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Teaching middle school students about unit prices is an important step to students understanding ratios, rates and proportions, and eventually physics. More practically, its an important concept for students to learn when growing towards spending money well when going to the grocery store. Here are 15 unit rate activities geared towards middle schoolers. PBS Learning Media includes a short video reinforcing students understanding of ratios. From there, teachers can build a lesson and interact with support materials for students and teachers. Additionally, you can share this resource with Google classroom. Learn More: PBS Learning Media This activity allows students to see how unit-rate questions translate into practical skills. Students page through grocery store fliers and choose 6-10 examples of the same object. Then, they find the unit price for each object and select the best deal. Learn More: Thatcher Math Cafe In this print activity, students have to read through various scenarios and decide how to classify each example. They then glue the card in the appropriate column. Students being able to correctly sort through the cards is an effective learning strategy for clarifying their understanding of ratio word problems. Learn More: My Math Resources In this blog, a math teacher built a real-world scenario for students, asking them to estimate the number of sugar packets in each bottle. After looking at student solutions, they then worked together to solve for the real amount using unit rate math. Finally, she provided individual practice for students with new food items. Learn More: Math Equals Love This proportions foldable is a great way to introduce the equation in a tangible form for students with a little construction paper and a marker. You can reinforce the concept even further by asking students to draw an X in a different color pencil, showing the equation before they show the rest of their work. Learn More: Math Equals Love Here is another resource type to add to your lesson plan when introducing unit prices or unit rates to students. This graphic organizer helps students clearly see the rate, and unit rate and compare the two. Once students have had enough guided practice, they can make their own organizer. Learn More: To The Square Inch This video is an engaging and real-life applicable resource presenting word problems and examples. It can easily be included on Google Classroom or presented in snippets as response questions throughout the lesson to check for understanding, but would also be a great activity for homework, group work, or distance learning. Learn More: Youtube This unit price math foldable is a wonderful educational resource alternative to regular student worksheets. In this worksheet, students solve for the cost of individual ingredients, but also the finished product (a burger). This interactive activity challenges students to understand the real-world application of ratio activities in a restaurant and when spending money on groceries. Learn More: Common Core Material Here is an additional resource when teaching students about unit prices. They may be easily confused by all the types of ratios and rates, but this foldable acts as an anchor chart to reinforce what youve already taught and to help kids as they work through homework problems. Learn More: Cognitive Cardio Math This bundle of worksheets can be used as homework papers or guided practice at the end of math lessons. It covers a variety of topics from complex fractions to unit rates and also includes an answer key for teachers. Learn More: Exceeding The Core This interactive resource is a wonderful enrichment activity for students learning about unit prices. Hide the sets of cards around the room. As students find them, ask them to solve the problem. The answer links up with another students card, and eventually, the circle is complete. Learn More: Absolute Algebra In this middle school math activity, students are given several different bags of candy and asked to find the best and worst deal. Students are also given reflection questions including Why do you think this is the best/worst deal? Support your answer and then ask them to share with their peers. Learn More:Yummy Math Genius Generation has some great resources for distance learning or homeschooling student. First, students can watch a video lesson, complete some reading, and then be given several practice problems. There are also teacher resources to round out the experience and provide support. Learn More:Generation Genius Education.com provides lots of simple worksheets for students to practice what they have learned. In this particular worksheet, students solve several word problems and then have to compare various deals, selecting the best option. Learn More:Education Students solve multiple-choice unit price word problems and color starbursts the appropriate color based on their answers. While an answer key is included, its also easy for students to check themselves if you reveal a key on the board. Learn More:PreAlgebra Teachers Unit pricing makes comparing productsfrom one brand to the next or between different sizesmore like comparing apples to apples, so it's easier to see which item really saves you the most money. Unfortunately, the unit pricing on the labels you see at the grocery store isn't always reliable.To recap: unit pricing takes the price of the item (say, $1.59 for a 24-ounce jar of spaghetti sauce) and divides it by a standard unit of measurement (such as ounces) to provide a simple price comparison point ($1.59 divided by 24 ounces = $0.07 per ounce). You can then use that unit price to see if you're getting the best deal. Will the 45-ounce jar of sauce at $3.69 save or cost you money? Doing the math ($3.69 divided by 45 ounces = $0.08 per ounce), the answer is no; buy the smaller jar.Usually you'll see the unit price on the shelf price label at grocery stores and big box retailers like Target and Wal-Mart. Despite their seeming helpfulness for smart shoppers, though, you can't always trust them. Unit Pricing Isn't Regulated or Required in All StatesAccording to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), only 19 states and 2 territories have unit pricing laws and regulations, and only 11 have mandatory unit pricing rules (i.e., how unit prices should be calculated and displayed). That means that 31 states don't have firm requirements for these pricing labels. The unit pricing you (may or may not) see on a label could vary greatly from one store to another or even between products within the same store, depending on where you live.The states that have mandatory unit pricing provisions are: Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Vermont and the Virgin Islands. You can check the pricing laws and regulations for your state from this NIST page.Missing Unit PricesStores in states that don't have mandatory unit pricing rules can still choose to add a unit price calculation on their price labels for the convenience of their customersor choose to omit them altogether. How-To Geek's Lowell Heddings, who tipped us off to this issue, noticed that the Target near himhe's in a state without mandatory unit pricing lawsstarted to take down the per unit pricing labels. Even more curious, the pricing for laundry detergent seemed off. 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You might also consider keeping a price book so you know the typical sales prices (and per unit prices) for the groceries and household items you buy most.Finally, remember that larger and bulk buys don't always offer the better value, and steer clear of grocery stores' other deceptive tricks. Photo by lupuliuss (Shutterstock), Mike Mozart. Real Life, Good Food Sometimessimilar foods are sold in different sizes, which can make it hard to compare prices. Unit pricing is a way to compare similar products to determine which is the best deal. Instead of focusing only on the overall price, with unit pricingyou calculate the cost of a unit of that product, which could be per serving, ounceor poundfor a few examples. Lets see how this works by comparing two cans of chicken noodle soup. The first can is 19 ounces and costs $2.69. The second can is 10.5 ounces and costs $1.99. The second may be the lower price, but is it the best deal? Though the second can is cheaper, the price per unit is $0.19 per ounce, while the price per unit for the first can is $0.14.Per ounce, the first can costs less than the second can! Most of the time, larger packages tend to cost less per unit than smaller packages. Thats the better deal, if you are going to eat the whole package before it goes bad. For some foods, buying bigger may not be better if you end up throwing half of it out. Only you know what will work for you and your family.Fresh produceWhen shopping the produce section, start by reading the shelf sticker: is it priced per piece or by the pound?Which is the better buy? Lets compare these peppers and find out. To compare the best price between piece or pound, grab your phone and plug this in:By item:Weigh the item in Pounds. This green pepper weighs 0.3 pounds.Divide the price by the weight to get the price per pound. So, divide .99 by .3 to find that green peppers cost $3.30 per pound.By Pound:Weigh the item by piece. These peppers weigh .25 pounds.Multiply the weight by price to get the price of the piece. So, take .25 x 4.8 to find this pepper costs $1.20.The mix of bell peppers looks a lot more expensive, and when you calculate the cost, it is $0.21 more than the green pepper. The green pepper is the better buy.Packaged productsWhich of these is the best deal? If you guessed Salad Dressing 2 youre right! The price per ounce is found by dividing the cost of the item by the number of ounces.Salad Dressing 1 costs $3.89 for 32 ounces. For this dressing, divide $3.89 by 32 to get $0.12.Salad Dressing 2 costs $4.29 for 48 ounces. For this dressing, divide $4.29 by 48 to get $0.09.Most grocery store shelf labels have the price per ounce posted so you can compare unit prices without a calculator.Other tips for finding the best dealsEnd-caps may display items that are advertised as specials, but check the price because it may be the regular price (or even marked up).Shop the upper and lower shelves in each aisle. Items at eye level are placed there to make the product more enticing although it may not be the healthiest or least expensive option. Saving money when food shopping can be difficult due to the different weights and sizes of packages, cans, and containers. Sometimes it's cheaper to buy two smaller-sized packages of cereal and sometimes it is not. To help take the mystery out of these decisions, unit pricing was developed and became a New Jersey law in 1975. Shoppers looking to get the most for their money can use the unit price to compare packages of different sizes and determine which offer the best value. Zoom in Figure 1. Compare the unit price of the same product in different sizes. What is Unit Pricing? The unit price is the cost of an item per pound, ounce, quart, feet, count, or other measure that is commonly used. It permits the consumer to compare the price per unit of items, such as canned peas or packages of dinner napkins. Figure 1 shows an example of two containers of yogurt with different unit prices. Which is the better value, per ounce? While the retail price of the top container is more, it is a better value, per ounce (Figure 1). Unit and retail price will be on the same label, which may be vertically or horizontally divided to display both prices. The unit price will be displayed on the left side or upper portion of the label, depending on the format, as seen in Figure 2. While the space devoted to the unit and retail prices should be equal, the retail price can be the same size or larger than the unit price. Zoom in Figure 2. Examples of unit pricing labels. Note: All letters and numbers must be: The unit price section of the label must also give the unit of measure, e.g., pound, ounce, or count. Unit price shelf labels may also include stock or code information as long as it does not interfere with the consumer information. Where is Unit Pricing Found? Unit price labels are often found on the shelf edge (Figure 3, left) but can also be on an individual container (Figure 3, right) or both the shelf edge and the container. Figure 3. Where to find unit price labels. Many online retailers list the unit price along with retail price, as shown in the figure below, but it is not mandatory. Figure 4. Screen capture of an online shopping cart. How To Use Unit Pricing By comparing the unit price of different sizes of a favorite brand OR different brands of the same style product, you can quickly see which costs less per unit. Look at the examples below to determine what choices you would make for your family. Here are some prices for store brand whole carrots. All items are the same brand but come in different-sized packages (Figure 5). Figure 5. Compare the unit price of the same product in different sizes. Use the unit price to compare the items and answer the questions below: Figure 6 below shows prices for the same brand of carrots as above, however, these are different types of carrots. Think about the questions below and decide what you would purchase for your family. Figure 6. Compare the unit prices of the same food, carrots, in various types (baby carrots, carrot chips, and canned sliced carrots). Figure 7 shows some examples of the same product, but from different brands and in different-sized packages. Use the unit price to determine which is the best choice for you. Figure 7. Unit prices of same product (brown rice) from different brands. Do All Stores Use Unit Pricing? No. Even though unit pricing is a law in New Jersey, some retail stores are not required to display unit pricing. For example, retail stores having gross receipts of not more than $2 million in the previous year or having 4,000 or fewer square feet of floor space devoted to selling consumer products, are not required to display unit pricing. An owner of more than one retail store need not display unit pricing if the stores meet similar regulations. Many online retailers list unit prices but it is not mandatory. What Are Unit Prices and Lists? Some retail store owners have received permission to provide unit price information in list form. These lists must be easy to read and displayed at or near the commodity. As with the unit price labels, these lists must be divided into columns and provide information in the same order: ITEM WEIGHT UNIT PRICE RETAIL PRICE OURSTORE ORANGE JUICE 12 OZ $0.12 $1.44 OURSTORE ORANGE JUICE 52 OZ $0.06 $3.12 MYBEST ORANGE JUICE 12 OZ $0.19 $2.29 Additional stock or code information may appear on the unit price sign or list. Is Unit Pricing Required on All Retail Consumer Commodities? No. These items do not need to carry a unit price label according to NJ law: Some other products may be exempt from unit pricing based on the interpretation of current regulations. If in doubt, call your county Office of Consumer Affairs (PDF). Unit Pricing Will Not Tell You About The: References Acknowledgement This fact sheet has been updated from the original version written by Audrey Burkart. August 2023 Copyright 2025 Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. All rights reserved. For more information: njaes.rutgers.edu. Cooperating Agencies: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Boards of County Commissioners. Rutgers Cooperative Extension, a unit of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, is an equal opportunity program provider and employer. Unit pricing makes comparing productsfrom one brand to the next or between different sizesmore like comparing apples to apples, so it's easier to see which item really saves you the most money. Unfortunately, the unit pricing on the labels you see at the grocery store isn't always reliable.To recap: unit pricing takes the price of the item (say, $1.59 for a 24-ounce jar of spaghetti sauce) and divides it by a standard unit of measurement (such as ounces) to provide a simple price comparison point ($1.59 divided by 24 ounces = $0.07 per ounce). You can then use that unit price to see if you're getting the best deal. Will the 45-ounce jar of sauce at $3.69 save or cost you money? Doing the math ($3.69 divided by 45 ounces = $0.08 per ounce), the answer is no; buy the smaller jar.Usually you'll see the unit price on the shelf price label at grocery stores and big box retailers like Target and Wal-Mart. Despite their seeming helpfulness for smart shoppers, though, you can't always trust them. Unit Pricing Isn't Regulated or Required in All StatesAccording to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), only 19 states and 2 territories have unit pricing laws and regulations, and only 11 have mandatory unit pricing rules (i.e., how unit prices should be calculated and displayed). That means that 31 states don't have firm requirements for these pricing labels. 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Though the second can is cheaper, the price per unit is $0.19 per ounce, while the price per unit for the first can is $0.14.Per ounce, the first can costs less than the second can! Most of the time, larger packages tend to cost less per unit than smaller packages. Thats the better deal, if you are going to eat the whole package before it goes bad. For some foods, buying bigger may not be better if you end up throwing half of it out. Only you know what will work for you and your family.Fresh produceWhen shopping the produce section, start by reading the shelf sticker: is it priced per piece or by the pound?Which is the better buy? Lets compare these peppers and find out. To compare the best price between piece or pound, grab your phone and plug this in:By item:Weigh the item in Pounds. This green pepper weighs 0.3 pounds.Divide the price by the weight to get the price per pound. So, divide .99 by .3 to find that green peppers cost $3.30 per pound.By Pound:Weigh the item by piece. These peppers weigh .25 pounds.Multiply the weight by price to get the price of the piece. So, take .25 x 4.8 to find this pepper costs $1.20.The mix of bell peppers looks a lot more expensive, and when you calculate the cost, it is $0.21 more than the green pepper. The green pepper is the better buy.Packaged productsWhich of these is the best deal? If you guessed Salad Dressing 2 youre right! The price per ounce is found by dividing the cost of the item by the number of ounces.Salad Dressing 1 costs $3.89 for 32 ounces. For this dressing, divide $3.89 by 32 to get $0.12.Salad Dressing 2 costs $4.29 for 48 ounces. For this dressing, divide $4.29 by 48 to get $0.09.Most grocery store shelf labels have the price per ounce posted so you can compare unit prices without a calculator.Other tips for finding the best dealsEnd-caps may display items that are advertised as specials, but check the price because it may be the regular price (or even marked up).Shop the upper and lower shelves in each aisle. Items at eye level are placed there to make the product more enticing although it may not be the healthiest or least expensive option. Welcome back, everyone! Today, I want to talk about one of the most overlooked skills in grocery shopping: deciphering price tags or how to look at price per unit. It may seem deceptively simple, but it can actually get quite complicated. You may be on the lookout for sales, but are you really getting the best deal? Lets learn how to read between the lines and see if that sale price is worth it. Understanding price tags and decoding unit price can help us make informed decisions and find the best value for our money. Personal preferences, storage conditions, and serving sizes can impact the reliability of price tags and the accuracy of unit price calculations. Beware of misleading packaging and always compare unit prices before adding items to your cart. Deciphering price tags can be a challenging skill to master, but its an essential one to have when grocery shopping. Sales signs can be deceiving, and its crucial to know how to read between the lines to determine if a sale price is worth it. The key to understanding price tags is the unit price. The unit price is the cost per unit, and the unit can be ounces, pounds, pieces, or a variety of other measurements. To find the price per unit, you simply divide the total cost by the quantity. For example, if a pack of Uncrustables costs $16.99 for 18 sandwiches, the price per unit is $0.94. However, things can get more complicated when an item doesnt have a specific unit. For instance, Captain Crunch cereal lists the price per unit as $29.8, which was calculated by dividing the total price by the weight. But, most people dont eat cereal based on weight; they eat it based on serving size. So, to determine the price per serving, you need to divide the total price by the number of servings. This 12.6oz box of cereal has 9 servings, so we take the price of $3.75 and divide it by 9 servings. This gives us a price of $0.41 per serving. (If we bought two boxes at the sale price of $6.00 and divide by 18 servings, the price per unit is now $0.33 per serving.) Its important to note that serving sizes can vary, so you need to determine your own normal serving size. This will help you get an accurate price per unit and make informed price comparisons. Additionally, not every item comes in just one size, and sometimes buying a smaller package can be more cost-effective. In the rice example, we look at 3 different packages of the same rice. We have a 1lb bag, 2lb bag, and a 5lb bag. Since the one pound bag is on sale, it is actually cheaper to buy five 1lb bags of rice than it is to buy just a 5lb bag. If the one-pound bag was not on sale, the price per pound would actually be the same for all 3 sizes, so then you would just buy the amount you will need. When it comes to grocery shopping, deciphering price tags can be a daunting task. While unit price can be a helpful tool, it can also get complicated. Let me explain some of the complexities. So far we have looked at unit price being calculated by: number of items in package serving size by the pound There are actually a lot of different ways to calculate price per unit and it varies based on the product. Lets take a look at some tricky prices per units to fully understand how to do effective price comparing. First, lets look at some boxes of instant mashed potatoes. My local Walmart typically offers 3 different sizes and none of them are nice whole numbers like pounds. At first glance, it may seem obvious that the larger 26.7oz box is the best deal. But what if you dont eat instant mashed potatoes very often or dont have a spot to store this really big box? We have to keep in mind that price per unit is great to make a decision based on lowest price, but we still have to balance it with usage and storage. Next, lets look at frozen pancakes. Both of these boxes look very similar in size, so this would be a great example of confusing packaging. In this case, we are comparing mini sized pancakes and full size pancakes. If we try to calculate the price per serving, we will notice that the box of mini pancakes only has 3.6 servings ($1.02 per serving) Whereas the full size pancakes have 4 servings for $0.82 per serving. This gets harder when I know that my kids would never eat 11 mini pancakes in a single breakfast. So if we cant compare servings on this one, the next best option is to look at the total weight of the package. The mini pancakes weigh 14.1oz for a price of $0.26 per ounce. The full size pancakes weigh 14.8oz for a price of $0.22 per ounce. To me the better deal would be the full size pancakes, because I am getting more pancakes by weight for a better price. Every store that sells food is required to have a price per unit on the packaging, but no where does it say the unit that they pick has to be helpful! Perfect example of this is a 4 pack of Pediasure. The cost of a 4 pack is $9.98 and the tag shows the price per unit is $9.98. Walmart has decided that calculating the price per total package was the easiest so that is what they used on their price tag. A more helpful price per unit would have been the price per bottle. Since Pediasure can come in multiple packaging sizes like 4, 6, 12, 24, and so on. So, in this case, the price per bottle would be $2.49. If I was comparing the prices on multiple sizes packaging, I would need to look for a price per bottle that was lower than $2.49 to find the best deal! Be mindful of the packaging as well as the sizing. Dont always go by the unit price listed on the price tag, go with a per unit price that makes sense for you and your family! Keep in mind the following options when calculating price per unit for your family: Who will be eating it and how much do they typically eat in a serving. Is this an item that you have had before and know that your family will eat it? Do you have enough storage space for the largest package? Will you eat this item before it goes bad or gets stale? By asking yourself these questions, you can avoid some pitfalls if you only look at price per unit. Price per unit is just one decision making factor in getting a good deal! We already know that grocery stores are required to list a price per unit, but that it doesnt always have to be helpful. But did you know that sometimes the price per unit is not even accurate? This can happen when they leave old tags up, or if an item is on sale. Thankfully most of us go to the store with our phone in our pocket, so figuring out price per unit is pretty easy. Grab that calculator app on your phone and go ahead and move it to the home page. This way next time you are in a store, it will be super easy to use your calculator and get the right price per unit on every item you put in your cart. Deciphering price tags takes practice, but its a skill that can save you a ton of money. By comparing unit prices before adding items to your cart, you can ensure you always get the best value. Keep in mind that sometimes the best value doesnt work in your grocery budget, and you need to consider your personal preferences, storage conditions, and budget when making a decision. I realize that calculating your own price per unit can take time, so I would focus on using it as a guide to see if a sale price is worth it first. Just like with all parts of saving money on groceries, start small and build on it. You dont have to be the King or Queen of Price Per Unit on your next grocery trip. I encourage you to start using this new skill of figuring out price per unit on your own. In fact, I bet you will start to notice that some stores have lots of unhelpful unit prices. I really want you to pick at least 5 products on your shopping list and figure out the unit pricing that makes the most sense for your family. Did using the price per unit, affect which item you choose to buy? Did you opt for a different size than what you would have typically bought? Leave me a comment and let me know how your price per unit adventure worked out this week. I would love to know what you found in the grocery store too! Unit pricing makes comparing productsfrom one brand to the next or between different sizesmore like comparing apples to apples, so it's easier to see which item really saves you the most money. Unfortunately, the unit pricing on the labels you see at the grocery store isn't always reliable.To recap: unit pricing takes the price of the item (say, $1.59 for a 24-ounce jar of spaghetti sauce) and divides it by a standard unit of measurement (such as ounces) to provide a simple price comparison point ($1.59 divided by 24 ounces = $0.07 per ounce). You can then use that unit price to see if you're getting the best deal. Will the 45-ounce jar of sauce at $3.69 save or cost you money? Doing the math ($3.69 divided by 45 ounces = $0.08 per ounce), the answer is no; buy the smaller jar.Usually you'll see the unit price on the shelf price label at grocery stores and big box retailers like Target and Wal-Mart. Despite their seeming helpfulness for smart shoppers, though, you can't always trust them. Unit Pricing Isn't Regulated or Required in All StatesAccording to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), only 19 states and 2 territories have unit pricing laws and regulations, and only 11 have mandatory unit pricing rules (i.e., how unit prices should be calculated and displayed). That means that 31 states don't have firm requirements for these pricing labels. The unit pricing you (may or may not) see on a label could vary greatly from one store to another or even between products within the same store, depending on where you live.The states that have mandatory unit pricing provisions are: Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Vermont and the Virgin Islands. You can check the pricing laws and regulations for your state from this NIST page.Missing Unit PricesStores in states that don't have mandatory unit pricing rules can still choose to add a unit price calculation on their price labels for the convenience of their customersor choose to omit them altogether. How-To Geek's Lowell Heddings, who tipped us off to this issue, noticed that the Target near himhe's in a state without mandatory unit pricing lawsstarted to take down the per unit pricing labels. Even more curious, the pricing for laundry detergent seemed off. Usually, larger sizes of a product are a better dealbuy the larger size or in bulk and pay less per unit. In his case, the larger size of the same laundry detergent brand and product cost more. There was no per unit price label to highlight that differencebut maybe that was the point.Inconsistent Unit PricingEven if a store does display a unit price on the label, you have to be careful when relying on it. Some states have a requirement that the per unit measurement (e.g., ounces versus quarts) must be the same for each product within the categorybut other states do not.So you might see some flavors of tea priced by the quart on some labels or per 100 tea bags on others. And even if the unit measurement is the samea dozen eggs, for examplethe calculations of these unit prices can be very inconsistent, as the labels above from a Target in New York demonstrate. David S. Read, who took the photo, says:Unit pricing is supposed to help people make informed decisions about the price difference between options. It is irritating enough when the unit price for a "value" or "saver" size is higher than the regular size. But at least the shopper who is paying attention can readily identify the deception.More troublesome is looking at a group of products and finding that their unit prices don't use a consistent unit. For example, I've looked at cereals and had some brands give a unit price per ounce and others per pound. Worse, I've seen volume and weight measures used on similar products. Clearly such a store doesn't want me (the consumer) to have an easy path to understanding the relative prices of those items.Items on sale also don't often include a per unit price on the label, which could also throw you off.Unit ConfusionSome products are just trickier to compare with the unit price because they vary a lot by type. Paper towels, for example, often have a "per 100 sheets" unit pricing, but sheet sizes aren't the same for all brands, and select-a-size paper towels will have more (but smaller) sheets, giving them a lower cost per 100 sheets than full-sheet paper towelseven if the select-a-size ones are more expensive

ounces.Yet if you divide $18.99 by 20 for the per-ounce price and then multiply it by 16 again, you get $15.19 per pint.States with pricing regulations have set guidelines for how much error is allowed on the price labels. In New York, for example, if at least 96% to 98% of items (depending on the store size) are accurately priced, the remaining 2 to 4% of pricing label errors are acceptable to the industry regulators. We shoppers might feel differently about that.The Solution: Do the Math YourselfThe takeaway is that you can't really trust the unit pricing labels to always figure out which is really the better buy. If the store has the unit pricing on the label, it could help you comparison shop, but it could also lead you astray.The solution is to calculate the per unit price yourselfyes, even if there's already unit pricing on the label. This is tedious and annoying, but it's the only way to compare prices for sure. We've mentioned two apps before that can help: Unit Price Compare for Android (free) and CompareMe Shopping Utility for iOS ($1.99). You might also consider keeping a price book so you know the typical sales prices (and per unit prices) for the groceries and household items you buy most.Finally, remember that larger and bulk buys don't always offer the better value, and steer clear of grocery stores' other deceptive tricks. Photo by lupuliuss (Shutterstock), Mike Mozart. If you took all your month's receipts and categorized them by spending type, how much of the pie would your food budget take up? The U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics reckons that just over 12% of our spending goes toward food. That's more than we spend on entertainment, apparel, or even healthcare.Historically, the percentage of disposable income spent on food has decreased since the 1960s. However, the USDA notes a sharp uptick in this percentage since COVID-19. Combine that fact with the reality that over 10% of Americans are food insecure. The bottom line is that food costs and affordability have become significant players in the spending game, especially in the past few years.The average food budget is split pretty evenly between eating out and eating at home, so your shopping strategy at the local Aldi, Trader Joe's, or another grocery store can help determine how much food you bring home for that half of your budget. And there are many ways to save money on groceries. One of our favorites is checking the unit price label. Essentially, the unit price tells you how much the item costs per unit of measurement. It may use increments by weight (grams or pounds), volume (ounces or milliliters), or count (pieces or units). By presenting pricing information separate from marketing ploys or deceiving packaging gimmicks, unit price labels give you a more precise cost comparison, even when package sizes differ.The food's shelf tag will usually list the product's name, the price for that particular package size, and a barcode for internal inventory. Look closely: the unit price blurb is usually hidden on the bottom corner. If you have a subpar vision, you may want to bring a magnifying glass to the store because that print can be almost microscopic.Unfortunately, unit price labeling is neither mandatory nor standardized in the U.S., so finding consistent information to compare products can be challenging. For example, one brand of frozen broccoli may list a per-pound breakdown, whereas its neighbor on the shelf may use a per-ounce designation. If the type of measurement is in the same family in this case, by weight then you can just convert one unit type to the other. In this example, you would change the pounds to 16 ounces and divide that per-pound number by 16 to achieve a comparable price quote. Smarter shopping and saving money go hand in hand. Once you've identified the least expensive grocery stores in your area, that unit price comparison is the next step toward keeping a few more dollars in your pocket. Unless you're a die-hard brand loyalist, let the unit price guide your decision on which brand and package size of the product you buy for that trip.Let's walk through an example of how this little nugget of information can stretch your dollar. Suppose you pick up two packages of whole wheat spaghetti from different brands. Which is the most cost-effective: brand A at $3.99 for a 2-pound (32-ounce) package or brand B at $1.99 for a 12-ounce package? Let the unit price label do the work for you. Brand A costs $0.12/ounce, whereas brand B costs $0.17/ounce. There's a clear winner, especially since dry pasta is shelf-stable so you can save the unused portion of the package for another meal.Another strategy involves a general unit price cut-off, like the $1-per-pound rule, to stay true to budget. In this case, you'd buy foods with equivalent per-pound costs that don't exceed $1. Whichever way you leverage per-unit labels, they can streamline your shopping experience and save money.

Unit rate tags. Unit price tag. Unit rate price. Unit rate and unit price.