



Run your own Supermarket Tour

*** 'updated for 2013 guide' ***

A 'how to' guide....

We're keen to get the word out there - equipping all of you who are interested to make a difference.

We previously have run supermarket tours in Melbourne, and out of these have developed this resource. We are hoping that you might be one of the people who can be skilled up to pass on the message to your own group of friends, colleagues or interested individuals.

Basically the [print guide](#) has everything you need to run a simple 'shopping with a conscience' supermarket tour of your own. Outlined below is a step by step process on how you can run a the session.

The goal is to provide an introduction to ethical or sustainable shopping. Basically this is sharing the unseen story behind some of the 'stuff' in our everyday lives. It will be most effective if it connects with what people in your group presently buy - common items on their shopping list.

1. What you'll need
2. Parts of the session
3. The tour details
4. Appendix: further information



Ethical Supermarket Shopping Guide



1. What you'll need

As the leader of the group, you will need:

- a copy of the guide – preferably a copy for each member of the group. (You can order them [here](#).)
- a familiarity with the guide to help facilitate people's understanding (icon decoder, principles, boycott, etc)
- three areas (issues) to focus on – preferably ones that you are passionate about. Part of telling the story is telling it from your perspective – make it personal – make it your own. How did you get involved in this? Why is this issue important and why is it important to you?
- items to shop with (see '[what do we take along?](#)' section below)
- to look through the '[things you need to know](#)' section
- 60 minutes time in total

2. Parts of the session

1. [Before the shop](#) (10 minutes) – introduction, convey what, why, principles, what do we take along
2. [Exploring the aisles](#) (30 minutes) – visit 3 parts of the supermarket using a particular product at each to -
 - i. explore the guide using the ratings for that particular product type (focus is on company record – the track record of the companies behind the brands)
 - ii. introduce a second issue and possible criteria for purchasing (ie. food, miles, genetic engineering, etc - see [table below](#))
3. [Own task](#) (10 minutes) – divide people into pairs. Give each pair the task of choosing an item they buy regularly (ie. tinned tomatoes, toilet paper) and finding it. Then asking (i) what is it's story (ii) find a 'best buy' focussing on company record and (iii) introduce one other criteria and look for a 'best buy' according to that.
4. [Wrap up](#) (10 minutes) – gather as a whole group again. Ask how they found it, what did they learn, how would they include this in their own shopping practices.



3. The Tour details

3.1 Before the Shop (10 minutes)

>> introduction

I always start with an introduction of 'why' it's important to start to think about ethical purchasing. Basically there's a story behind all of our stuff. A story that we often don't see and don't know about. This includes the conditions where something is made, how far it has traveled, where the packaging ends up at the end of its life. There are many hidden impacts. See more at [Story of Stuff](#).

When we spend our money we are in fact giving validation to the many processes that go on behind the scenes. We are investing in all sorts of systems with our dollar - often things we wouldn't give money towards normally or endorse with our buying power. See more on [page 1 of guide](#).

Ethical shopping is thinking about the impacts of our purchases and choosing products that minimise these impacts. It's using our choices to care for the planet, other people and ourselves too. It's being responsible for these choices, based on the information we have.

See further examples to explain the **context** [here](#) (1. impacts are *unseen*; 2. present systems are *unsustainable*; 3. we have become *disconnected* from the things that give us life). You might choose to use these, or use your own examples, or leave it out. Less is often more, simple often best.



Ethical Supermarket Shopping Guide



>> principles

Then I usually turn to the middle spread (p. 38,39) in the guide and reflect on the [many issues](#) that we could consider when shopping in the supermarket, beyond the usual cost and convenience. This is not a comprehensive list - just some we've come across. How does it make people feel? Ask your group. The usual answer is "overwhelmed", "paralysed", "Where do I start?".

So in light of this, let's look at 5 principles to help guide our purchases. [Page 4](#) of guide. They are:

- 1) Every purchase makes an impact, therefore each choice makes a difference.
- 2) Avoid unnecessary consumption. Ask "Do I need it?"
- 3) Learn about the issues, but don't be overwhelmed. Take on one issue at a time.
- 4) Look for the best buy. Based on what you value and what's available.
- 5) Make lasting change. Create new habits. Celebrate good choices.

These five principles can be remembered on one hand - using them is your 'vote'.

Now we'll be exploring the aisles and using specific products as an entry point to discuss three issues of your choosing (see [table below](#)). My favorites are Food Miles, Packaging, Genetic Engineering and Fairtrade. But best to choose ones that you are particularly interested in, or may be relevant to your group. Three issues are enough for people to get an idea without being overwhelmed. But before we shop, what do we need to remember to take with us?

>> what do we take along?

- 1) our reusable bag. [why?](#)
- 2) our list. Know what you're looking for. Avoid unnecessary purchases.
- 3) our money
- 4) our guides - Guide to Ethical Supermarket Shopping, [Greenpeace True Food guide](#)
- 5) our brain . Good to take it wherever you go.



3.2 Exploring the aisles (30 minutes)

I suggest a group with numbers up to 10 is suitable. I try to be discrete - yet mindful that we're just doing what most people do - that's to *think about* what they will choose as a best purchase. No crime in that! Also worth keeping in mind that mostly we're going to buy something in the store... and that's the bottom line. Mostly the retailer won't mind as long as you're spending money with them. Often good to discuss your plans with the supermarket prior to the event.

See the table on the next page referred to in the paragraphs below.

So choose your first issue (ie. food miles), go to the Aisle matched in the column below (ie. canned beans), and have people turn to the appropriate guide page (ie 23). Then ask your group to find a best buy according to company track record using the information in the guide. You may need to help them with following information - icon decoder (inside front page), boycotts & criticisms p10 & 11, assessment sources p73.

Next introduce your issue (ie. food miles), and turn to the appropriate blurb page (ie. p17). Read out the information yourself or have someone in the group do it. There is a brief overview of the issue, and a series of action points (with the trolley icon). After taking people through these, ask them to find a 'best buy' with this criteria in mind. Additional info is in Further Resources column below.

Ethical Supermarket Shopping Guide



Issue	Aisle	Guide Page		Blurb Page
Ownership Aust vs foreign (Multinational Monopoly)	Milk	28	50	Further Resources
Genetic Engineering	Ice cream	44	16	Note Aust icon in guide tables. Note distinction between Aust Owned (relates to where company is based) and Aust made (relates to where product is made)
Palm oil	Chips	21	20	Find a GE free icecream using the resources suggested. Have Greenpeace send you out some True Food Guides. Great video outlining issues: ' Future of Food ' movie
Organics	Health food or fresh veg	46	70	Often really hard to find palm oil free alternatives. But also really important as Orangutans only have short time before their habitat is gone if current practice continues.
Packaging & waste	Biscuits	20	18	See if you can find a certified organic product?
Factory Farming	Eggs	26	45	Hard to get biscuits that's aren't 'double' packaged. Can you find one?
Recycled paper	Toilet paper	67	67	What's the difference between regular (caged) eggs, Barn-laid, and Free-range? more
Food Miles	Canned beans	23	48	
Fairtrade	Chocolate	32	32	I use Heinz beans as an example, having travelled 3,131kms from New Zealand; or Lipton's tea travelling 8,259kms from India. More info at CERES report Local Harvest
Fairtrade	Coffee	42	42	
Company Record	Museli	21	10 & 11 and rest	

Ethical Supermarket Shopping Guide



I suggest as you shop emphasising the concept of 'best buy'. Know what you're looking for. Take on one issue at a time. Know that a 'Best buy' is about prioritising what we value. You may want to find a local organic option but in reality you may need to trade off one issue for another. See your positive choices as 'glass half full' rather than 'glass half empty'. Every change to your shopping list for the better is just that – a positive change.

Also allow time for people to tell you and others of their experiences, struggles and perspectives. Often solutions or alternatives come from someone else who's asked the same sorts of questions.

3.3 Own task (10 minutes)

Once you have gone through your three issues, then divide people into pairs and have them do a similar process with an item of their own choosing – something that they buy regularly. Have them:

- 1) ask what is it's story – what do we know about this product?
- 2) choose a 'best buy' when looking at company record (use the ratings in the guide)
- 3) introduce one other criteria and look for a best buy according to that. Usually one of the issues you've already discussed.

So you're repeating what you've just done in Part 2, but with them choosing the product and issue.

3.4 Wrap up (10 minutes)

Gather as a whole group again. Ask how they found it, what did they learn, how would they include this in their own shopping practices. Celebrate their good purchases. Restate the principles. Finish up with affirming that 'every good choice makes a difference' and that with today's purchases, they have just taken a huge step in reclaiming their shopping basket!

Ethical Supermarket Shopping Guide



...A note on using the supermarket

A common question we're asked is 'do I have to have permission from the supermarket to run such a tour?'. Sometimes we've liased with the supermarket and let them know what we're up to. It's good, it builds relationships and communicates that there's people with looking for more than just a 'cheap buy' out there. If you are talking with them, it's good to point out that you're helping people make a 'best buy' with some issues in mind and that there are better choices in their store. Always frame it in the positiive.

At other times we haven't asked permission, and rather treated it like we were simply shopping as a group. Whether or not you ask permission, of course it's best to be respectful of other shoppers and not cause a disturbance. You may find you do attract attention from other shoppers, or security people, which I find is a great oppotunity to share your specific particular questions - "I'm looking for oil that's GE free. Do you have any suggestions?".

Also remember that running the tour, and in fact how you use the guide in the store, is your own responsibility. We as a group (the Ethical Consumer Group) take no responsibility for what you do, but do hope you have fun, and share the good news of better choices in a creative way.

Good luck. Email or call me with questions or to let me know how you go. I'd love to know. Nick 0417 114 492



4. Appendix: Further Information

Context

1. Unseen

An example of how the impact of our purchases are unseen is the Australian Conservation Foundation's "Consumption Atlas", found at www.acfonline.org.au/consumptionatlas, looks at the carbon and water footprint of households and compares different areas. In terms of carbon, Transport (cars) and Utilities (power), usually seen as biggest contributors, only contributed 30% combined. Just the tip of the iceberg. The unseen carbon footprint behind **food** contributed another 30% and another 30% was in the **goods** we buy. (remaining 10% is for home renovations). Our water footprint has a similar % breakdown, so you could reduce shower time from 7min to 4min and save 60 litres a shower, that's 20,000 year. At the same time by reducing your meat consumption by two 150g serves per week, you'd save another 20,000 litres a year.

2. Unsustainable

Our present system of food production is not sustainable. It takes 3.5 calories in to produce every calorie out. In 1960 the ratio was about 1:1. This is largely due to an important discovery in 1909 by two Germans Haber & Bosch who were able to split nitrogen to make ammonium. This enables the feed stock for Nitrogen-based fertilizer, which is the basis for all conventional agriculture today. It is of course based on a finite resource - oil.

So huge amount of resources and energy go in, with waste (pollution) out. In natural systems there is no concept of waste. All elements are used as part of the next part of the cycle.

3. Connection

Our culture has lost connection with the things that sustain us. Kids think milk comes from supermarket. It is only when we reclaim the knowledge about the impacts of our choices that we can be responsible for them. Connect up dots. Part of this is a 'relocalising' of our food. We know little about the many processes connected with a California orange. It's travelled over 12,000kms to get to us. We may know more about an orange from Mildura having travelled 500kms. But it's even more likely we'll know about the orange tree next door, that's 20 metres from us.

Ethical Supermarket Shopping Guide



Plastic Bags

Most of us have a bunch of these in our cupboards. The trick is remembering to have them with us when we reach the supermarket. There are 6.9 billion plastic bags used every year in Australia. That's 7,000 per minute. Lots of unnecessary plastic. That often ends up as waste. So put your bag in your handbag or rucksack, or boot of your car. Treat them like your wallet or keys or glasses. Don't leave home without them.

Eggs

With **regular (caged) eggs**, up to five hens are kept in small wire cages with a minimum height of 40 centimetres and floor space of about 500-550 square centimetres. They have their beaks trimmed to prevent cannibalism. With **Barn-laid**, Up to 1000 chooks live in a large barn divided into pens. They can spread their wings, bathe in dust, perch and scratch for food. The RSPCA has accredited several barn-egg producers. With **Free-range**, hens are free to move around on open ground during the day. The Free Range Egg and Poultry Association administer the FREPA accreditation scheme. [more](#). See Sustainable Table's Egg and Poultry chart [here](#).

Things you need to know

When thinking about the story behind stuff, it is useful to divide features into these groups:

1. the **product** itself - includes packaging, nutrition content (salt, sugar, fat)
2. the **processes** behind the product - includes wages and conditions (fairtrade issues), genetic engineering, food (travel) miles, animal issues (factory farming, animal testing)
3. the track record of the **companies** who own the brand - involvements (military, gaming, tobacco, uranium, etc) and praises or criticisms in regards to areas of environment, social, animals and governance.