

# A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO MEAL PREPPING



Meal prepping saves money and time, reduces stress, and contributes to a healthy, balanced diet. But if you've never done it, this beneficial habit can seem intimidating and time consuming.

With the right plan in place, meal prepping can be easier than you think. We put together these step-by-step tips to help you get started.

## STEP 1 CHECK YOUR CALENDAR.

First thing's first: look at your calendar for the upcoming week.

Are you ordering takeout on Tuesday night? Will you be out of town on Friday?

Note these types of activities and plan accordingly. It will reduce your food waste and save you money.

## STEP 2 MAKE A MEAL PLAN.

Keep your meal plan simple! Pick a few different recipes to rotate throughout the week for your meals and snacks so you don't get bored.

You can also pick one or two recipes that can easily be tweaked with different veggies, sauces, or garnishes to help switch things up from day to day.

## STEP 3 MAKE A GROCERY LIST.

Many grocery stores now offer a mobile app, which makes this task exceedingly easy. (If yours doesn't, check out these [third-party apps](#).)

Just search for the item you need, quickly compare brands and prices, and add the best option to your list. Of course, a good old pen and paper will also do.

And don't forget to take stock of your fridge and pantry before adding things to your list. There's nothing worse than spending money on ingredients you already have.

## STEP 4 GO GROCERY SHOPPING.

If you used a mobile app, grocery shopping will be a breeze. It sorts your shopping list by aisle, ensuring you know exactly where to find each item.

And, since you came in with a plan, you (hopefully) won't buy things you don't need... another win for your pocketbook and your waistline.

**PRO TIP:** Some stores offer grocery pick-up services for a minimal fee. Just submit your grocery list and head to the store at your designated pick-up time. Staff will bring out your groceries, load your car, and send you on your way!

## STEP 5 PREP YOUR MEALS.

This step will change depending on the meals you choose, but here's an example of a day of meal prep if you need some ideas.

- **Breakfast:** [Overnight oats](#). This will take just 10 minutes to make, and you'll have delicious, nutritious breakfasts for every morning of the week.
- **Lunch:** [Simple rotisserie chicken salad](#). Ready-made rotisserie chicken is one of the best meal prep short-cuts. Just shred it with a fork or your fingers, and it's ready to go! This salad will only take you 20 minutes to prep.
- **Snack 1:** Cashews and grapes. After washing the grapes, portion out each into separate snack bags or containers.
- **Snack 2:** [PB&J energy bites](#). Energy bites are great for grab-and-go snacks. These bites take 10 minutes to prepare.

If you also want to prep dinners, try picking dishes that don't take much time to make in the first place (i.e., 30 minutes or less). [Browse recipes](#) online or find a [cookbook](#) with quick, easy, and healthy weeknight meals. You can use any leftovers for another dinner during the week.

**FOOD SAFETY 101:** While making meals at home, pay attention to food safety best practices—especially regarding the cooking, storing, and reheating of your prepped meals. Give yourself a refresher on [food storage basics](#) and keep an organized fridge/freezer with up-to-date food labels.

You can also visit [USDA's website](#) for food safety facts and tips, as well as a hotline for questions.

**That's it! In less than one hour, you can prep breakfasts, lunches, and snacks for the entire week. If you're new to cooking, be patient with yourself. Once you get the hang of it, you'll get faster.**