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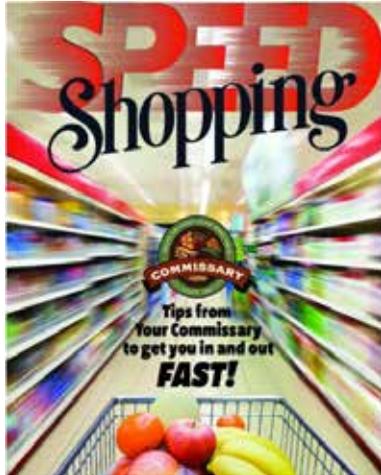
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SHOPPING TIMESAVERS: Want to maximize your time walking down the aisles on your next visit to the commissary? Try these tips



By Kathy Milley, DeCA Corporate Communications

FORT LEE, Va. – The average grocery store shopper spends 41 minutes per shopping trip, not including travel time, and makes 1.5 trips per week according to the Time Use Institute. That equates to 53 hours per year spent grocery shopping. The Defense Commissary Agency offers ideas to help shorten your shopping trip, allowing you to divert some of this time back to family and leisure activities.

"When your schedule is tight, our tips can help you shave precious time from your commissary shopping trip, where you can save about 25 cents on the dollar," said Marine Sgt. Maj. Michael R. Saucedo, DeCA's senior enlisted advisor to the agency director. "But when your schedule permits, take some time exploring your commissary and talking to department managers. There are always new products to discover, great promotions throughout the store and department managers willing to share helpful shopping tips."

Tips to shave time from your shopping trip:

1. USE COMMISSARY CLICK2GO The best way to save valuable shopping time is to use Commissary CLICK2GO, the online shopping and curbside pickup service, available at select locations. Shop from the comfort of your own home and schedule a pickup time. The commissary staff will do all your shopping and have it ready to load in your car when you drive up to the pickup location. And it just got better. The Commissary Click2Go service fees have been waived for a limited time. Currently Commissary CLICK2GO is available at 52 locations with more locations coming online each month. Keep checking for the new locations coming online on commissaries.com.

2. CREATE A MASTER PLAN Planning is the most effective way to cut time from your in store shopping trip and to minimize the number of visits per week. Choose what meals you plan to make during the week and jot down needed ingredients. Commissaries.com offers many recipes that will help with your weekly meal plan. Then check your pantry, refrigerator and cabinets, crossing out the items you already have on hand. Sort the remaining items on a shopping list by category. When you get to the store, you'll know exactly what to buy and where everything is located. Use this helpful Weekly Meal Plan Worksheet to make it even easier. Save your meal plans and corresponding shopping lists to use again saving even more time on future shops. As you are shopping, you might see an item that sparks an idea for an additional dinner that may need several ingredients. Once the inspiration hits, place the item in the child's seat of the cart as a reminder that you need to pick up the other ingredients or, if you have a pen, jot them down on your list under the appropriate department.

3. LOOK UP SALES AND RECIPES AHEAD OF TIME Before going to the commissary, look at the sales flyer on commissaries.com to find savings on the items on your list. If a specific brand is on sale, make sure to jot that down beside the item on your shopping list. It will save you time in the store if you know exactly what brand is on sale.

4. ORGANIZE COUPONS BEFORE YOU GET THERE Visit the Savings Center on commissaries.com before your commissary trip, to find resources with lots of printable coupons. Download digital coupons right to your Commissary Rewards Card. Print coupons for the items on your list and organize by category. You may also find industry coupons in the store displayed near the items you purchase.

5. AVOID SHOPPING AT PEAK HOURS Choosing off-peak hours is a great way to avoid crowds and long lines at the commissary. If unsure of the peak hours for your store, ask your store director.

6. DON'T SHOP HUNGRY This is a fundamental rule to help you save money when grocery shopping, but it is just as effective when trying to save time. Hunger can be a distraction when you are trying to get in and out of the store as quickly as possible.

7. HAVE A BACKUP PLAN FOR ESSENTIAL ITEMS Know your essential items or brands when you do your shopping and have a backup plan in your mind. On the off chance that a product is not available, having a backup prepared will not derail your quick shopping trip.

8. TALK TO YOUR COMMISSARY DEPARTMENT MANAGERS During a shopping trip when time is not a factor, talk to the commissary department managers. They have a wealth of information that can help you decide the best times to plan a quick shopping trip. Ask them about their delivery days, when certain products will be at their freshest or anticipated mark-down times.

9. USE SCIENCE TO CHOOSE YOUR CHECKOUT LINE Choosing a line with one person with a loaded cart may actually be faster than a line with several people with fewer items. Little's Law, the science behind selecting a queue, takes into account the idle time and interaction between each customer and adds that time to the length of each interaction. With all those "between customer" time additions, it may be quicker to choose the line with the fuller cart.

"We have lots of things competing for our time, so any free time we have has never been more valuable," said Saucedo. "Use Commissary CLICK2GO, these simple tips and the downloadable Weekly Meal Plan Worksheet, to make your next grocery shopping experience the most time-efficient one yet."

-DeCA-

NOTE: Graphic by Kathy Milley, DeCA Corporate Communications

About DeCA: The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Commissaries provide a military benefit, saving authorized patrons thousands of dollars annually on their purchases compared to similar products at commercial retailers. The discounted prices include a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.

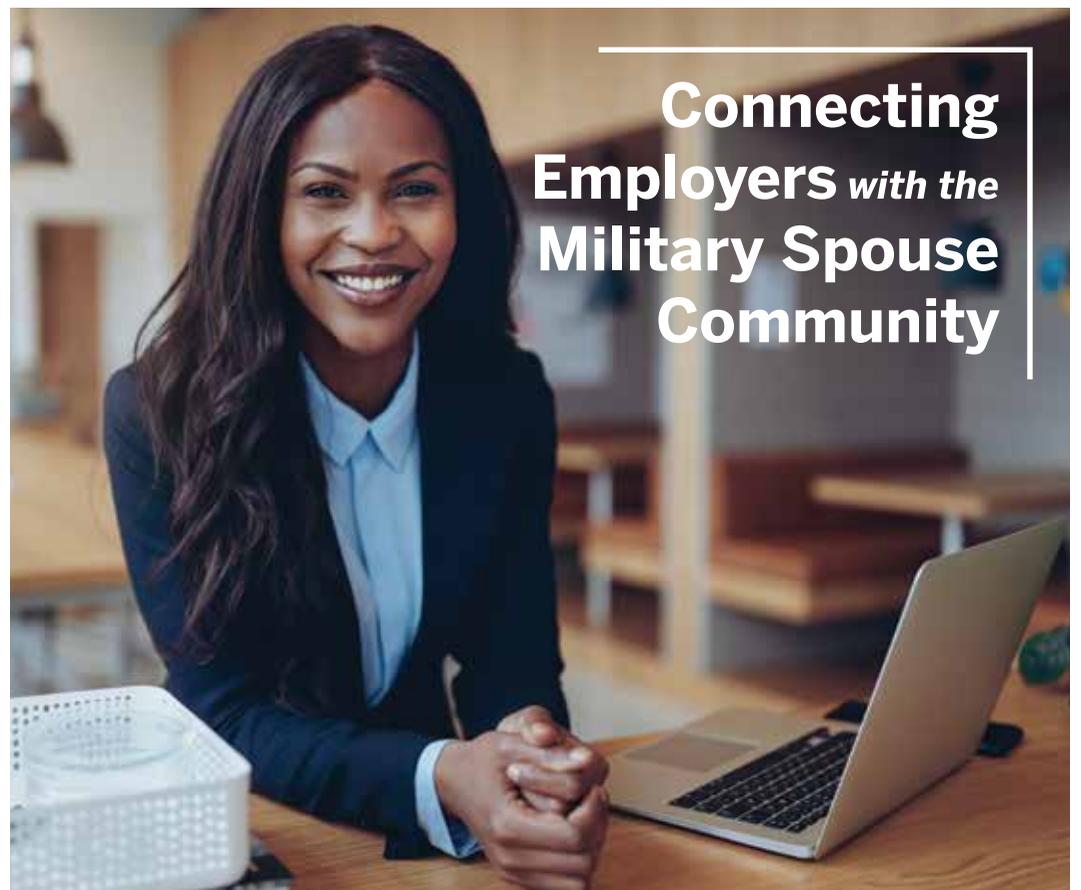
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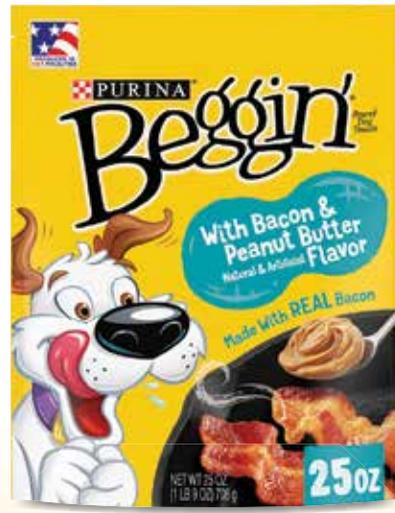
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