipes for simple, few ingredient meals that specifically focus on protein, fiber, vitamin D, calcium, and fluids.
- [Adapted Kitchen Tools, Utensils, and Accessibility](#): This resource includes a handout and three videos that highlight a variety of adapted cooking utensils that can be used to create an independent cooking and eating experience.
- [NutriLab Cooking Show](#): These videos include a variety of healthy, tasty recipes.