



How to Spot Fraudulent Grocery Coupons

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Everyone is trying to save money at the grocery store this year...so you would think stores would welcome our coupons. But despite all sorts of technological advances, some supermarkets are still saying no to legitimate coupons printed online.

Frustrated Shoppers

Valerie Murray is one of many shoppers who have told me they are frustrated by stores that won't accept internet coupons. Valerie said "at the cash register, I tried to use them, and was told 'no.' They would not even honor them at any store I tried."

Why not? Because she says they were black and white, one-sided, home printed coupons.

Avoiding the Bad Ones

The problem, as I first reported back in 2006, is that many online coupons are fraudulent. So how can you spot a fraud?

I recently asked Heather Tenney, who runs a coupon blog called "Little Miss Know it All." (click above)

Heather told me "never print a coupon that's forwarded to you in an e-mail. That's rule number one."

Heather says stick with established websites like:

- Coupons.Com
- Smartsources.Com
- And your store's website, such as Kroger.com or Wal-Mart.com.

Click the link above for more of Heather's coupon deals.

Signs of a Fraudulent Coupon

So how do you know if a coupon is legitimate? It will be for a reasonable discount -- like 75 cents -- with an expiration date.

A fraudulent coupon will usually offer something free --like a free Blockbuster movie or McDonald's salad -- with no expiration date.

Or it will be for \$8 off a box of Tide detergent (a very popular one), when that essentially means a free box of Tide.

Blockbuster, McDonald's, and P&G are not giving away their main products free...to anyone who prints a coupon.

Online Coupons that Work

Heather says most real internet coupons now have a security code...So you can print only one or two per computer. She tells me "a legitimate coupon is usually going to require some sort of software...so they can identify you and you can print them legitimately."

So when Coupons.com asks you to download their "coupon printer," it's safe to do. You can't print without it.

If the Store still says "No"...

If your store denies what you think is a legitimate coupon, go to the service desk. If that doesn't work, ask to speak directly to the store manager.

Let them know how that you may take your business to another store...So you don't waste your money.

I'm John Matarese.