THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SUPERMARKETS

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A When we go shopping at a supermarket, we often buy more than we need. But it may not be our fault—supermarkets are controlling the way we shop. In fact, the whole experience of shopping for food is planned and arranged for us. Every detail of a supermarket has a purpose. The way the aisles are organized, the music, the lighting, the product advertising—all these things make us stay longer and spend more.

B From the moment we enter, a supermarket's floor plan controls the way we experience the store. There is usually only one way in and one way out, so we have to start and stop at particular places. Fruit and vegetables and the bakery are usually near the entrance. Fresh produce and the smell of bread baking can make a store seem fresh and attractive. This puts us in a good mood and makes us hungry, so we take our time and buy more food.

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In addition, we often have to walk through the whole supermarket to find what we need. For example, common items that most people shop for—like milk and eggs—are usually at the back of the store. Popular items are often placed in the middle of aisles, so we have to walk through the aisles to get what
C we want. Supermarkets also put expensive food at eye-level where they are easy to reach. Cheaper items are placed on lower shelves, so we have to bend down to get them. Cash registers are usually at the exit, so we have to walk through the entire store before getting to the payment area. All of these strategies make us see more food and spend more money.

Supermarkets use other techniques to control our shopping experience, too. For example, they play music to affect how we shop. In a study of shopping habits in a New York City supermarket, researchers found that slow music in a store makes us shop more slowly. In fact, when supermarkets play slow music
D instead of fast music, shoppers spend about 38 percent more. Additionally, most grocery stores don't have any clocks or windows. We can't look outside or see what time it is while we shop. That way, we don't know how long we've been shopping.

So what can you do to avoid buying more than you need? First, make a list and don't buy anything that isn't on it. If you don't trust yourself to do this,
E bring only enough cash to buy what you need. Second, don't shop too often. Plan several days of meals and shop for food only once or twice a week. Lastly, don't shop when you're hungry. That's when everything in the store looks delicious!

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Task 2: Complete the summary below. Use NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER for each answer.

Supermarkets take great care over the way the goods are arranged. This is because they know a lot about how to persuade people to buy things. (1)_____ like milk and eggs are placed at the back of a store to encourage customers to buy things which are not on their shopping list. Supermarkets also use other tricks, like placing (2)_____ halfway along a section so that people have to walk all along the aisle looking for them. The idea is to boost 'dwell time': the amount of time people spend in a store. (3)_____, for example, brand-name products from the big producers are arranged at eye level where they are easy to reach while (4)_____ ones are found at a lower level.

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