



Best Digital Coupon Sites

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Business and technology expert, Marilyn Harroun tells us about trendsetting technology that can help you save time and money at the grocery store.

I really, really don't enjoy grocery shopping. But we have to eat and I have to do most of the grocery shopping at my house. Like everyone, I want to save money and get the best deal but I also need to save time. I have never been a pro at couponing. And a recent study showed that "couponers" usually save \$5.00-\$9.00 a week BUT they spend 3-7 hours searching, clipping, and combining coupons to get the deals. That's not for me!

So, what are the options for digital couponing in the 21st century? I know there are couponing websites, but is there any new technology that would make it possible for me to save TIME AND MONEY? My definition of the perfect solution--a few minutes online with my shopping list, the technology finds all the deals and coupons sends them to my loyalty card (or better yet my cell phone or mobile device) and I can continue to shop at my favorite store.

Oldest & Most Popular Digital Deals & Coupons Site

www.mycoupons.com

This is really where the whole online coupon concept started. Since then several other sites have come online duplicating what MyCoupons started – like WOW-Coupons.com, Retailmenot.com, Keycode.com and others.

But MyCoupons is the oldest and most comprehensive online shopping portal. They have been around since 1995. You can find deals on just about anything from just about any major retailer. From buying a car to insurance to online dating services to general merchandise to hotels to student discounts. The list goes on and on. Go to www.mycoupons.com and roll over education to show drop-down list of deals for students.

It really is the one stop shopping portal to search any major retailer's website for deals, coupons and coupons codes. And they have a small group of "Deal Finders" like Godfather Paul and Shoppin' Shauna. www.mycoupons.com/deal-finders.html

Each claims to have saved "MyCouponers" millions of \$\$\$ and each DealFinder has a short list of retailers as their specialty. Godfather Paul is into the auction sites like eBay while Shoppin Shauna works with Overstock.com, Expedia. <http://www.mycoupons.com/deal-finders-shauna.html>

You can sign up to get their list of "hot deals" for the week. They show up in your InBox every Wednesday for you to sort through. And MyCoupons does have a section of printable coupons they tout as "exclusive" to their website. And you must print them to redeem them. <http://www.mycoupons.com/coupons/Printable/print>

The shopper still has to do the lion's share of searching and collecting deals, coupons and offers. NONE of the coupons are digital as you must print most everything on the site. MyCoupons is really an interface or portal to most major retailers' websites. So for example, if I select an offer at Target, I am headed for Target.com when I click on it. Shoppers should consider it a very robust online directory service for couponing. A big online catalog of deals and coupons. So in 10-12 years their digital catalog of deals has grown larger but they have not really been the leader in developing new apps or software that leverage mobile technology (like cell phones, iPad, etc.) And while MyCoupons may save me some MONEY, it doesn't save me much TIME because I still have to do the searching and combining myself.

My Favorite Grocery Retailer Digital Couponing

www.smithsfoodanddrug.com

One of my favorite retailers because Smith's has been fairly progressive in automating my shopping experience; saving me TIME AND MONEY. Smith's is a fairly good size grocery chain which coordinates and partners with manufacturers to offer coupons and in store special offers. Their website is powered by softcoin.com, a YOU Technology connecting manufacturing and retailers to their customers. You start with a Smith's **1-2-3 Fresh Values Card** to take advantage of the digital couponing and special offers.

Go to their website and register as a Fresh Values Customer then login to your account. http://www.softcoin.com/Sites/Kroger_SummerOfSavings/Page/HomePage

Load up to 150 coupons on your Fresh Values card at a time and then print your list of coupons and add to it to make a shopping list. http://www.softcoin.com/Sites/Kroger_SummerOfSavings/Page/SelectCouponsPage Coupons can be sorted by value, popularity or product. I even get customized emails with special offers and coupons or the option to get double points based on my previous shopping habits with Smiths--in my case oatmeal, fruit, fresh produce, soda--things I have purchased several times. And the coup de gras, I earn cents off on gas for my car. Anywhere from \$.05 to \$.30 depending on how much I spend on each shopping trip.

Cons –

You are limited to the coupons Kroger/Smiths selects. My shopping list consists of the coupons currently loaded on my card. And even if I search and can find additional deals and coupons, I have to print them and deal with redeeming them at checkout. And about 50% of my "couponing" is still done by print and paper-not digital.

Mobile Digital Couponing-So far

www.cellfire.com/grocery

Cell fire is interesting because they have taken some small steps to connect digital deals and coupons with a mobile device like a smart phone or iPhone.

http://www.cellfire.com/

On Cellfire's home page you select your hometown and zip code and the page populates with suggested coupons you can load to your participating grocer's card--in this case the page populated with coupons for Smith's that can be loaded to my Fresh Values card and then I can receive a text or email notification to my cell phone up to 3X a month.

www.cellfire.com/deals.php

However, you can go mobile with a small group of "deals" that can be saved directly to your phone. www.cellfire.com/howitworks.php (In Choose a Topic select Using Offer in the drop down menu)

To redeem your offer, you are instructed to simply show your cell phone screen displaying the offer, the code, or UPC to the cashier. And Cellfire's list of compatible cell phones and devices and includes most all major cell phone providers and cell phone typical cell phone types. In my case, I found my carrier and my Blackberry listed.

You must download a small mobile app to your phone to access the digital deals Cellfire offers. And right now, the list of coupons and deals and available retailers (again Smith's is on the leading edge of automating the shopping experience) is small. BUT-it's a small step or two in the direction of (My Utopia) sending digital coupons and deals to a mobile device.

Digital Couponing Services-Latest Technology

www.shoppingnanny.com

Of all the digital couponing sites I searched through, Shopping Nanny piqued my interest. This is new technology that could make it possible to fully automate digital couponing so I could save TIME AND MONEY. And SN is a home-grown Utah company. So my search took me full circle and back to Utah to find the latest.

SN launched nationally on July 1st. Currently you can select from over 30,000 grocery stores nationwide. Each store is part of a well-known grocery chain like Kroger/Smith's, Albertsons, Dan's, etc.

YOU Technology in the News

SN offers free services as well as paid subscription services. www.shoppingnanny.com/home/tryit Obviously, if you want the full battery of functionality including combining coupons and store specials via paperless coupons loaded to your loyalty card and all the extras, your subscription fee is \$5.95 a month. Some of the digital couponing sites like ShoppingSmart.com charge as much as \$19 a month with no guarantee of savings. But SN guarantees that if you spend at least \$90 a week on groceries you will save at least \$40 a month or your next month is free. So I signed up, filled in my profile info and gave SN a "test drive." http://www.shoppingnanny.com/home/member_home

I told SN to find participating stores within 10 miles of my home and she gave me the list http://www.shoppingnanny.com/home/profile_stores

I can then build my shopping list or start with one of the weekly lists SN has for me based on my family size. ALL lists are easily edited or added to. Here we selected the weekly list for a family with 2 Kids.

SN then searches for all store specials and available coupons and tells me how many. I can click on the arrow next to the item to get more information on the deals and coupons and then select the ones I want loaded to my card. This took a couple of minutes compared to a couple of hours it might have taken me. And I am more confident that I am leveraging all the available deals and coupons to save the most money at my store. And I can print my list and take it to the store with me.

And SN has taken some great first steps to building an online community of both service and information through their Forums. <http://forums.shoppingnanny.com/> Discussions on healthy shopping, green shopping, hints for beginners, and even recipes that come with shopping lists.

Shopping Nanny also helps me track my savings so I know I am getting my money's worth.

Marilyn Harroun has more than 20 years of professional experience in several hi-tech industries which include computer software and hardware technology, digital photo, entertainment, 3-D media, and major retail.

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