



Visual Shopping Plan

Prevent grocery store meltdowns by making a visual shopping plan and teaching it to your child before you go to the store. Visuals minimize upset and conflict by creating predictability, which feels safe.

When it comes to a child's meltdowns in a store, the most effective remedy is what you do BEFORE you get to the store. Using the pages in this document, make a visual shopping plan and teach it BEFORE the trip to the store. Children think in pictures, so a predictable visual plan will help them understand and handle your shopping trip.

You'll need the printed Shopping Plan and Shopping List pages, lamination sheets, scissors, tape or Velcro, and dry erase markers.

DIRECTIONS:

- **STEP 1:** Print and laminate the Shopping Plan and Shopping List documents included here. By laminating the pages and using a dry erase marker, you can use the plan over and over.
- **STEP 2:** Use scissors to cut the steps out of the shopping plan, then attach with tape or Velcro to the My Shopping Plan page. You may also create or draw your own pictures using the blank boxes on the visual steps page.
- **STEP 3:** Fill out the Shopping List with a dry erase marker. At the store, your child can use the dry erase marker to check off each item as you put it in the cart.
- **STEP 4:** Prepare your child for what is going to happen during the shopping trip by TEACHING the visual shopping plan.

HOW TO TEACH THE VISUAL SHOPPING PLAN:

- **STEP 1:** BEFORE each trip to the store, review the visual plan. Alert your child to any variations to the plan, because predictability and consistency help them feel safe and increase their ability to handle the situation.
- **STEP 2:** Review the shopping list BEFORE you leave home as well. Your child may have been asking you to purchase chocolate chips cookies or candy during a previous store trip (this may have even triggered a meltdown), and you have decided to put chocolate chip cookies on the list *this* time. Although chocolate chip cookies are on the list this time, remind them that what you purchase is limited to the items on the list, and that chocolate chip cookies may NOT be on the list next time. Preparing children for each shopping trip is key. No matter what items are on the list, you will be there to help your child handle the situation.
- **STEP 3:** Focus on *what you want* during the shopping trip by noticing and encouraging your child. For instance, say, “You are marking the items off our shopping list, so we have everything we need at home! That is helpful. You did it!”

SAMPLE CONVERSATION: VISUAL SHOPPING PLAN

Say, “**This is our shopping plan.**” Point to each step of the visual plan and say, “**We are going to ride to the store, take the shopping list, get the shopping cart, check items off the list, check out at the register, load up and ride home from the store. When we go to the store, you have a job to do. This is how you can be helpful. Your job is checking items off the list with the dry erase marker. We are only going to buy items on the list. You may want something that is NOT on the list, but if it is not on the list, we will be leaving it on the shelf. It is hard for you when you can’t have something you want, but you can handle it. We will take deep belly breaths together to help you calm.**”

PREVENTING MELTDOWNS WITH A SHOPPING PLAN



Attach
picture
with tape
or velcro

1

Attach
picture
with tape
or velcro

2

Attach
picture
with tape
or velcro

3

Attach
picture
with tape
or velcro

4

Attach
picture
with tape
or velcro

5

Attach
picture
with tape
or velcro

6



Ride to the store in the car



Take shopping list



Get shopping cart



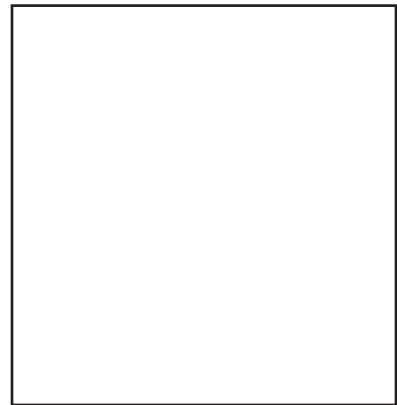
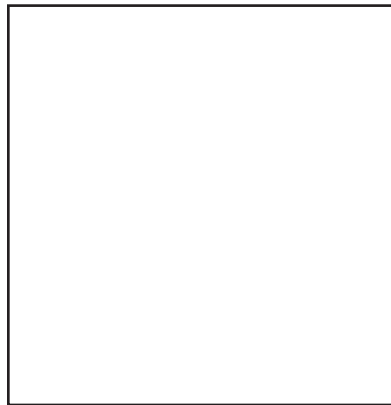
Check off items



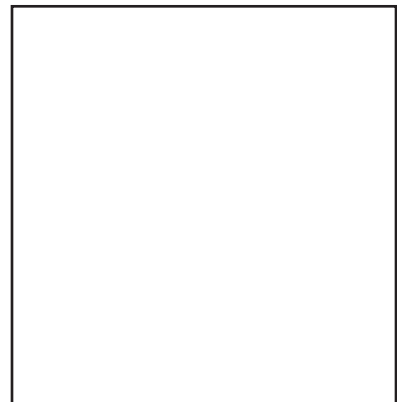
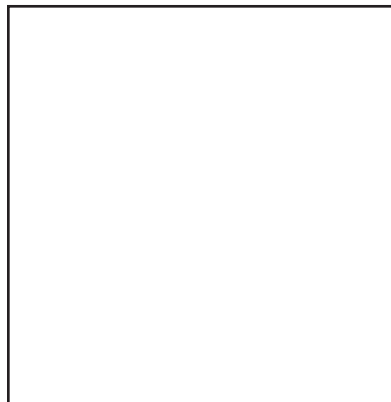
Check out



Ride home in the car



Create your own pictures by drawing or inserting your own pictures into the blank boxes.



Shopping List

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