

# Coupons Aren't Always Part of a Smart Shopper's Savings Plan

**BY BARBARA MILLER**  
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**MONTOURSVILLE** — To use or not to use coupons was the question 112 homemakers came to answer during Spring Interest Day held recently at Faith United Methodist Church, Montoursville.

Clyde Mosteller, owner/manager of Portion Pack, a Williamsport wholesale and food distribution firm, discussed not using coupons and comparison shopping. Carol Ernst, consumer specialist for Weis Markets, Sunbury, addressed the pros of using coupons effectively and supermarketing techniques. The day-long event was sponsored by the Lycoming County Extension Service.

Although Mosteller and Ernst took opposing views on coupon using, both encouraged comparison shopping, buying store brands, and experimenting with different brands.

"You can save in many instances by not using coupons rather than by using them," Mosteller maintained.

To decide whether a coupon will mean savings, Mosteller said, a shopper should first determine if the products being compared are of equal value. This is done by reading the ingredient labels.

Ingredients, he noted, are listed in the order of predominance starting with the most predominate item and ending with the least predominate.

Next, a consumer should compare the active ingredients (the ones that get the job done) contained in the two products. For example, when comparing a national brand of bleach to a house brand, Mosteller found the active ingredient in each, sodium hypochlorite, to be a little more than 5 percent in either case. This made them of equal value.

The final step mentioned by Mosteller was to compare the unit price of each product and subtract the cost of the coupon from the one brand to arrive at the cost of the items to the consumer. Many times, he said, even with the doubled value of a coupon deducted from a national brand, a house brand will be less expensive.

"Generally speaking," Mosteller observed, "the store brand is of similar quality to the national brand because the store brand reflects back on the store."

"But generics," he added, "are a different animal. You have no idea who is behind them; consistent quality is not there with generics."

Mosteller advised listeners not to do such comparative shopping all

at once, but a little at a time.

Ernst encouraged comparative shopping and using coupons to buy the things shoppers would normally purchase anyway.

"Successful supermarket shopping is like going on a successful diet — you need to count pennies like you need to count calories," she observed.

Ernst urged consumers to purchase products and evaluate them for themselves. House brands are manufactured for supermarkets, she explained, by a company who already manufactures that item.

"Even Green Giant and DelMonte have house brands. They can only sell so much Green Giant corn and then they put it in another can and label it something else," she stated.

The name brand manufacturers may have a bumper crop, according to Ernst, and approach companies such as Weis Markets and ask if they want to purchase the excess at a good price. Sometimes, Ernst said, house brand companies may even run out of Grade B produce and substitute Grade A produce in the can. The customer then will be purchasing a Grade A product at a Grade B price.

"If you are a house brand shopper, you should be able to save 15 to 20 percent in a store," Ernst added.

House brands seldom offer coupons, Ernst noted, because their prices are already rock bottom and there is no leeway for coupons. If there were no more coupons prices would not change, Ernst observed, because the cost of the coupon is figured in the manufacturer's advertising budget.

Concerning convenience foods, Ernst said, the cost of convenience is still there. But items such as cake mixes and frostings are likely to be less costly than scratch recipes because they are mixed in such large quantities.

"You can eat out at home cheaper than you eat out," Ernst said.

She noted that \$1 out of every \$3 in a food budget is spent on eating out. One way to save money in a supermarket is to buy the same frozen items you would purchase from a restaurant such as quarter pounders, pizzas, fried chicken, etc., and prepare them at home.

Additionally, she observed, "Physical fitness is not a fad, it's here to stay."

Ernst said that with 50 percent of the population watching their diets and six of the leading causes of death related to diet, food manufacturers are taking the hint and adding less salt and sugar to their products.

She concluded by noting that just 17 percent of the average American's income is spent on food. "Food is a bargain," she noted.



Clyde Mosteller, owner/manager of Portion Pack Food Service, Inc. of Williamsport, demonstrates how to compare brands of toothpaste. Portion Pack is a wholesale food distribution company.



Carol Ernst, consumer specialist for Weis Markets, Inc. of Sunbury, talks about using coupons effectively.



## BACK HOME

By Michelle S. Rodgers

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**"Dog'on Discipline"**  
 Well, our Christmas puppy is growing up...or growing big might be a better way to put it. She has outgrown two beds and two collars and has warmed her way into full membership in our family. In relating our puppy's age to human age she is just about a toddler. She certainly has all the characteristics of a toddler in the terrible twos! To deal with this situation we are enrolled in puppy obedience school.

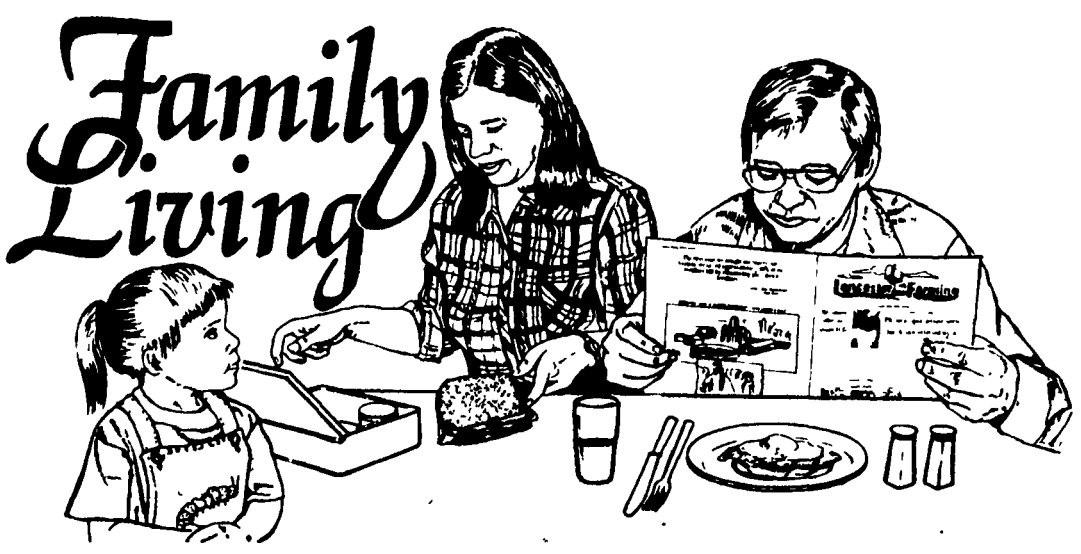
Another important characteristic of rules is that they should be consistently enforced. If slamming the door is ignored on Monday, but the child is sent to her room for slamming the door on Tuesday, she doesn't know what to expect. The result is confusion and frustration. It has been my experience that consistency is very difficult. However, the times when I have failed to be consistent have brought consequences. Just one evening of allowing the dog into the living room to watch T.V. with me has resulted in a constant battle to keep her out of there.

Consistency allows a child to predict your behavior. A child knows what is expected and the consequences of their behavior. Although rules should be consistently enforced, there are times when parents need to be flexible. For example, if grandmother is visiting, a grandchild may be allowed to stay up past her regular bedtime for this special occasion. Also, rules need to change as the child grows. As children grow, they may be included in setting the rules and in deciding on consequences for breaking the rules.

Effective discipline helps a child learn self-control, builds self-esteem, and sets good examples of ways to solve problems. As you can see, discipline not only involves the child but takes an equal involvement of the adult to make it work. Discipline is an everyday occurrence, fitting in with the routine of the day.

It's easy for me to see how the rules of family discipline also apply to the family dog. So, it's back to obedience school this week... it's as much to improve my skills as it is for her!

Children do need rules. They feel secure when they know what is expected of them. Rules need to be carefully thought out, however, not made up on the spur of the moment when mother or father has run out of patience or has a headache. Reasons for rules should be explained to your child. A child will be more likely to obey the rules if he understands the reasons for them. Make it clear that rules are



# Family Living