

Passage 1: The Psychology of Supermarkets

Read the following passage and answer Questions 1–13.

Designed to Sell

Have you ever walked into a supermarket to buy a carton of milk and left with a full bag of groceries? This is rarely an accident. Supermarkets are meticulously designed environments where every scent, sound, and shelf arrangement is calculated to maximize sales. For retailers, understanding consumer psychology is just as important as the quality of the products they sell.

The journey begins at the entrance. In most supermarkets, the first section shoppers encounter is the fresh produce department, filled with colorful fruits and vegetables. This is a strategic choice known as "priming." By placing healthy, fresh items at the front, the store creates a positive "halo effect." Once shoppers put healthy items in their basket, they subconsciously feel they have been "good," which makes them more likely to reward themselves with junk food later in the trip. Additionally, the bright colors and fresh smells stimulate the appetite, encouraging further spending.

Another common tactic is the placement of essential items. Staples like milk, bread, and eggs are almost always located at the very back of the store. This forces customers to walk through long aisles filled with tempting, non-essential goods to reach what they actually need. Retailers know that the more time customers spend in the store and the more products they see, the more they are likely to buy. This layout is often referred to as the "customer flow," designed to expose shoppers to the maximum number of purchasing opportunities.

Shelf positioning is equally scientific. There is a saying in the industry: "Eye level is buy level." High-margin products—those that make the most profit for the store—are placed right in the customer's line of sight, usually about 1.5 to 1.7 meters from the floor. Cheaper, generic brands are often placed on the very bottom shelves, requiring effort to find. Interestingly, this logic changes in the cereal aisle. Sugary cereals targeted at children are placed at a child's eye level, allowing young shoppers to spot them easily and pester their parents into buying them.

Even the auditory environment is manipulated. A well-known study in the 1980s found that the tempo of background music significantly influences shopping behavior. Fast-paced music encourages people to move quickly, which is useful in fast-food restaurants but bad for supermarkets. Conversely, slow, relaxing music causes customers to slow their walking pace. The slower they walk, the more they look at the shelves, and the more they purchase. Some stores even adjust the playlist depending on the time of day to manage the flow of people.

Finally, the checkout area is the last hurdle. This is the zone for "impulse buys"—small, relatively cheap items like candy bars, gum, and magazines. By the time shoppers reach the checkout, they have made dozens of decisions and are suffering from "decision fatigue." This mental exhaustion lowers their self-control, making them more susceptible to grabbing a chocolate bar while waiting in line.

Questions 1–6

Choose the correct letter, *A, B, C, or D.*

1. According to the first paragraph, why do supermarkets design their layouts so carefully?

- A. To help customers find items quickly.
- B. To ensure the quality of the products is preserved.
- C. To encourage customers to buy more than they planned.
- D. To reduce the number of staff needed on the floor.

2. What is the "halo effect" mentioned in the second paragraph?

- A. The visual appeal of bright lights on fruit.
- B. A psychological feeling that justifies buying unhealthy food later.
- C. The fresh smell that comes from the bakery section.
- D. The practice of putting the most expensive items at the front.

3. Why are essential items like milk and eggs placed at the back of the store?

- A. These items require large refrigeration units that fit best at the back.
- B. To protect them from temperature changes near the entrance doors.
- C. To make customers walk past other products to get to them.
- D. To prevent theft by keeping them away from the exit.

4. What does the phrase "Eye level is buy level" imply?

- A. Products placed at eye level are usually the most expensive for customers.
- B. Products at eye level generate the most profit for the store.
- C. Customers only buy items that they can see without moving their heads.
- D. The bottom shelves are reserved for the highest quality goods.

5. How does the placement of children's cereals differ from other products?

- A. They are placed higher up to prevent children from reaching them.
- B. They are placed near the dairy section for convenience.
- C. They are placed lower down to align with a child's line of sight.
- D. They are placed at the checkout to create impulse buys.

6. What effect does slow music have on supermarket shoppers?

- A. It makes them feel tired and leave the store sooner.

- B. It reduces the amount of "decision fatigue" they feel.
- C. It encourages them to walk slower and notice more items.
- D. It irritates them, causing them to move faster to the exit.

Questions 7–8

*Which **TWO** reasons are given for placing fresh produce at the entrance? Choose two letters, **A–E**.*

- A. It is the closest area to the delivery trucks.
- B. It stimulates the customer's appetite with bright colors and smells.
- C. It prevents the fruit from being crushed by heavy items.
- D. It makes shoppers feel they have started their trip with a healthy choice.
- E. It allows the store to charge higher prices for fresh items.

Questions 9–10

*Which **TWO** groups of products are typically found in specific strategic locations mentioned in the text? Choose two letters, **A–E**.*

- A. Cleaning supplies are always next to the entrance.
- B. High-margin goods are placed at adult eye level.
- C. Discounted items are always placed at the checkout.
- D. Cheaper generic brands are usually on the bottom shelves.
- E. Frozen foods are placed near the music speakers.

Questions 11–13

*Which **THREE** factors are explicitly mentioned as influencing a customer's behavior at the checkout? Choose three letters, **A–F**.*

- A. The customer's level of mental tiredness.
- B. The low price of the items on display.
- C. The brightness of the lighting in the area.
- D. The reduced self-control of the shopper.
- E. The helpfulness of the cashier.
- F. The length of the queue.