NO PREP

Budget a Feast

Unit Prices, Deals, and Receipts

Includes: Student reading, case study, differentiated questions, teacher key

Name: Period: Date:

Budget a Feast: Unit Prices, Deals, and Receipts

Why Budgets Break (and How to Fix Them with Math)

Holiday shopping compresses decisions into a few hectic days, and that time pressure silently sabotages budgets. The best defense is a simple toolkit: calculate unit price (cost per ounce, pound, or count), compare percent discounts to the original price, and estimate sales tax before checkout. When you focus on the per-unit cost instead of the shelf tag, you spot hidden trade-offs: a "value" pack might be more expensive per ounce than a smaller size, or a flashy BOGO may cost more than a store brand. Another budget buster is present bias—the tendency to overpay now to avoid hassle later. Planning a list by course (protein, sides, dessert) and marking one substitute for each item lowers stress and protects your wallet. Finally, track a

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Decoding Deals: Percent Off, BOGO, and Loss Leaders

A holiday aisle is a maze of incentives. A loss leader is a product priced below cost to lure you into buying the rest of your basket at higher margins. "Spend $60, get turkey for 99¢/lb" sounds amazing until you notice that qualifying for the price also requires buying items with poor unit prices. BOGO ("buy one, get one") demands attention to the fine print: is it truly free, or BOGO 50% off? If you only need one, the effective per-unit price might be worse than a smaller, cheaper alternative. Mix-and-match (e.g., "3 for $5") is another trap unless the unit price beats your other options. The key is converting every offer to the same denominator: "cents per ounce" or "dollars per pound." If a 32-oz stock is $3.20 and a 48-oz is $4.50, the first is 10¢/oz while the second is 9.375¢/oz. The second is a better buy if

you'll use it. But watch waste. Buying more only helps if you actually consume it before it expires; otherwise the true cost per eaten ounce rises. Finally, apply percent discount carefully: 25% off a $4.00 can saves $1.00; 15% off a $6.00 can saves $0.90. The higher percentage is not always the better total savings.

Reading Receipts Like a Pro: Taxes, Rounding, and Shrinkflation

Your receipt is a math document. First, confirm that the unit price you calculated matches the register totals. Promotions sometimes apply after a threshold, so verify line-by-line whether the discount triggered. Second, compute sales tax in advance for taxable items (often staples like raw produce are untaxed while prepared foods are taxed—rules vary by location). Estimating tax prevents "checkout shock." Third, scan for rounding differences; for example, a 33% off sale might apply to each item before tax, and rounding can make your real savings a few cents less than expected. Fourth, be alert to shrinkflation—packages that shrink while the price stays the same. A "one-pound" bag might now be 14 or 12 ounces, raising the unit price even if the sticker looks unchanged. Finally, check the subtotal, tax, and total to ensure the math is consistent. If a minimum purchase triggered your deal (e.g., $60), be sure your basket actually qualified, or you may pay the full price on that "deal" turkey without noticing until you're home.

Key Information: Quick Reference: Price Comparison Mini-Worksheet

Item	Size	Shelf Price	Unit Price	Notes
Turkey (whole)	14 lb	$1.49/lb	$1.49/lb	No minimum purchase
Turkey (promo)	16 lb	$0.99/lb*	$0.99/lb	*Only with $60 basket
Cranberry sauce	14 oz	$2.10	15.0¢/oz	Cheaper than 2 for $5 (17.9¢/oz)
Butter	16 oz	$4.80	30.0¢/oz	Warehouse 48 oz at $12 = 25.0¢/oz

Item	Size	Shelf Price	Unit Price	Notes
Pie crusts (2-pack)	16 oz	$3.20	20.0¢/oz	BOGO 50% off = 15.0¢/oz if you need 2

Case Study Excerpt — The $60 Threshold: When a "Deal" Isn't

Jamal and Ana plan a feast for eight with a strict $60 ceiling before tax. Their flyer from Store X screams: "Turkey 99¢/lb with $60 purchase!" They pencil out a 16-pound bird for $15.84 and imagine they're crushing the budget. But the fine print says the $60 must be spent on participating items—most with weak unit prices. Stuffing mix is $2.79 for 6 oz (46.5¢/oz) compared to a store brand at Store Y for $1.50 per 6 oz (25.0¢/oz). Canned corn is "10 for $12" (20.0¢/oz), while Store Y sells a 12-pack at $10.80 (15.0¢/oz). Butter is $5.49/lb at Store X but $3.99/lb at a warehouse. If Jamal and Ana chase the 99¢ turkey, they must also buy enough high-priced items to cross the threshold, raising their average unit cost across the basket. They try a second plan: skip the threshold and buy the 14-pound turkey at $1.49/lb from Store Y ($20.86). Then they fill the basket with best-in-class unit prices: warehouse butter (25.0¢/oz), Store Y vegetables (15.0¢/oz), and a private-label pie crust (20.0¢/oz). They also plan two substitutes (sweet potatoes if russets spike; homemade cranberry relish if cans sell out) to avoid paying panic premiums. At checkout, Plan A (threshold turkey) comes to $66 before tax because the "participating items" forced expensive choices—even though the turkey itself was cheap. Plan B (no threshold) comes to $57.50 before tax. The difference isn't luck; it's math. Jamal and Ana converted every shelf tag into unit price, chose sizes they could reasonably consume (to avoid waste), and refused to let a single headline price anchor the whole trip. Their receipt shows smaller line-item costs, consistent unit price wins, and no last-minute add-ons to chase a conditional "deal." Plan B looks less exciting in the ad, but in the real world it produced a better total—and a calmer shopping trip.

1. Which mathematical comparisons allowed Jamal and Ana to avoid overspending in Plan B?

_____

_____

2. How did the "participating items" condition in Plan A change the average unit price of their basket?

_____

_____

Multiple Choice

1. The most reliable way to compare differently sized packages is to compute the:

    a) Unit price (cost per ounce, pound, or count)

    b) Shelf tag with the biggest font displayed by the retailer

    c) Sale percentage printed on the sign

    d) Loyalty points earned

2. A retailer prices turkey at 99¢/lb only if you spend $60 on select items. This is best described as a:

    a) Rain check guarantee

    b) Simple BOGO without conditions

    c) Threshold promotion that may raise average basket cost

    d) Markdown with no strings attached or minimum purchase requirements

3. A 20% discount on a $4.50 item saves _____, while a 15% discount on a $5.00 item saves _____. Which is the larger dollar savings?

a) $0.70; $0.80 — second is larger

b) $0.90; $0.75 — first is larger

c) $0.80; $0.70 — first is larger

d) $0.75; $0.90 — second is larger

Matching

Write the letter of the correct definition on the line next to each term.

Term	Definition
1. ___ Loss leader	A) Must spend a set amount to unlock a discount
2. ___ BOGO	B) Product priced very low to attract basket purchases
3. ___ Shrinkflation	C) Price per standard unit for fair comparison
4. ___ Unit price	D) Buy one, receive an additional item under stated terms
5. ___ Minimum purchase requirement	E) Package size decreases while price stays similar

Fill-in-the-Blank

1. Comparing products by _____ prevents being misled by package size.

2. A turkey price that unlocks only after spending a certain amount uses a _____ promotion.

3. When brands reduce contents but keep the sticker price, that's _____.

Short Answer

Answer each question in 2-4 complete sentences.

1. How can buying "in bulk" increase total cost even if the unit price is lower? Give two reasons.

2. Describe one method to estimate sales tax before checkout and explain why it helps budgeting.

3. Explain how planning substitutes for two side dishes can protect a budget when shelves are empty or prices spike.