



# Complete Guide to Meal Planning

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My Personal Grocery List



## Hi friends! Let's talk about meal planning!

Sometimes the idea of having to sit down and meal plan feels like a pain - but do you know what is more of a pain? The stress of trying to decide what is for dinner every night when my toddler is having a meltdown at my ankles or going way over budget at the grocery store because I didn't go in with a plan. I have found my life to be so much easier if I just make the decision and commit myself to make a meal plan for our family.

There is no one way or "right" way to do meal planning or grocery shopping, but I'm going to share with you *my process* and what I have found best to work for me at this stage in our lives. Just remember that if this isn't the best method for your life, that's okay! We can still all learn from each other's tips and methods.

There are a couple of universal tips that I think can be helpful for anyone:

- Get organized! Set a specific time every week or two to devote to planning your meals.
- Have a *flexible* plan! Most likely your week will not go exactly as you planned it but you are still going to benefit from working off of a plan rather than completely winging it.

## My Meal Planning Process

When I'm making our meal plan, the first thing I do is sit down with a pen, paper, and my calendar (yes, I like to physically write it out - but that's just me). I plan our meals two weeks at a time - so I list out the dates for the next two weeks and make note of any nights that we won't be home or we know that we will be eating out. I also make a note if there is a night that maybe only one of us will be home for dinner or a date night for us, which would mean that I will only need to make dinner for our daughter. This lets me know exactly how many dinners I will need to plan.

Next, I usually go to my [Pinterest boards](#) or scan through a few of my favorite cookbooks as well as any recipes I've saved on my phone that I wanted to try out (I love to just take a screenshot of recipes or meal ideas I come across online). While there are usually a few staple meals that we have every two weeks, I like to change things up and not eat the same things all the time.



I have a few criteria that I look for when I'm looking for new meal ideas for our family:

- Is it something that will be nourishing for us?
- Are the main ingredients something that both my husband and I like?
- Is it too complicated or does it have too many ingredients?
- Can I get it on the table in less than 30 minutes? If not, can parts of the meal be prepped ahead?

Once I've chosen my meals for those two weeks, I will go through and note any ingredients I will need to buy and get started on my grocery list.

## My Grocery List

I like to organize my grocery list by the way the store is laid out. It just helps my brain not to feel too overwhelmed. I add all the ingredients I need for my chosen meals, plus any staples items we may need for breakfasts or snacks. We typically eat very simple breakfasts on weekdays, like energy balls with fruit or gluten-free protein muffins. Lunches are usually leftovers from the night before or sometimes a quick salad with protein, which is something I try to keep in stock.

*I created a blank template of my meal plan and grocery list for you to use if you'd like! Click [here](#) to download!*

Having a plan and walking into the store with a list not only helps me to feel more organized but more importantly, it helps me stay on budget (well.. mostly 😊), minimizes food waste, and gives me the assurance of knowing that I'm buying healthy, nourishing food for my family!

*As promised, [here is my exact meal plan and grocery list](#) from the last two weeks!*

There are several different methods of buying groceries. Some people prefer to go into the store and shop themselves and some choose to order their groceries online and either pick them up or have them delivered. You also can choose whether you want the convenience of buying everything from one store or if you are trying to be more budget-conscious, you may choose to shop at a few different stores in order to save more money. I usually buy part of my groceries from Trader Joe's (mostly meat, produce and some pantry items) and place a Kroger Clicklist or Walmart pick-up order for the rest of it (household items, a few snacks, diapers, etc.). This is the way I have



found to work best for our schedule and budget, but by no means does this mean that you have to do that as well. You are the expert on your family - you do what works for you!

I hope this guide gives you a little inspiration and encourages you to make the process of meal planning work for your family!

*Alaina*

For more helpful tips for moving forward on your health journey, visit [www.yourhealthforward.com](http://www.yourhealthforward.com) or follow along on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [Pinterest](#)!

