

20 ways to play at the Supermarket

Going to the supermarket with your child can be one task that parents dread. It's not much fun from the child's point of view either, as they sit in a trolley or walk around endless aisles of items they're told they can't have. Involving your child in the process of doing the grocery shopping from start to finish can be a fun and playful learning experience for you both. You'll be giving your child the opportunity to engage in some real world play and for older children, this can be a good time to practice their maths skills and introduce elements of financial literacy which will help them in the future.

1. **Create a shopping list** - While you write your shopping list, ask your child to create their own list. Use magazines and newspapers to cut out pictures or the names of items that they think you need, and stick them on a sheet of paper to take with you.
2. **Using lists** - Armed with your shopping lists and a pen or pencil, ask your child to help you find the items and cross them off when you've got them safely stored in your trolley.
3. **Play games** - Have a game of *Supermarket / Spy* or introduce numbers and colours into question games, such as 'How many yellow items can you see?'
4. **Get creative** - Take along a notepad and some crayons and ask your child to draw things that they see in the store. Take their pictures home and use them to make a supermarket scrap book or collage, or even for your next shopping list.
5. **Colour Hunt** - Use a crayon or coloured circle stickers to mark 5-6 colours on a sheet of paper in a notebook. Give your child the notebook and a pencil at the store so they can draw or write in any objects they spot that match each colour. Yellow – draw a banana, red – can of tomato soup. Make it more challenging by adding in a descriptive word e.g. something which is white + cold, red + smooth.
6. **Make it a race** - If you are shopping with another adult, divide up the list and children and pick up items quickly as you race to the check-out. The winning team gets out of putting away the groceries at home!
7. **Supermarket bingo** - Create Bingo boards for each child with pictures of items you regularly buy at the supermarket. As you shop, ask your children to cross off what they have on the card. Have a small prize in your bag for the winner.
8. **I Spy a Shape** - Show your child examples of cones, cylinders, squares, rectangles and other shapes at home. Then, when you are placing the items on the check-out, ask them to shout out the shapes of the different items as you line them up.

For older children...

9. **Role reversal** - Give your child the shopping list and let them push the trolley and tell you what items are needed.
10. **The price is right** - Ask your child to compare the prices of items and to help you decide which are the best value for money. When a sign says '2 for 1' or 'buy 2 get a 3rd free' are these really good deals?
11. **Store detectives** - Ask questions and give challenges as you go around the store. How many different types of milk/bread/cheese can they find? Can they go to the next aisle and retrieve an item for you? How many members of staff can they spot?
12. **Photo collage** - Give your child a digital camera and ask them to take pictures as you go around the supermarket. When you get home, print off your favourite pictures to use in a supermarket scrapbook or collage.
13. **It all adds up** - Take along a calculator, pen and notebook. Challenge your child to keep track of how much your shopping will come to. How close they be when it comes to the check-out? Make it a contest by making a guess yourself. Keep a running tally of who is the closest each time.
14. **Weights and measures** - Ask your child to help you weigh out any loose fruit and veg that you buy, and calculate the cost. Compare the weights of different items and estimate which will be heavier or cost more.
15. **Price hunt** - Test your child's maths skills by asking them to find items on your list, note the price and then work out the cost of 2 or 3 of them etc (you may need to take a calculator for this one).
16. **Eat me** - Look at the use by dates of the items you're buying. Talk about how many days away that date is. Question whether or not you should buy it on that day - will the date pass before you've had chance to eat it?
17. **Alphabet Hunt** - On a piece of paper, write the alphabet out in a couple of columns, with a space beside each letter. Your child must find something at the supermarket that starts with each letter, and write them down.
18. **Round Them Up** - at the checkout, have your children group items starting with the same letter and place them on the conveyor belt. Bananas go with bread, cereal goes with crackers and coffee and so on. Or you could group items by colour, shape or size.
19. **Packing the shopping** Can they help you pack the shopping by grouping items together such as things for the fridge in one bag, fruit & vegetables in another, tins and other non-perishables in another etc.
20. **Unpacking the shopping** Ask your child to help you unpack the shopping and put the items in the correct places. Talk about why certain things have to go in the fridge, the freezer, etc.