

# Grocery Store Adventure: Meal Planner & Budget Shopper

**Subject Areas:** Math (Money & Addition), Literacy (Reading & Writing), Life Skills

**Grade Level:** 1st-2nd Grade (Approx. age 7)

**Time Allotment:** 45-60 minutes

## Materials Needed

- Paper and pencil/crayons
- A variety of non-perishable food items from your pantry (cans, boxes, bags of pasta, etc. - about 15-20 items)
- Sticky notes or small pieces of paper and tape
- A marker
- Play money (or homemade paper money) - a mix of \$1, \$5, and \$10 bills
- A reusable grocery bag or basket
- A calculator (optional, for support)
- An old cereal box or shoebox to act as a cash register

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## Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Plan a simple meal and create a corresponding shopping list.
- Categorize food items (e.g., grains, vegetables, snacks).
- Use play money to "purchase" items within a set budget.
- Calculate the total cost of several items using simple addition.

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## Lesson Activities

### Part 1: The Meal Plan (10 minutes)

1. **Engage:** Start by asking, "If you could cook any meal for us tonight, what would you make?" Talk about their favorite foods. Let's choose one simple meal to plan for, like spaghetti with garlic bread or tacos.
2. **Brainstorm & List:** Ask, "What ingredients do we need to make [chosen meal]?" Guide them to think of each component. For spaghetti, they might say "noodles," "sauce," and "bread."
3. **Create the Shopping List:** Have the student write or draw the needed ingredients on a piece of paper. This is their official shopping list! Encourage them to sound out the words as they write.

### Part 2: Set Up the Store (10 minutes)

1. **Gather Inventory:** Together, "stock the shelves" by gathering 15-20 food items from your pantry

and placing them on a table or counter. Be sure to include the items from their shopping list.

2. **Set Prices:** Use the sticky notes to create price tags for each item. Keep the prices simple (e.g., \$1, \$2, \$3). Let the student help decide the prices. This gives them a sense of value. For example, "Should a big box of cereal cost more than a small can of soup?"
3. **Organize:** Ask the student, "How should we organize our store?" Guide them to group similar items together (e.g., put all the canned goods in one spot, all the snack items in another). This introduces the concept of aisles and categorization.

### Part 3: The Shopping Trip! (15 minutes)

1. **Set the Budget:** Give the student a set amount of play money, like \$20. Explain, "This is your budget. You can't spend more than this! You have to make sure you have enough money to buy everything on your list."
2. **Go Shopping:** Give them the grocery bag and their list. Let them walk through the "store," find the items they need for their meal plan, and place them in their bag. Encourage them to read the labels and double-check their list.
3. **Smart Choices:** If they want to buy an extra item (like a snack) that isn't on the list, prompt them to think critically: "Do you have enough money in your budget for that? Let's check." This encourages them to add up prices as they go.

### Part 4: Checkout (10 minutes)

1. **You be the Cashier:** At first, you can be the cashier. Have the student unload their items. Say the price of each item out loud as you scan it over the "cash register" box.
2. **Student as Mathematician:** Have the student add up the prices on their paper. They can use mental math, count on their fingers, or line up the numbers to practice addition. (*Example: "The sauce is \$3 and the pasta is \$2. How much is that so far?"*)
3. **Pay the Bill:** Once they have the total, ask them to pay you with their play money. Help them count out the correct amount.
4. **Switch Roles!:** Now, it's their turn to be the cashier! You can grab a few items and let them add up the total for you. This reinforces the math skills in a fun, new context.

## Closure & Discussion

Clean up the "store" together and talk about the activity:

- "What was your favorite part of being a shopper?"
- "Was it hard to stay within your budget?"
- "What's one thing you learned about grocery shopping today?"
- Connect the activity to the real world: "Next time we go to the real grocery store, you can help me find these items and we can look at the real prices!"

## Differentiation & Extension Ideas

- **For Extra Support:**
  - Use only pictures on the shopping list.
  - Keep all prices at \$1 to focus on one-to-one counting.
  - Provide a calculator for the "checkout" portion so the focus remains on the process of

shopping.

- **For an Extra Challenge:**

- Introduce prices that include cents (e.g., \$1.50, \$2.25) to practice adding decimals.
- Introduce the concept of a sale. Mark one or two items with a "50% off!" sign and help them calculate the new price.
- Have them plan for two meals, requiring a longer list and a bigger budget to manage.