



How supermarkets make you **buy more**

**73%**

of you are annoyed at supermarkets moving goods around

47%

of you are annoyed that essentials are placed at the back of the store

35%

of you think special offers at the entrance are helpful

We decode supermarket layouts to reveal why you may end up buying more than you need

From placing special offers at the end of an aisle to displaying sweets at the checkout, it's no secret that supermarkets use every trick in the book to tempt you to buy more than you'd intended. Almost two thirds of Which? members we recently surveyed agreed that they tend to buy more than they planned at the supermarket. And more than seven in ten said they go for special offers if they see them.

In July and August 2009, we asked 2,743 members for their views of the tactics supermarkets use to increase their sales. Nearly two thirds of those surveyed said that special offers at shop entrances were 'helpful' or 'convenient', but there are some tactics that shoppers dislike.

Almost three quarters of you are annoyed when groceries are moved to different aisles – a tactic used to tempt you with other items while you try to track down what you really wanted. Almost half of you think it's annoying when supermarkets place essential items, such as bread and milk, at the back of the store – another ploy to make you walk past items you didn't plan on buying.

You also dislike it when supermarkets place products that appeal to children on lower shelves to catch their eye – almost six in ten think it's manipulative.

Shelf battle

Where your staple groceries or favourite brands are placed on the shelves, and how much space they occupy, is carefully planned. The most sought-after shelf is the one at eye level – manufacturers often pay a lot for the best spots.

If a brand is established and is making an adequate return, manufacturers won't need to pay for a good position. But supermarkets make an initial charge for new

manufacturers or products, and manufacturers can also pay for eye-catching shelf labels, called 'shelf talkers', which promote a special offer in front of the product.

Supermarket buyers regularly review their sectors to assess volume and positions for certain brands, based on how much has been sold and how much profit is being made. Manufacturers know when these reviews happen, and plan ahead to negotiate the best shelf position possible.

Power struggle

While you may think manufacturers hold the key to the price asked for their products in supermarkets, Andrew Seth, former chief executive at Lever Brothers and co-author of *The Grocers* and *Supermarket Wars*, says the power balance has tipped in supermarkets' favour.

Supermarkets negotiate special offers with manufacturers to highlight leading brands; manufacturers – who fund these offers – will then see a lot of stock shifted. Dr Seth says this can come at a price to the manufacturer: 'Competitor supermarkets will see that deal, and the manufacturer may then have to improve on it for a rival supermarket.'

While lower prices obviously benefit the consumer, some of these increased profit margins have gone into the supermarkets' own pockets. 'Some of these profits, in turn, have enabled supermarkets to compete aggressively in the categories where they have been fighting to gain new presence, such as non-food products,' says Dr Seth.

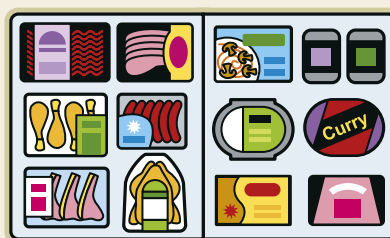
For those who want to beat the supermarkets' sales tactics, we've worked with Jeff Bray, senior lecturer in retail at Bournemouth University, to put together a guide to decoding your supermarket, on p64-65, which will help you spot other tactics you might not have noticed. ►►

Your supermarket decoded

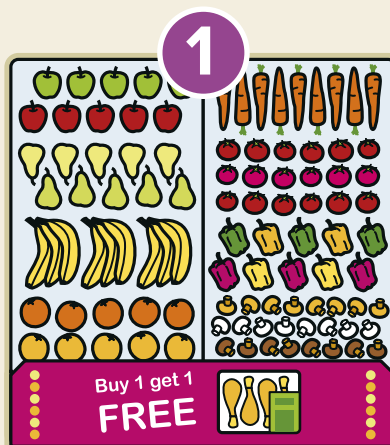
We reveal some common supermarket positioning tactics aimed at making you buy more than you bargained for

1 FRUIT AND VEG

The placement of fruit and veg at the front of the store is no accident – it's there to represent the healthy, fresh image that supermarkets want to portray.



5



1



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6

7



5 LUNCH ITEMS AND DWELL ZONE

You'll usually find everything you need for a quick lunch at the front of the supermarket, often next to impulse buys such as tobacco, newspapers and flowers. This is convenient for workers on a busy lunch break, but they want you to be aware that you can also get your lunch when you pop in for your everyday essentials.

6 LOOK RIGHT

Most of us look to the right when we enter the shop – so that's where supermarkets put current deals they want you to snap up to grab your attention. These can be brought out at a moment's notice – if it starts raining heavily, you may see umbrellas appear here.

7 ROW ENDS

The row ends are the most profitable part of the store for product manufacturers. They pay to put their products here, and often fund the special offers that accompany them.

2 THEMED AISLES

Halloween is soon upon us, and with it will come the costumes and themed sweets near the front of the store to prompt you to buy them. These aisles change with the seasons.

3 LIKE WITH LIKE

Groups of food that go together are often found close to each other to prompt you to buy them. It's common to see the tea and coffee next to the biscuits and the cereals, for example.

4 ESSENTIALS

You'll almost never see essential items such as milk or bread at the front – supermarkets want you to walk through the store and be enticed by other goods before you get to what you need.



8 VALUE LINES

You won't find the cheapest lines in the best shelf spots. 'Supermarkets don't want you to buy value items,' says Jeff. But having different varieties of the same product may encourage you to switch to pricier versions.

9 ALCOHOL

Alcohol is almost always towards the back as it contradicts the healthy image supermarkets clearly want, despite the fact that, from the perspective of packing your trolley this is completely illogical, as all the heavier items end up at the top.

10 CHECKOUTS

Sweets are common checkout staples and are very tempting for tired shoppers and young children. But checkouts also promote other reminder buys and non-food related services such as finance products. 'You'd never consider these at any other point in the store – only when you've got some wait time,' says Jeff.