

Grocery Store Adventure: From Cart to Cupboard!

Materials Needed:

- Play food items (variety is good!)
- Empty food boxes/containers (cleaned, e.g., cereal boxes, yogurt cups)
- Toy shopping cart or basket
- Reusable grocery bags
- Paper and crayons or markers
- Designated play areas for "Store Shelves," "Refrigerator," "Pantry," and "Freezer" (can be labelled areas, boxes, or actual locations if child-safe and supervised)
- Optional: Play money, toy cash register

Introduction (5-10 minutes)

Let's start our fun adventure today! Ask your child: "Do you like going to the grocery store? What are some of your favorite foods we buy there?" Explain: "Today, we're going to have our very own grocery store adventure! We'll learn how to pick out yummy food and then how to put it all away when we get home. It's like being a super helper!"

Activity 1: Let's Make a List! (10-15 minutes)

Explain: "Before we go shopping, it's a good idea to make a list so we don't forget anything important!"

1. Discuss a simple meal or snack they like (e.g., a fruit salad, a sandwich, or items for a pretend picnic).
2. Ask: "What ingredients do we need to buy for our [chosen meal/snack]?"
3. Help your child draw pictures or write (with help if needed) 3-5 items on a piece of paper. For example, for a fruit salad, they might list an apple, a banana, and some grapes.
4. Praise their creative list-making efforts! "This is a fantastic list! Now we're ready to shop!"

Activity 2: Grocery Store Fun! (15-20 minutes)

Set up your play grocery store: arrange the play food and empty boxes on "shelves" in a designated area.

1. Give your child their grocery list and a shopping cart or basket.
2. Say: "Welcome to our store! It's time to find everything on your list."
3. Encourage them to look for the items. They can "read" the labels (even if just looking at pictures on boxes or the shape of play food).
4. As they find items, they can put them in their cart/basket. You can ask: "How many apples do we need according to your list?"
5. Optional: If using play money, they can "pay" for their groceries at a pretend checkout.
6. Once they have all their items, help them pack them into reusable grocery bags. "Great shopping! You found everything!"

Activity 3: Putting Groceries Away (10-15 minutes)

Move to the area with designated spots for the "refrigerator," "pantry," and "freezer."

1. Say: "Now that we're home from the store, we need to put our groceries away so they stay fresh and yummy."
2. Take out one item at a time from the bags. Ask: "Here's the (play) milk. Where do you think this goes? Does it need to stay cold in the refrigerator, or can it go in the pantry?"
3. Discuss why certain foods go in certain places (e.g., "Milk and yogurt need to be cold so they don't spoil." "Cereal and crackers like to stay dry in the pantry." "Ice cream needs to be super cold in the freezer!").
4. Have the child place each item in the correct designated play area. Guide them as needed, turning it into a sorting game.
5. Praise their good work: "You're doing an amazing job organizing everything! Our kitchen will be so neat."

Wrap-up & Discussion (5-10 minutes)

Sit together and talk about the adventure:

- "What was your favorite part of our grocery game today?"
- "Why is making a grocery list helpful?"
- "Can you tell me one food that goes in the refrigerator? One for the pantry? One for the freezer?"
- "How do you think knowing where things go helps us in the kitchen?"
- Connect to real life: "Next time we go to the real grocery store, maybe you can help me find some things from our list! And when we get home, you can help put some things away!"

Extension Activities (Optional)

- **Create a Store Flyer:** Draw or cut out pictures of food and make a pretend store advertisement with play prices.
- **Real Pantry Sort:** With supervision, sort a few real, non-perishable items from your pantry (e.g., cans, boxes of pasta).
- **Food Group Fun:** As they sort play food, briefly mention food groups (e.g., "Apples are fruits, and they are healthy for us!").
- **Story Time:** Read a children's book about grocery shopping or food.
- **Sensory Bin:** Create a sensory bin with dried beans or pasta and add some play food items for them to find and sort.