

MANAGING IN TOUGH TIMES

FAMILY FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

The Ins and Outs of Warehouse Club Shopping

Warehouse club shopping can be a great way to save money, especially if you have multiple family members living at home. However, you must also use caution! It is easy to overspend when you are surrounded by numerous products and free samples.

Most warehouse clubs require you to purchase a yearly membership. Be sure to shop around the warehouse clubs in your area to ensure that you are getting the best deal. Warehouse clubs will often offer free tours or a one-day membership to allow you to experience the store before committing to a membership. When you are shopping around, compare the products that each club carries, the membership prices, and special perks that each store may offer to you. Each family is unique, so be sure to keep your family's needs in mind.

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If you decide to commit to a warehouse club membership, consider the tips below to maximize warehouse club benefits while being mindful of your budget:

- **Make a list and stick to it.** You will be amazed at how many products your local warehouse club offers! Many clubs stock products including televisions, bedding, outdoor furniture, and more. Be sure that you shop with a list in hand to avoid going over budget or coming home with an unneeded product.
- **Unit pricing.** Pay attention to the unit pricing of the product you are interested in buying – buying in bulk is not always the best deal. Compare the pricing of bulk products to individually packaged products to make sure that you are not spending more than you need to.
- **Purchase the store brands.** Warehouse club stores offer store brand products, much like your local grocery store. Generally speaking, the store brand products are high quality and will offer you the greatest savings. You'll find a number of food and beauty products at great prices, too.
- **Bulk meat.** Warehouse club stores offer great savings on meat and poultry purchases. Investing in a vacuum sealer will allow you to buy large packages of meat and poultry without worrying about waste. Break the larger packages of meat into smaller servings appropriate for your family and then freeze them.
- **Avoid the middle aisles.** Similar to your local grocery store, it is best to shop around the perimeter of the store. Products carried in the middle aisles of club stores are less likely to save you money. The best deals that you will find will be on products such as milk, eggs, and sliced bread.

- **Share your purchases with family and friends.** Consider sharing the cost of your membership with family and friends. You can all take advantage of the savings while splitting purchases and costs!
- **Seasonal savings.** Warehouse clubs offer amazing savings at the end of every holiday season. Keep an eye out for these deals in your club's weekly flyer.
- **Take advantage of warehouse club gas.** Have you ever driven by your local warehouse club and noticed the significantly cheaper gas prices? Cheaper gas is a perk that you should consider, whether you are simply driving by or making a weekly or monthly shopping trip.

Warehouse club shopping can be intimidating. However, by paying attention to prices, making a list and sticking to it, and stocking up on frequently used household supplies, you and your family can save a significant amount of money.

In many ways, warehouse club shopping is similar to shopping at your local grocery store; you can be successful using many of the same budgeting strategies. However, keep in mind that purchasing in larger quantities requires a greater up-front cost and a dedicated space at home to store your purchases. With the right planning, you will be pleasantly surprised by the savings!

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