

OLYMPIC-STYLE GROCERY SHOPPING

Ah, the beginning of a new year! Among our good intentions to make this New Year better, I bet most of us want to lose some weight. Unfortunately, the big change can't happen if all the little things stay the same. Here is an excellent way to change your entire outlook on shopping, exercise, better eating habits and saving time and money, all at one time!

Grocery store habits can make or break us so make grocery shopping an Olympic-style speed event. The goal is to get in and out of the store as fast as possible with only what you need. That sounds pretty simple doesn't it?

Training for this event is important. Practice speed walking with your hands held out in front of you, as if holding your grocery cart, not pumping up and down. The pumping is replaced by alternate side snatching, while maintaining balance and speed. I suggest training with a 1 lb package of 95% lean ground beef in each hand. As your strength increases graduate to a large head of cabbage or a 2lb bag of onions. Also, practice keeping the eyes moving, scanning ahead for your next object while using your peripheral vision to keep from running into stacked displays.

Always have a shopping list and stick to it. This is very important. Do your thinking and planning ahead of time. Stopping to think will slow you down and increase the load in your cart. Plan what you want and write it down. If you always go to the same grocery store, you should recopy the list in the order you will come upon the items. A familiar track will increase your speed.

My favorite grocery store just added a bunch of new smaller carts. They have two small baskets, one above the other instead of the one huge tank. I love them! They are lighter and more maneuverable. The wheels don't drag or squeak. They turn on a dime so I can really cut the corners short without losing speed or traction. Look around for a store that has these.

Go to the store when you are in a hurry, with a time limit before your next task. This will increase your motivation. Start your deep breathing exercises to get your oxygen levels up, while pulling into the parking lot. When you get out of the car, do a few quick stretching exercises and jog in place for a minute to get loose and warmed up. Tight muscles will slow you down.

List in hand, grab your shopping cart firmly by the handle, take a few more deep breaths, assume your starting position and imagine hearing the starter's pistol. GO! Focus on getting all the items on your list and back out of the store as fast as possible.

You can cut your time down by staying mainly on the outside aisles where you find the fresh produce, dairy, meats and seafood. If you slow down and loiter in those center aisles full of highly processed, sweetened and fatty foods, you will lose the grocery store game and no weight! And for goodness sakes, eat first! You need all the energy you can get for zooming around and you do not want to be tempted to buy extra stuff just because you're hungry!

Remember how much energy you are using and that protein is necessary to maintain that level. Upping your protein, in relation to your carbohydrates will help you get and stay lean and mean and increase your shopping speed. Know where to find the turkey pepperoni and frozen shrimp (both of which are fast high protein, low fat snacks). Image the carton of your favorite brand of low fat cottage cheese and the color of the lid on your low fat milk. Going directly to these products will give you the time to open the egg carton to make sure they are all intact.

There are a few things you have to dip into the center for. Know exactly where to find the salsa, V8 juice, green tea and tuna packed in water. Plan your route so you know exactly where to cut a close corner around the displays of soft drinks, chips and donuts while keeping both hands firmly on your grocery cart and eyes ahead toward your goal.

Learn to snatch a bag of frozen fish with one hand while opening the freezer door with the other and pushing the cart ahead with a foot. Coordination is the key here! Keeping the eyes directed at the fish will help you maintain your balance and earn a 10 on this event. If you allow your attention to drift

toward the ice cream or frozen pies for even a moment, you could experience a terrible wipeout in the middle of the aisle.

If you buy personal hygiene, cleaning and paper products at the grocery store, you can consider these "safe" aisles. If you find yourself tiring, duck into one of them. You can slow down, not enough to lose momentum but enough to catch a few deep breaths, between the laundry detergent and dishwashing liquid. By the other end of the aisle you'll be re-energized to kick up your speed again.

Stay alert. With your eyes up and constantly scanning, you will make eye contact with other Olympic shoppers. Be sure to give them a big smile and a cheery hello or even a "high-five". This will make you feel good and studies show that friendly out-going people are happier and healthier and lose weight easier.

The last obstacle is the rack of impulse junk food right before the register. Don't lose it here! Look around and smile and talk with other people in line. While putting your purchases onto the counter, focus on your checker. Smile and say a friendly hello. As you move forward, greet the packer and engage in some happy chatter. This will keep you from being attracted to those enticing, but dangerous, goodies right beside you. And remember, those poor people are stuck, standing there doing a boring job. Brighten their day by sharing some fun with them and you've leaped your last hurdle.

As you trot back out the door, with a successfully light load, do a little victory dance and imagine you hear the crowd roar with approval. See the judges holding up the 10's for your strength and agility and willpower. Tip the bag person and laugh with joy as you continue your day, proud and healthy!