

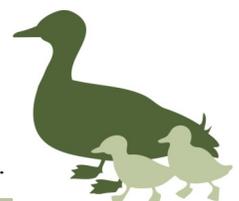
# SHOPPING with CHILDREN



Shopping with children, especially young children, requires both patience and planning. Following are some helpful hints for shopping with children during the holidays and throughout the year.

1. Plan shopping when children (or adults) are not already tired or hungry. Avoid crowds and busy times, such as right after work/right before dinner when possible. Shopping is less stressful when adults and children feel comfortable and unrushed.
2. Talk with children in advance about what you will be buying. Preschoolers may like to help make a list, while toddlers may prefer to look at the pictures in store flyers. Remember also that shopping can provide an early education in the concepts of nutrition and budgeting, as well as decision making and understanding that plans make life easier. If children can help make some choices, make this clear so they can anticipate their role.
3. Remind children ahead of time about limits and behavior. Let them know specifically what you expect from them as far as staying with you, not touching, accepting that they will not be allowed to have items not on the list, etc. Children who are still learning appropriate behavior benefit from such gentle reminders.
4. Capitalize on children's curiosity. Let them look at interesting items, learning new words as they go. Ask them questions about what they see, such as what things do, how things are used, how foods taste, etc. Encourage them to think about concepts such as counting, measuring and comparing. Simple questions teach children as well as lessen their boredom. Allow them to hold an item you will be purchasing, as long as it is safe for your child and can't be damaged.
5. Let older preschoolers help you locate items on the shelf, using clipped-out pictures from the grocery ads. Play "I spy" using colors or rhyming words. Bring a crayon for children to mark through items on a list.
6. Allow children to make choices within choices. For example, you may select two or three acceptable cereals, and allow your child to choose the one to buy this time. Remember what you promised they could choose when you were planning and discussing the shopping trip.

continued...



# SHOPPING with CHILDREN

continued...

7. Recognize that you will have to say "no" about some things. You can say no just as kindly as you can say yes, recognizing the wish, even if not granting the specific request, as in "That cereal does look good, doesn't it? I wish I could let you have it, but it's got way more sugar than is good for us. Let's see if we can make a different choice".
8. Don't hesitate to give children valid reasons why requests cannot be granted. Remember, this is all a learning process, so telling kids that you don't have the money for special things this week, or pointing out the flimsy construction of a toy helps children broaden their understanding.
9. Remember to pack the essentials. Most outings with young children include a tote bag of supplies, and shopping should be no different. You know what your child is most likely to need in terms of diapering and feeding supplies, as well as one or two entertaining toys.
10. If your market has a no-candy checkout station, use it to avoid further temptation at the end of a trying experience. (If it doesn't have, ask the store manager to consider adding one.)
11. Make sure the shopping trip is within the range of your child's ability. Trips to the grocery store armed with a list and a plan are very different from trips to a department store to "window shop" or to consider a large purchase. If you have to take your child shopping for a big ticket item like a car or an appliance, do your research online ahead of time if possible. This will cut down on the actual time spent shopping.
12. If possible, break up major shopping events (back-to-school, holidays) into smaller trips. Interperse shopping with other errands or events that the child enjoys. A trip to the library or a specialty store can go a long way toward appeasing the patience of children confronted with a longer shopping trip. If you have more than one child, consider making trips "special" by taking only one child at a time, if possible.
13. Finally, remember that the outing will be more rewarding for you and your child if you end on a positive note, having accomplished what you set out to do. Should you or the kids reach the limit of your patience, don't hesitate to cut the shopping trip short and return under different circumstances.

