



Grocery Store Tips

Navigating the Grocery Store with Kids ABA Behavioral Tips and Supports



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Play "Grocery Store" at Home

- Set up a mini store using pantry items or toy food.
- Practice the routine: Walk → Find → Pay → Done.
- Take turns being the cashier or shopper.
- Reinforce small steps: "Nice waiting!" "Great hands!"



Make a "My Grocery Ring"

- Print photos of your child's favorite or frequently purchased foods.
- Laminate, hole-punch, and place on a binder ring.
- Flip or remove each card as items are found.
- Add 1 "fun item" to keep motivation high.

Visuals reduce verbal demands and support independence.



Before You Enter the Store

- Choose Quick Trip or Long Trip
- Review the Grocery Ring or item list
- Pack supports and preferred items
- Plan a reward for after checkout
- Bring another adult when possible
- Set expectations: "We are buying 3 things"



Pack Your Store Success Kit

- Noise-canceling headphones or earbuds
- Sunglasses or hat for bright lights
- Preferred snack (gummies, lollipop, crackers)
- Chewy, fidget, or comfort item
- Tablet/phone for checkout only
- Small prize for after the trip

Save one favorite item only for store trips—novelty boosts motivation.



Staying in the Cart (Kids Climb!)

- Buckle the seat right away—make it routine.
- If the cart has two seats, bring a stuffed toy or doll.
- Buckle the toy in first, then your child.
- Practice buckling the toy at home and in the car.
- Give a cart job: hold the ring, list, or small item.
- Use a visual rule: Sit → Snack.



Build Tolerance Gradually

- Start with short trips (5–10 minutes).
- Buy only 2–3 items at first.
- Take shorter, more frequent trips.
- Slowly increase time or number of items.
- Use a timer or visual to show how long the trip will be.



If a Meltdown Happens

- Safety first! Move to a quieter area or step outside.
- Use a calm voice and minimal language.
- Offer a break, headphones, or comfort item.
- Do not add new demands in the moment.
- Leaving early is okay—regulation comes first.



After the Trip

- Praise effort: "You did something hard today."
- Add a sticker or token to a "Store Hero" chart.
- Celebrate with a predictable reward (song, snack, small prize).
- Keep the next trip short to end on success.



Work With Your BCBA

- Practice grocery skills during sessions.
- Teach functional communication: "Break please," "All done."
- Build cart safety and waiting goals gradually.
- Review what worked and adjust supports together.

These ABA strategies support, but do not replace your child's individualized plans with outside providers. Always collaborate with your child's Clinicians for individualized strategies, if applicable.