

“**Grocery Saving Strategies:**  
**Drugstore Deals and Freebies**”



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[www.CouponMom.com](http://www.CouponMom.com)



## **Drugstore Deals & Freebies**

Learn how to get hundreds of dollars of free items from your drugstores

You can easily get free items and real bargains every week from drugstores when you combine sales, coupons, rebates and special promotions. As appealing as that sounds, most shoppers do not want to spend a lot of time figuring out how to combine savings programs to get the best deals. The good news is that you can save hundreds of dollars at drugstores without taking time to figure out all the deals yourself. Just use the free deals lists for CVS and Walgreens at [www.couponmom.com](http://www.couponmom.com) every week! This eBook and the Coupon Mom site will teach you how to get dozens of free drugstore items every year.

Major drugstore chains such as CVS/Pharmacy and Walgreens each have their own savings programs that allow you to get free items by combining generous rebates, store coupon catalogs, store discount cards, and/or weekly circular coupons. Although their savings programs work differently from each other, they are both much easier to use than old-fashioned, tedious rebate programs. You can use either one or both of them to save hundreds of dollars a year.

I tested both programs by shopping at each store three times (once per week) for a total of six short shopping trips. I was able to buy \$266 worth of good merchandise for \$5.63. Later in this eBook I will detail the specific steps I followed as well as the items purchased to help you decide if this system appeals to you.

After reading this eBook, you can also get many free items in less than 30 minutes per week when you let the Coupon Mom website do the research for you. Every Sunday morning you can find detailed deals lists for both CVS and Walgreens in the Drugstore Deals section at [www.couponmom.com](http://www.couponmom.com). Registered Coupon Mom members can access the list at any time, and do not need to pay a subscription fee to use the service. It is absolutely free!

If you do not have a CVS or a Walgreens in your area, simply study the website of your drugstore chain to learn how its programs work and apply these same principles to your local drugstore. You can use the Virtual Coupon Organizer at [www.couponmom.com](http://www.couponmom.com) to create a “Best Deals” list for any store. Print both free eBooks from the Coupon Mom site, “The Coupon Mom System” and “Advanced Grocery Savings Strategies,” to understand how to use the Coupon Mom site tools.

### **Donate bargains to charities to help others at no cost:**

Not only can you get free items every week, food pantries and shelters really need common drugstore items. Weekly bargains include shampoos, toothpaste, toothbrushes, laundry detergent, paper products and even some food and grocery items.

You can check the **Cut Out Hunger** section of the Coupon Mom site to see the specific items charities need the most and learn how to find your local charity. Summertime is the most difficult time of year for food pantries and shelters. Donations decrease during vacation time and demand for supplies increases as families no longer benefit from free school breakfast and lunch programs. In other words, it is an ideal time to begin using easy savings programs to buy bargains for your family and donate to others at no cost.

### **CVS/Pharmacy Savings Programs:**

CVS offers several savings programs that shoppers can use to save dramatically. In fact, you can expect to get several free items a month when you combine their savings programs. As of this writing, their programs include:

**The CVS ExtraCare card:** Your first step to saving at CVS is to get an ExtraCare card at your store. Then register it online at [www.cvs.com](http://www.cvs.com) immediately to get special savings offers via email and direct mail on a regular basis. After you register your card you will receive a Welcome email message from CVS—be sure to open and read it. It will include a printable coupon for \$4 off a \$20 order at CVS. You will be able to combine that coupon with other coupons and offers to save dramatically on your first savings trip to CVS. If you provide your mailing information you will also receive coupons and offers by mail. The CVS direct mail offers will correspond to the types of items you have bought in the past, based on your ExtraCare card purchase history, so be sure to open and read any CVS mailings you get. Because many promotions are limited to one per card, my husband and I each have our own ExtraCare card to maximize our household savings.

**Extra Bucks Rewards Account:** This program is extremely easy and offers automatic earnings on all of your CVS spending. There are two ways that shoppers can accumulate rewards in their account:

- **2% automatic Extra Bucks rewards:** When you shop at CVS stores or online at CVS.com using your ExtraCare card, you will earn 2% of your total non-prescription spending in your Extra Bucks account. At the end of each quarter, you will receive your earnings in the form of an Extra Bucks Reward coupon for your spending over the previous quarter. It will work just like store credit at any CVS store or online at CVS.com (although you will not get change back if the value of your Extra Bucks Reward coupon exceeds the cost of your order). The coupon will print on the bottom of your first store receipt in the following quarter, or you can go online to CVS.com and print your Extra Bucks coupon to use on your next shopping trip. You can also check your account balance at any time at CVS.com if you have registered your card online. When you register your ExtraCare card at CVS.com, you may receive special promotion codes to increase your rebate earnings. As a registered member, recent offers I have received included a “Triple Extra Bucks” promotion to earn 6% on my non-prescription spending instead of 2%

for a 30-day period, a coupon to get a free Mother's Day card when I purchased \$30 of merchandise at CVS, and a \$10 off \$50 purchase coupon.

- **Extra Bucks rewards for prescriptions:** When you use your ExtraCare card when paying for prescriptions, you will receive \$1 for every two prescriptions filled.

**Extra Bucks Program:** CVS shoppers can qualify for Extra Bucks Now coupons when they buy specific items each week. Extra Bucks Now coupons are essentially rebates in the form of CVS store credit that do not require you to mail in a form or receipt. Rather than having to wait six weeks to receive a rebate, these rewards will print immediately as a cash-off CVS coupon at the bottom of the receipt as soon as you purchase the qualifying item(s). You do not have to fill out any forms, address an envelope or spend money on postage. You only need to stop and look at your receipt to see if you've received an Extra Bucks reward when you buy the item, and put that piece of paper in your wallet or coupon organizer to use on your next shopping trip to CVS. You can use the coupon on any non-prescription purchases at CVS. In other words, if you accidentally throw your receipt away as you leave the store, you are throwing away real money! The weekly advertising circulars will list the details of several Extra Bucks Now promotions every week. You can find these circulars in your newspaper, in stores, and online at CVS.com.

Although CVS has had the Extra Bucks Reward program for years, in the past the Extra Bucks reward would not print until at least two days after your purchase of the product. Once it printed, you could use it on a following visit. With the new Extra Bucks Now program, you get the coupon immediately so you are more likely to actually use your Extra Bucks Rewards to realize the reward savings.

- **How Extra Bucks Promotions Work:** The CVS weekly ad clearly details Extra Bucks promotions, such as "Get a \$5 Extra Bucks coupon and a free tote bag worth \$14.99 when you buy \$15 worth of Maybelline cosmetics or Garnier products." The fine print underneath the ad will also tell you how many deals each shopper can get during the promotional period, per card. Some deals are limited to one per week, while other promotions may state that the shopper can get multiple deals during the promotional period. Store shelf tags will also indicate the promotion period dates for each item. The Coupon Mom website will also list the CVS Extra Bucks promotion details at the top of the CVS Best Deals list every week, updated on Sunday mornings when store prices change.
- **Redeeming Extra Bucks coupons:** There is no limit to the number of Extra Bucks Now coupons you can use per order. For example, if you earned four Extra Bucks coupons totaling \$20 in savings, you could use all four coupons on your next order. If your order is less than the total value of your coupons (in this case, \$20), you will not receive any cash back for your excess Extra Bucks Now coupon value. Therefore, plan your shopping list to be sure that

your order equals or exceeds the value of the coupons you want to use.

- **Combine manufacturers' grocery coupons with Extra Bucks promotions:** You can use coupons from the newspaper coupon circulars for featured Extra Bucks qualifying items to save even more. For example, if an item is on sale for \$1.99 and offers a \$1.99 Extra Bucks coupon, you could also use the \$1.00 newspaper coupon you have for the same item. As long as you remember to use your Extra Bucks Now coupon on a future order, you will be saving more than you are spending while getting a free item.
- **Maximize your savings with Extra Bucks promotions:** Many Extra Bucks promotions give you a reward when you buy multiple items within a brand to meet a minimum purchase amount. Even if you have coupons for all of the participating items purchased, the minimum purchase requirement will be counted prior to having your coupons deducted. For example, if you bought three Maybelline items totaling \$15.00 (the minimum amount needed to earn the \$5 Extra Bucks coupon) and you had three \$2.00 coupons for each of the three items, you would get \$6 off your \$15 price. You would pay \$9 at the register and still get a \$5 Extra Bucks coupon to be used on a future store visit because your pre-coupon cost met the \$15 requirement. Your net cost would be \$4 for the three items (\$15 less \$6 coupons and \$5 Extra Bucks coupon).

**Join Upromise and register your ExtraCare card for more automatic rebates:** If you are already a member of Upromise, you can earn more rebates in your college savings account by registering your CVS ExtraCare card in your Upromise account. Every time you buy a qualifying Upromise item, a percentage of the purchase price will be added to your Upromise account. The rebate percentage will be calculated on the purchase price before deducting any grocery coupons for the qualifying item. Several name brands found at CVS participate in the Upromise program such as Tide laundry detergent, Butler Gum oral care products, Bic razors, Elmers glue, Tylenol, One-A-Day, Benefiber, Olay soaps, Old Spice products, and far more. The good news is that you do not need to keep track of what the Upromise items are because you will receive your rebates automatically as long as your ExtraCare card is registered in your account. If you are not a member yet, you can sign up quickly at [www.couponmom.com](http://www.couponmom.com) or Upromise.com.

**Save at CVS.com:** Although you do not earn Extra Bucks Now reward coupons for online shopping, you can save by shopping at CVS.com in other ways. If you shop online at CVS.com through the CVS link at Upromise.com, you will earn 5% Upromise rebates on your total purchase amount. You will also earn additional Upromise rebates for qualifying items and the 2% ExtraCare card earnings on non-prescription spending. CVS.com orders over \$49 get free shipping, and you may find attractive discount coupons for online orders at CVS.com, such as \$10 off a \$50 order. Offers and promotions will vary.

**ExtraCare Coupon Centers in stores:** CVS is introducing a new in-store coupon program that will allow shoppers to print coupons for items they use from

an in-store kiosk called ExtraCare Coupon Centers. Shoppers can scan their ExtraCare card at the coupon centers and print relevant coupons before they begin shopping. By scanning your ExtraCare card, the system will recognize your purchase history and provide coupons for featured items that match your shopping preferences. The new program is expanding to selected stores across the country.

Once you understand these savings programs, you can easily combine them to really save. For example, CVS recently featured Butler Gum toothbrush twin packs on sale. The twin pack of toothbrushes ordinarily sells for \$3.99. It was on sale for \$1.99, and it had an Extra Buck Reward for \$1.99. If you stopped right there, you would essentially have received the item free. However, there were more savings opportunities for that item. A coupon was available in the newspaper for \$1.00 off and the item also qualified for a Upromise rebate of 3%. Finally, you would earn a 2% rebate on your spending in your ExtraCare account. Remember, even though you would receive an Extra Bucks Reward coupon for \$1.99, you will still be spending money on your first order, so you would earn the automatic Upromise rebate and Extra Bucks reward. Let's look at how the math works when we stack all of these savings programs together:

<b>Regular Price of Twin Pack Butler Gum Toothbrushes:</b>	<b>\$3.99</b>
Sale Price with ExtraCare card	\$1.99
Less \$1 manufacturer's coupon	(1.00)
<b>Price paid at register</b>	<b>\$ .99</b>
Additional rebate savings:	
CVS ExtraCare rebate (2% of final cost)	(.02)
Upromise rebate (3% on pre-coupon price)	(.06)
CVS Extra Bucks reward	(\$1.99)
<b>Total sale, coupon &amp; rebate savings on \$3.99 item—2 free toothbrushes and realized a net profit of \$1.08 (before tax):</b>	<b>\$5.07</b>

Although this example may seem too good to be true, there are many deals like this at CVS. Make it easy to find them by using the Coupon Mom "Best CVS Deals" at [www.couponmom.com](http://www.couponmom.com) in the Drugstore Deals section.

When the Extra Bucks program began in April 2007, I tested the CVS savings programs by shopping at CVS once a week for three weeks in a row. I only purchased items my family would use or that I could donate to charity. Because the lists were short and CVS stores are relatively small compared to a supermarket, each shopping trip took me 15 minutes or less. Creating my shopping list was easy and took less than 20 minutes for each trip, since you can sort the CVS deals list at [www.couponmom.com](http://www.couponmom.com) quickly by percentage savings per item. I selected the items we use with the highest percentage savings, printed my customized list, and quickly cut out the coupons needed.

By using the Extra Bucks Reward coupons earned during the first week's trip, my cash outlay for the second and third trips was very low. Be sure to use your

Extra Bucks Reward coupons within one month after they print as they generally expire after one month. By getting in the routine of picking up the ultra-bargains every week or two, you will reduce the chances of losing or forgetting to use your Extra Bucks Reward coupons.

By combining sale prices, Extra Bucks Reward promotions, newspaper coupons, Extra Bucks 2% rebates, and Upromise rebates I was able to save 84% on my total purchases, equal to \$145 in savings. My actual cost for the following list of items was \$25 before tax. The items I purchased included:

Bic Soleil razor, Venus 3 ct. disposable razors, Schick Intuition razor, Pampers jumbo pack training pants, Tide laundry detergent 100 oz., All Small & Mighty laundry detergent 32 oz. (2 bottles), Vaseline Intensive Care lotion 25 oz, Listerine 1 liter with bonus 250 ml., Softsoap body wash, Soy Joy nutrition bars (4 bars), Precision Xtra Glucose meter, Pringles (3 cans), Gold Emblem dry roasted peanuts 16 oz. (3 jars), Butler Gum twinpack toothbrushes, Garnier Nutrisse shampoo 13 oz. (4 bottles), Aleve pain reliever trial size 6 ct. (2 packages), Vlasic pickle relish, Hersheys Cocoa 3.5 oz. Chocolate bar (2 bars), and a large canvas tote bag valued at \$14.99.

**Here is my combined savings summary for three CVS shopping trips:**

<b>Total Value of Merchandise from CVS/Pharmacy:</b>	
Cost of items if purchased with no coupons or promotions	\$155.31
Value of free item as part of promotion (canvas tote bag)	14.99
Total Value of merchandise including free tote bag:	\$170.30
<b>Total Savings Realized:</b>	<b>\$145.24</b>
Sale price savings	47.30
Newspaper coupons	31.51
Extra Bucks rewards coupons printed at register	49.47
Extra Bucks percentage rebate earned in Extra Bucks account	1.64
Upromise rebate earned in Upromise account	.33
<b>Final Cost after all savings before tax (84% total savings):</b>	<b>\$ 25.06</b>

**Walgreens Savings Programs:**

Walgreens also has several very attractive savings programs that shoppers can combine to get free items every month. The Coupon Mom website makes it easy for shoppers to take full advantage of all of Walgreens' savings programs by listing Walgreens Best Deals at Couponmom.com every week. The site updates its Walgreens list on Sunday mornings.

The savings programs include:

- **Weekly circular with sale items and promotions:** Walgreens has weekly sales circulars that come in the Sunday newspaper and are available online at Walgreens.com. Every week Walgreens features many low sale prices, “buy one, get one free” offers and special promotions. If you do not have Internet access to check the Coupon Mom site’s list, you can use the Walgreens circular to plan your trip, combining sale prices with coupons to save the most.
- **In-Ad coupons:** Walgreens sales circulars include many Walgreens store coupons. Because these are store coupons, it is possible to combine them with manufacturer coupons from the newspaper, printable coupon sites or other sources. Walgreens stores should accept printable coupons because you can print manufacturers coupons directly from their site. When you combine the two coupons together, it is possible to get items free or at a very low cost. You can also use the Virtual Coupon Organizer at [www.couponmom.com](http://www.couponmom.com) to see if manufacturers coupons are available from your newspaper circulars for items that have Walgreens in-ad coupons.
- **Special promotions:** Walgreens stores also have “Register Rewards” promotions that give shoppers a coupon off their next Walgreens purchase when they buy qualifying items. For example, a recent Register Rewards promotion gave shoppers a \$5 Register Rewards coupon when they purchased \$15 of Unilever products. Many of the qualifying products were also on sale and had newspaper coupons available. Incidentally, the \$15 minimum purchase price is counted before coupons are deducted. Therefore, if you had \$5 worth of newspaper coupons for your \$15 worth of Unilever items, you would end up paying only \$5 after you factor in your \$5 Register Rewards savings. The Coupon Mom Walgreens list will note qualifying items for special promotions to make it easy for shoppers to cash in on big savings!
- **Easy Saver Catalog Coupons and Rebates:** Walgreens publishes an Easy Saver catalog on a monthly basis that is available in stores and can also be printed online from Walgreens.com. It includes several Walgreens store coupons for a wide range of items, details of special promotions and a long list of rebate offers. The weekly sales circular will also point out when a sale item has a qualifying rebate or Easy Saver catalog coupon available. However, the Coupon Mom deals list goes a step further by letting shoppers know when a newspaper coupon is also available for items with Easy Saver coupons and rebates, which can knock the price down to zero in many cases.
- **Easy Saver All-in-One Rebates:** You can now file your rebates online at Walgreens.com or mail in your receipt and a form to get your Walgreens rebates. You can save time by listing all of your rebates for the month on one form. You do not need to include UPC barcodes in most cases. It only takes a few minutes to write down the necessary information and put it in the mail. Maximize your rebate savings by noting rebates for items you like, check to see if coupons are available, and wait to see if those items go on sale before the end of the month. You can make more than one trip to buy rebate items

over the course of the month, but you can only mail in one form per month per household. If your coupon and rebate items do go on sale before the end of the rebate period, you are very likely to get the items free. Be sure to keep a copy of the form that you mail in as well as a copy of your receipt. You can also ask the cashier to provide you with a second copy of your receipt when you buy your merchandise if a copier is not easily accessible.

- **“Free After Rebate” Items:** Every month the Walgreens Easy Saver catalog will feature items that will be free after the rebate. The list of items will be at the top of the rebate form. Store shelf tags will also point out items that are free after the rebate. If you have coupons for these items, you will get the coupon savings as well as the full rebate value on the rebate form (up to the actual price of the item in your store).
- **Easy Saver Rebate Gift Card Bonuses:** Walgreens also offers a 10% Gift Card rebate bonus. When you send in your rebate request, you have the option of receiving your rebate in the form of a check in the mail, or in the form of a Walgreens gift card. If you opt for the Walgreens gift card option, you will get an additional 10% added to your rebate amount. For example, I recently submitted \$18.50 of rebates to Walgreens and will receive an extra \$1.85 because I chose the gift card option. When you do that every month, you end up making a good amount of money over the course of the year as well as getting many free items.

I tested the Walgreens Easy Saver Rebate program for three weeks (one week per month in each monthly rebate period), focusing only on the items that were “Free After Rebate” as well as a Checkout Cash promotion that gave me a \$20 cash off coupon for a future shopping order when I purchased nine qualifying items. I elected to have the rebate value put back on my Walgreens gift card to earn a 10% bonus on the rebate amount. I also used grocery coupons from the Sunday newspaper to maximize my savings.

<b>Total Value of Merchandise from Walgreens:</b>	
Cost of items before coupons	<b>\$ 95.91</b>
<b>Total Savings Realized:</b>	<b>\$115.34</b>
Rebate value	60.95
Newspaper coupons	28.29
Checkout Cash coupon printed at register	20.00
10% rebate bonus for having rebate put on Walgreens gift card	6.10
Received \$95.91 in free merchandise plus \$19.43 in store credit	
<b>Final Profit (in the form of store credit) after all savings before tax:</b>	<b>\$ 19.43 profit</b>

Items purchased in these three trips to Walgreens included: Garnier Fructis hair conditioner 25.4 oz., Playtex tampons 16 ct., Oral B Crossaction toothbrush,

Sucrets lozenges 18 ct., Imodium 20 ct., Aleve 20 ct., Excedrin 24 ct., Goodys Headache powder 4 pack, Butler Gum twinpack toothbrushes, Oral B toothbrush, Soy Joy nutrition bars (2 bars), Walgreens maxi pads, Softsoap bodywash 18 oz, Reach Cleanpaste floss 50 yards, Walgreens 4 pack lightbulbs, Gillette antiperspirant, Venus 3 ct. disposable razors (2 packages), Daisy disposable razors 12 ct., Secret Platinum antiperspirant, Aussie shampoo 13 oz. (4 bottles).

### **Other Drugstore Savings Strategies:**

- **Combining “Buy One, Get One Free” offers and coupons:** It makes sense to get more than one newspaper per week because you can use two identical coupons when you get two identical items with a “buy one, get one free” deal at drugstores.
- **Combining coupons with trial sizes:** Drugstores generally have a trial size product section. If you have coupons that match any of these items, you may be able to use coupons on trial sizes to get items free, unless the coupons specify minimum sizes or say “excluding trial sizes.” If the coupon does not specify or exclude sizes and simply says “any”, then you can use it on a trial size. I recently purchased a small six-count package of a pain reliever and a trial sized deodorant with coupons.
- **Pharmacy prescription transfer coupons and competitor coupons:** On a local basis drugstores may mail out prescription transfer coupons, such as giving customers a \$20 store gift card when they bring in a new prescription or transfer one from another pharmacy. Ask your drugstore if they will also accept other pharmacies’ prescription coupons. If so, start keeping an eye out for your grocery stores’ and other drugstores’ prescription coupons to have several opportunities to save on prescriptions at your preferred drugstore. For example, CVS stores do accept competitors’ prescription transfer coupons. You also earn \$1 for every two prescriptions filled in your Extra Bucks account at CVS.

### **My observations of the differences between the two rebate programs:**

- Walgreens’ “Free After Rebate” program is updated monthly and the CVS Extra Bucks promotions are generally updated weekly. I could get all of my free items in one shopping trip per month at Walgreens. However, I had to wait a full month to get new freebies at Walgreens. CVS offered new promotions each week.
- The CVS Extra Bucks Now coupons print on my receipt as soon as I buy the item, which is the easiest rebate program I’ve ever used. I found myself checking the CVS deals more often because they were so easy to get.
- Walgreens gift card values do not expire, as compared to the CVS Extra Bucks Reward coupons that generally expire after 30 days. I was still able

to use the rebate value on my Walgreens gift card when I hadn't used their rebate program for over six months. It is easier to be an occasional rebate saver at Walgreens. I needed to be diligent about keeping track of my CVS Extra Bucks Reward coupons to make sure I didn't forget to use them.

- Because you get 10% rebate bonuses with the Walgreens program, it is possible to end up netting a profit while getting free items.
- The Walgreens rebate program is less convenient because it requires mailing in a form. However, today you can submit your rebate online at Walgreens.com which makes it easier. I hate to admit that one month I neglected to mail the form in on time and missed out on the rebate. Now I avoid making that mistake by putting the form, receipt and envelope in the middle of my desk as soon as I get back from the store. That forces me to fill it out immediately. It only takes a few minutes to do!

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Stephanie Nelson is The Coupon Mom™ and has taught television viewers and readers how to save in many areas, including groceries, restaurants, online shopping, gifts, and entertainment. Since 2004 she has appeared frequently on television and radio teaching savings tips, including The Oprah Winfrey Show, The Today Show, Good Morning America, CBS Early Show, The Mike and Juliet Show, and CNN. Nearly one million members use her free grocery deals website [www.couponmom.com](http://www.couponmom.com).