

Goal: Plan a snack within a budget. Then, buy and eat!

Grades: 2–6+

Minimum participants: 1

Suggested grouping: divide into pairs

Time: 20–60

Math: arithmetic and estimating with money

Materials:

- grocery store circulars (1 per group)
- paper and pencils
- calculators (optional)

Prerequisites: familiarity with dollars and cents; reading

Books about money and purchasing:

Money At the Store. Roy, Jennifer. (Benchmark, 2006).

Bunny Money. Wells, Rosemary. (Puffin, 2000).

Before beginning

Decide on the spending limit.



1 Introduce the spending limit

We have \$20 to spend on snack for all of us. You'll be making a list of what you could buy.

Talk About...

Explain how the group will settle on a final shopping list (e.g., voting or choosing the healthiest list).

2 What would you buy?

Distribute grocery store circulars and other materials. Children make their lists, using estimation or calculators.

3 Finalize the menu

How did you make your choices? How did you stay within budget?

We rounded to the nearest dollar and then added.

With the group, decide on the final shopping list.

If possible, bring everyone with you to make the purchases.

Our total was \$21.73, so we took out a box of crackers for \$1.99.



Variations

Buy it by the dollar (easier). Before giving out the grocery circulars, round prices to the nearest dollar and write them in. Children work just with whole-dollar amounts.

Buy in bulk (harder). If you buy snacks in bulk, involve children in planning purchases. Print out online catalogs for them to look through to make their choices.

Wish list (harder). Plan make-believe purchases with an unrealistic spending limit— \$100, \$1,000, or more. Children use catalogs to plan what they would buy.

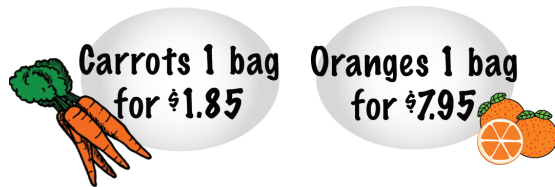


Estimating with money

*I have \$10 to spend. How many bags of carrots can I buy?
Can I afford a bag of carrots and a bag of oranges?*

Sometimes you don't need an exact total. You just need to know what you can afford, so you estimate.

Estimation is also a good way to check an answer you get with a calculator or with pencil and paper. If your answer isn't close to your estimate, you may have made a mistake.



"The oranges cost about \$8 and with the carrots, that's \$9.85—close to \$10."



Staying within a budget

Most adults need to keep to a spending limit. They watch for discounts and bargains, balance necessities and treats, and determine trade-offs among cost, quality, and amount. In this activity, children do something similar. They consider what they would like, what they need, how much is left for extras, and whether to substitute cheaper items for more expensive ones.