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- *Title of article:* "Victory In The Grocery Battle Ground"

Some parents find it exhausting to take their young children to go grocery shopping. The trip can turn out to be a battleground. How can parents make grocery shopping a more pleasant experience for both themselves and their children? Here are some suggestions to consider.

Consider everyone's needs prior to the shopping trip:

- Are children hungry or tired? If so, feed them some snacks. Since children can get irritable when they are tired, it might be a good idea to take the trip at a different time.
- Have you been having a bad day? Are you stressed from work? A minor temper tantrum from your children will add to your stress, and you might reach your tolerance threshold.
- Have you planned ahead? Take a list of needed items to save you time in the grocery store.
- How is everyone feeling, including you?
- Let your children know shopping can be fun for everyone.
- Let your children know it is a privilege to go shopping.
- Make your expectations clear.
- Follow through on what you say.
- Role play with your child at home about how to act at a store. Have fun and let your child pretend to be the parent and see how they act if you misbehave.
- Bring your children's favorite toy, blanket, or book or a nutritious snack.
- Take an older child (possibly a neighbor's child) with you to help entertain your child.
- Reward good behavior.
- Make sure you and your children are wearing comfortable clothing.

Communicate your expectations:

- Tell your children how you want them to behave before stepping into the grocery store.
- Convey rules that are clear to children – especially the rule that they stay within your sight.
- Tell your children (ages 4 and above) they can be good helpers by getting some light grocery items for you.

Make it a fun and educational opportunity:

- Allow children to have input within certain necessary food groups, like vegetables and grain. Not only can they develop a sense of responsibility, but they can also learn names of different kinds of food and the categories they fall in, like vegetables, grains, poultry, etc.
- Help develop your children's mathematical skills by asking them to count out food items for you.

You've tried everything and nothing works:

- Ignore inappropriate behavior unless it becomes dangerous, destructive, or annoying to others.
- Remove a child who is out of control. Take the child to a restroom or out of the store where you can say quietly that the behavior is unacceptable.
- Go home if your child cannot calm down. Find a babysitter and return to the store alone.

Children need a pat on the back:

- If they have helped you, don't forget to show your appreciation, and tell them how they have helped.
- If they have followed the expectations you have set for them, thank them for being great shopping companions. Follow with a hug.
- Occasionally, allow them to pick out their favorite snack as a reward.

Look out for those carts!

- If you prefer to put young children in a shopping cart, keep an eye on them at all times since young children are very mobile, and they could fall when trying to get out of the cart.

Shopping with your preschoolers can be a pleasurable experience for you and your children if you plan ahead, take precautions, and be creative!

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