

SMART FOOD BUDGET AND 7-DAY MEAL PLAN

A Step-by-Step AI Prompt Guide
for One Mother and Two Children

Use these prompts to plan meals, check what you already have, compare local stores, look for sales, and stay within your food budget.

Editable Participant Resource

Use general information only. Never enter bank account numbers, card numbers, Social Security numbers, passwords, or other private information into an AI tool.

How to Use This Guide

This guide gives you one clear step at a time. Complete the worksheet for each step. Then copy the prompt into an AI tool. Read the answer carefully. Change anything that does not fit your family, budget, health needs, or local prices.

Step	What You Will Do
1	Choose your weekly food budget.
2	Write down what food you already have.
3	List your family’s needs and simple preferences.
4	Ask for a 7-day meal plan with three meals each day.
5	Ask for recipes and one master ingredient list.
6	Remove items you already have from the shopping list.
7	Compare two grocery stores near you.
8	Check current sales, digital coupons, and lower-cost substitutions.
9	Choose where to buy each item and record what you actually spend.

AI Safety and Accuracy

Do not share private financial information. Store prices and sales change often. Ask the AI to state the date checked and to say clearly when it cannot verify a current local price or sale. Always confirm prices in the store app, weekly ad, or store before shopping.

What You Need Before You Begin

- ☐ A weekly food budget amount
- ☐ Your ZIP code or city
- ☐ Names of two nearby grocery stores
- ☐ A list of food already at home
- ☐ Any food allergies or medical food restrictions
- ☐ A phone, computer, or printed store ads

Step 1: Set the Weekly Food Budget

Write a food budget that is realistic. Do not use money needed for rent, utilities, medicine, transportation, or other required bills.

Budget Question	Amount
Money available for food this week	\$_____
Amount to keep for an emergency	\$_____
Final grocery budget	\$_____
Expected extra food help or benefits	\$_____

Copy-and-Use Prompt 1: Help Me Set a Food Budget

PROMPT 1

Help me make a simple weekly food budget for one mother and two children. I have \$[amount] available for groceries this week. I need to keep \$[amount] for an emergency. I may also receive [general type of food help, if any]. Do not ask me for bank information, account numbers, Social Security numbers, or other private information. Show me: (1) my final food budget, (2) a suggested amount for breakfast foods, lunch foods, dinner foods, snacks, and household staples, and (3) a small emergency food amount. Keep the answer simple and realistic.

My Budget Decision

My final grocery budget is:

A concern I need to plan for:

Step 2: Shop at Home First

Before planning meals, check the pantry, refrigerator, and freezer. This keeps you from buying food you already have.

Food Group	Have It	Amount or Item
Rice, pasta, noodles, or oats	☐	_____
Bread, tortillas, biscuits, or cereal	☐	_____
Beans, canned vegetables, or soup	☐	_____
Canned meat, tuna, peanut butter, or eggs	☐	_____
Milk, cheese, yogurt, or butter	☐	_____
Fresh or frozen vegetables	☐	_____
Fresh, canned, or frozen fruit	☐	_____
Chicken, ground meat, fish, or other protein	☐	_____
Flour, cornmeal, sugar, oil, or baking items	☐	_____
Seasonings, sauces, or condiments	☐	_____

Copy-and-Use Prompt 2: Use What I Already Have

PROMPT 2

I am planning meals for one mother and two children. Here is the food I already have: [paste your pantry, refrigerator, and freezer list]. Organize the food into these groups: breakfast foods, lunch foods, dinner foods, snacks, and staples. Tell me which items should be used first because they may spoil. Then suggest at least five meals I can begin with using mostly what I already have. Use simple, low-cost meals and do not add expensive ingredients.

Food that should be used first:

Step 3: Describe the Family's Needs

Use only general information. Do not enter names, birthdays, school names, addresses, medical record numbers, or other identifying details.

Information	My Answer
Number of adults	1
Number of children	2
Children's general age group	_____
Foods the family will not eat	_____
Food allergies or restrictions	_____
Cooking equipment available	_____
Time available to cook	_____
Meals that must be packed or carried	_____

Copy-and-Use Prompt 3: Prepare for Meal Planning

PROMPT 3

I need a low-cost meal plan for one mother and two children. The children are in these general age groups: [ages or age groups]. Foods we do not eat are: [list]. Food allergies or medical food restrictions are: [list or none]. I can cook with: [stove, oven, microwave, slow cooker, air fryer, or other equipment]. I have about [number] minutes to prepare most meals. We need [number] packed lunches or meals away from home. Summarize these needs in a short meal-planning checklist. Do not ask for private or identifying information.

Step 4: Create the 7-Day Meal Plan

The plan should include breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day. It should reuse ingredients, plan leftovers safely, and stay within the weekly budget.

Copy-and-Use Prompt 4: Seven Days and Three Meals Each Day

PROMPT 4

Create a complete 7-day meal plan for one mother and two children. My total grocery budget is \$[amount]. Food I already have is: [list]. Family needs are: [age groups, allergies, foods avoided, cooking equipment, and time limits]. Include breakfast, lunch, and dinner for each of the seven days. Use simple, affordable ingredients. Reuse ingredients in several meals so little food is wasted. Plan safe leftovers when helpful. Keep the meals realistic for a busy mother. Under each meal, list the main ingredients needed. At the end, estimate the total cost. If you cannot verify current local prices, say that clearly and label the prices as estimates.

Day	Meal	Planned Food
Day 1	Breakfast	_____
Day 1	Lunch	_____
Day 1	Dinner	_____
Day 2	Breakfast	_____
Day 2	Lunch	_____
Day 2	Dinner	_____
Day 3	Breakfast	_____
Day 3	Lunch	_____
Day 3	Dinner	_____
Day 4	Breakfast	_____
Day 4	Lunch	_____
Day 4	Dinner	_____
Day 5	Breakfast	_____
Day 5	Lunch	_____
Day 5	Dinner	_____
Day 6	Breakfast	_____
Day 6	Lunch	_____
Day 6	Dinner	_____
Day 7	Breakfast	_____

Day	Meal	Planned Food
Day 7	Lunch	_____
Day 7	Dinner	_____

Step 5: Ask for Simple Recipes

Every recipe should use plain directions, ordinary measurements, and common kitchen equipment. Ask for substitutions when an ingredient costs too much.

Copy-and-Use Prompt 5: Recipes for Every Meal

PROMPT 5

Using the 7-day meal plan below, write a simple recipe for every meal that needs cooking or assembly. [Paste the meal plan.] For each recipe, include: (1) recipe name, (2) number of servings for one adult and two children, (3) exact ingredients and amounts, (4) short numbered directions, (5) cooking time, (6) safe storage instructions for leftovers, and (7) one lower-cost substitution. Use easy words and no more than six steps per recipe whenever possible. For meals such as cereal, sandwiches, or fruit and yogurt, give simple assembly directions instead of treating them as complicated recipes.

Food Safety Reminder

Check that meat, eggs, leftovers, and refrigerated foods are handled safely. When uncertain, follow current USDA food-safety guidance or instructions from a trusted health professional.

Recipe	Name	Reviewed
Recipe 1		☐
Recipe 2		☐
Recipe 3		☐
Recipe 4		☐
Recipe 5		☐
Recipe 6		☐
Recipe 7		☐

Step 6: Make One Master Ingredient List

A master list combines repeated ingredients and shows the total amount needed for the full week.

Copy-and-Use Prompt 6: Combine All Ingredients

PROMPT 6

Using the meal plan and recipes below, make one master ingredient list for the full seven days. [Paste the meal plan and recipes.] Combine repeated items into one total amount. Organize the list by grocery-store section: produce, meat or protein, dairy and eggs, bread and grains, canned goods, frozen foods, pantry staples, and other. Beside each item, show the amount needed for the week and which meals use it. Do not include an item more than once unless different forms are required.

Copy-and-Use Prompt 7: Remove What I Already Have

PROMPT 7

Compare this master ingredient list: [paste list] with the food I already have: [paste inventory]. Create three lists: (1) enough at home—do not buy, (2) partly available—buy only the missing amount, and (3) not available—buy the full amount. Then create a final shopping list that includes only what I need to purchase.

Store Section	What I Need	Amount
Produce	_____	_____
Meat or protein	_____	_____
Dairy and eggs	_____	_____
Bread and grains	_____	_____
Canned goods	_____	_____
Frozen foods	_____	_____
Pantry staples	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____

Step 7: Compare Two Grocery Stores

Use the two stores you can realistically reach. Include transportation cost and time—not only shelf prices.

Information	My Answer
My ZIP code or city	_____
Store 1	_____
Store 2	_____
Date prices were checked	_____
Transportation cost to Store 1	\$_____
Transportation cost to Store 2	\$_____

Copy-and-Use Prompt 8: Compare Two Local Stores

PROMPT 8

Compare grocery prices for the shopping list below at [Store 1] and [Store 2] near ZIP code [ZIP code]. [Paste final shopping list.] Use current prices only when you can verify them. State the exact date checked and identify whether each price is a regular price, advertised sale, digital coupon price, loyalty-card price, or estimate. For each item, show Store 1 price, Store 2 price, the lower price, and the amount saved. Then show the estimated total at each store. If a price or sale cannot be verified, write 'not verified' instead of making up a price. Consider package size and unit price so the comparison is fair.

Important: Confirm every price and sale in the store app, weekly ad, or store before shopping.

Item	Store 1	Store 2	Best Choice
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____

Step 8: Check Sales and Other Ways to Save

A sale is helpful only when the item is needed, the size is useful, and the final price fits the budget.

Copy-and-Use Prompt 9: Find Sales on Needed Ingredients

PROMPT 9

Using this shopping list: [paste list], find current advertised sales, digital coupons, loyalty offers, or store-brand alternatives at [Store 1] and [Store 2] near ZIP code [ZIP code]. Show only offers that apply to ingredients I need. State the exact date checked, offer requirements, package size, expiration date, and final price. Do not include a deal that requires buying more than my family can reasonably use unless the item can be safely stored or frozen. If you cannot verify a sale, say so clearly.

Copy-and-Use Prompt 10: Lower the Total Without Losing Meals

PROMPT 10

My grocery list is estimated to cost \$[amount], but my budget is \$[amount]. Help me lower the total without removing any full day of meals. Suggest lower-cost store brands, less expensive proteins, seasonal produce, safe substitutions, planned leftovers, and ingredients that can be used in more than one meal. Show each change, the estimated savings, and the new total. Do not suggest unsafe food practices or unrealistic serving sizes.

Done	Money-Saving Action
☐	Use store brands when quality and size are similar.
☐	Compare unit price, not only package price.
☐	Use beans, eggs, tuna, or peanut butter for some lower-cost protein.
☐	Choose seasonal or frozen produce when less expensive.
☐	Plan one or two safe leftover meals.
☐	Use one ingredient in several meals.
☐	Buy only the amount the family can use or safely store.
☐	Check digital coupons before entering the store.
☐	Avoid shopping while hungry and follow the list.
☐	Keep a calculator open and track the cart total.

Step 9: Make the Final Shopping Plan

It may be cheaper to use one store after transportation, time, and coupon requirements are considered. Use two stores only when the savings are worth the extra trip.

Copy-and-Use Prompt 11: Choose the Best Shopping Plan

PROMPT 11

Review this store comparison: [paste comparison]. Transportation to Store 1 costs about \$[amount], and transportation to Store 2 costs about \$[amount]. Tell me whether I should shop at Store 1 only, Store 2 only, or split the list between both stores. Include grocery cost, transportation cost, estimated total cost, and estimated savings. Keep the plan simple. Do not recommend an extra trip unless the savings are greater than the added transportation cost and time.

Final Decision	My Plan
Store 1 items	_____
Store 2 items	_____
Estimated groceries	\$_____
Estimated transportation	\$_____
Estimated total	\$_____
Weekly grocery budget	\$_____
Amount left or amount over	\$_____

Actual Spending Record

Item	Planned	Actual	Difference
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____

Item	Planned	Actual	Difference
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____
_____	\$_____	\$_____	_____

Complete All-in-One Prompt

Use this prompt after you have gathered your budget, food inventory, family needs, ZIP code, and store names.

ALL-IN-ONE PROMPT

Help me create a complete weekly food plan for one mother and two children.

MY INFORMATION

- Weekly grocery budget: \${amount}
- ZIP code or city: [location]
- Store 1: [store name]
- Store 2: [store name]
- Food already at home: [inventory]
- Children's general age groups: [age groups]
- Foods avoided: [list]
- Allergies or medical food restrictions: [list or none]
- Cooking equipment: [list]
- Time available for most meals: [minutes]
- Meals that must be packed: [number]

COMPLETE THESE STEPS IN ORDER

1. Organize the food I already have and identify what should be used first.
2. Create a 7-day meal plan with breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day.
3. Use simple, affordable meals and reuse ingredients to reduce waste.
4. Provide a simple recipe for every meal that needs cooking or assembly. Include servings, exact ingredients, short numbered directions, cooking time, safe leftover storage, and one lower-cost substitution.
5. Combine all ingredients into one master list by store section.
6. Remove items I already have and create a final shopping list.
7. Compare the final list at Store 1 and Store 2 using current prices only when they can be verified. State the exact date checked. Label regular prices, advertised sales, digital coupon prices, loyalty prices, and estimates.
8. Show current sales only for ingredients I need. Include package size, requirements, expiration date, and final price.
9. Suggest additional ways to lower the total without removing a full day of meals or using unsafe or unrealistic serving sizes.
10. Recommend whether to use one store or both stores after transportation costs are considered.
11. Show the estimated total and whether it fits my budget.

IMPORTANT RULES

- Do not ask for private information such as account numbers, card numbers, Social Security numbers, passwords, or exact home address.
- If you cannot access or verify a current price, sale, coupon, or local inventory, write "not verified" instead of making it up.
- Keep the answer clear, practical, and organized with tables and short sections.

Important: Review the plan and confirm local prices, food safety, allergy needs, and serving sizes before using it.

Filled-In Example Prompt

This example uses a \$75 weekly budget, ZIP code 71203, Walmart, and Brookshire's. Replace these details when needed.

FILLED-IN EXAMPLE

Help me create a complete weekly food plan for one mother and two children.

MY INFORMATION

- Weekly grocery budget: \$75
- ZIP code: 71203
- Store 1: Walmart
- Store 2: Brookshire's
- Food already at home: 2 pounds of rice, 1 jar of peanut butter, 6 eggs, 4 cans of green beans, oatmeal, flour, cooking oil, salt, pepper, and one bag of frozen mixed vegetables
- Children's general age groups: one elementary-age child and one middle-school-age child
- Foods avoided: very spicy foods
- Allergies or medical food restrictions: none
- Cooking equipment: stove, oven, microwave, slow cooker
- Time available for most meals: 30 minutes
- Meals that must be packed: five school lunches

COMPLETE THESE STEPS IN ORDER

1. Organize the food I already have and identify what should be used first.
2. Create a 7-day meal plan with breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day.
3. Use simple, affordable meals and reuse ingredients to reduce waste.
4. Provide simple recipes with servings, exact ingredients, short directions, cooking time, leftover storage, and a lower-cost substitution.
5. Create one master ingredient list, remove what I already have, and make the final shopping list.
6. Compare Walmart and Brookshire's near ZIP code 71203. Use current prices only when verified, state the date checked, and label unverified prices.
7. Check current sales, digital coupons, loyalty offers, and store-brand substitutions only for ingredients I need.
8. Suggest ways to stay within \$75 without removing a full day of meals or using unrealistic serving sizes.
9. Recommend one store or a split shopping plan after transportation and time are considered.
10. Show the estimated total and amount left in the budget.

Do not ask for private information. If current local prices or sales cannot be verified, write "not verified" instead of making up information. Keep the answer clear and practical.

Important

The example is a starting point, not a guarantee that \$75 will cover every needed item. Local prices, children's ages, appetite, school meal access, food benefits, allergies, and food already available will change the result.

Weekly Review

Review Question	My Answer
Did I stay within the food budget?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Did the family have enough food?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Which meals worked well?	_____
Which meals were not eaten?	_____
What food was left?	_____
What food spoiled or was wasted?	_____
Which store had the better final value?	_____
What will I change next week?	_____

Copy-and-Use Prompt 12: Improve Next Week’s Plan

PROMPT 12

Help me improve next week’s food plan. My budget was \$[amount], and I spent \$[amount]. Meals that worked well were: [list]. Meals the family did not eat were: [list]. Food left at the end of the week was: [list]. Food wasted was: [list]. Suggest five practical changes for next week that will reduce waste, use leftovers safely, and help me stay within budget. Keep the suggestions simple and do not ask for private information.

My notes for next week:

Quick Prompt Checklist

Done	Check
☐	I entered only general information.
☐	I did not enter private financial or identifying information.
☐	I included one adult and two children.
☐	I included my weekly food budget.
☐	I listed food already at home.
☐	I requested seven days and three meals each day.
☐	I requested recipes, ingredients, and exact amounts.
☐	I requested a final list after removing food already at home.
☐	I named two realistic local stores.
☐	I asked for the date and source of current prices or sales.
☐	I asked the AI not to invent unverified prices.
☐	I confirmed prices and sales before shopping.
☐	I reviewed food safety and allergy concerns.
☐	I recorded what I actually spent.

Encouragement

A good food plan does not have to be perfect. Begin with what you have. Make one clear plan. Check prices before you shop. Learn from the week, and make the next plan a little stronger.