

Snack Attack or Snack Sanity? Shop Smart with This 10 Best Questions Checklist

Highlight

Go grocery shopping with these 10 questions in your hand to buy the healthiest snacks and save money, too.

The 10 Best Questions®

1. Am I hungry right now? Am I tired? What time is it?
2. Is my snack attack a craving or an emotional response?
3. Do I want a snack, a treat, or a cheat?
4. Is this snack bar a dud? How can I be sure?
5. What does this snack bar label say?
6. Am I a natural-born sucker for the word “natural?”
7. So, what *is* natural and healthy? How about going nuts?
8. Will this snack really fill me up?
9. Do I need a portable snack?
10. Is this snack necessary? Is there already something at home or on hand?

The Golden Question

The million-dollar question you almost forgot to ask.

How closely does this snack resemble nature?

The 10 Best Answers

1. Am I hungry right now? Am I tired? What time is it?

Are you shopping right now with a snack-attack or sane-snack mindset? You’ve probably heard, “Don’t shop when you’re hungry.” It’s true and it’s especially important if you are heading down the snack or candy aisles at this minute.

The danger zone for tummy grumbles is between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m., just as you are dinner shopping after a long, tiring day. “Even short-term food deprivation leads to people choosing more high-calorie food options,” the researchers wrote for the *Journal for the American Medical Association* in 2013.

Bonus tip: Hungry shoppers buy more non-food items, too. Ask this question and save money.

[Related: Managing Job Stress: The 10 Best Questions](#)

2. Is my snack attack a craving or an emotional response?

Ask yourself:

- Why do I want this snack?
- Am I actually trying to soothe away my stress and problems?
- Did I have a good/bad day and secretly think I deserve a reward?

Clinical psychologist Dr. Melissa McCreery writes, “The No. 1 mistake you can make when you want control over emotional eating is to beat yourself up. Then, in that moment, when you’ve already blown it, you are more likely to just grab the chips.”

Sound familiar? So, are you putting those chips/candy bar/cheese puffs into your shopping cart -- or not?

[Related: Are Emotions Ruining My Diet? Ask These 10 Best Questions](#)

3. Do I want a snack, a treat, or a cheat?

Here’s the difference: a snack can be healthy or unhealthy: treats are usually junk food.

Nutritionist Dr. Lisa Young writes for the *Huffington Post*, “Snacking can be a good practice if we make healthy choices like foods with nutrients, protein, and fiber.”

Treats? Think cheese puffs, Ritz crackers, Twinkies, donuts and M&Ms – non-nutritional choices. Cheats? Oh, you know when you’re cheating...

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4. Is this snack bar a dud? How can I be sure?

Consumer Reports recently suggested this question. Some cereal, protein, and fruit bars are healthy choices but others are empty calories or guaranteed sugar crashes.

Beware of snack bar ads or wrappers featuring athletes in top shape and brand names sounding like the great outdoors. Industry insiders happily pitch this “health halo” to the growing group of

people wanting healthier snacks. No wonder snack bars are projected to grow to a \$6.2 billion market by 2018.

So how do you choose healthy bars? Read the label.

5. What does this snack bar label say?

Not all snack bars are created equal. Here's ingredient-reading advice compiled from *Consumer Reports* and Texas dietician Mengyuan Wang. Pay attention to where bad ingredients are listed on the label (shows percentage/prevalence).

Avoid:

- Highly-processed without real foods like oats and dried fruit listed.
- Sugars (corn syrup, fructose, honey, fruit concentrates, artificial sweeteners)
- High fat (should be less than 5 grams)

Learn more here.

[Related: How to Read a Snack Bar Ingredient List: The 10 Best Questions](#)

6. Am I a natural-born sucker for the word “natural?”

Nature sells. But don't be fooled, especially if you are tired and hungry. “Natural” on a food label is meaningless, especially for processed snack foods.

Watchdog organization, the U.S. Food and Drug Agency (FDA) admits it doesn't monitor snack-foods' use of “natural” very closely. FDA says on its website: “It is difficult to define a food product that is ‘natural’ because the food has probably been processed and is no longer the product of the earth.”

7. So, what is natural and healthy? How about going nuts?

Harvard Medical School professor and prolific author Dr. Anthony Komoroff and many other medical and diet experts recommend we all get nutty.

Komoroff says, “Unsalted nuts and seeds make great snacks. Almonds, walnuts, peanuts, roasted pumpkin seeds, cashews, hazelnuts, filberts, and other nuts and seeds contain many beneficial nutrients and are more likely to leave you feeling full (unlike chips or pretzels). Just watch the portion sizes.”

[Related: The 10 Best Questions to Buy Nuts](#)

8. Will this snack really fill me up?

Before you put a snack in your grocery cart, consider how filling it will be.

If you choose snacks that make you feel full – like nuts – you’ll be eating more fiber and protein, getting more energy for the calories, and less likely to eat too much in one sitting. It’s a lot easier to spoon down a tub of ice cream than crunch through a bag of almonds.

9. Do I need a portable snack?

Consider how and when you’ll eat this snack. If you’ll be on the run and feel exhausted, cut-up pieces of fruits and veggies are a smarter choice than that candy bar in your hand.

It’s not too late to circle back for some apples. Apples in particular pack a sweet snack punch with good soluble fiber, low calories, and are often recommended as part of a healthy diet for weight loss.

[Related: The 10 Best Questions to Pick the Best Apples](#)

10. Is this snack necessary? Is there already something at home or on hand?

Take a quick inventory to understand your snacking habits. Are you restocking fruits and veggies or replacing chips and ice cream? Is this your daily candy bar or usual cup of yogurt?

Think beyond this moment and this craving. You may be able to make lasting diet improvements by getting in touch with your snacking patterns and preferences.

[Related: Improve Your Snacking Habits with These 10 Best Questions](#)

The Golden Question

The million-dollar question you almost forgot to ask.

How closely does this snack resemble nature?

Ask yourself this question as a bottom-line reality check to make smart choices. Another version of this question: Would my great-grandmother recognize my snack? Dried fruit, yes. Doritos, no.

Harvard’s Dr. Komoroff gets the last word: “Fruits, veggie sticks and moderate amounts of nuts are all good choices. But watch portion sizes and keep snacks to around 150 calories.”

[Related: How to Choose Healthy Snacks for Kids: The 10 Best Questions](#)

QDoc’s Q-Tipsters

As a lifelong, not-so-healthy snacker, the QDoc swears by asking yourself questions to control impulse buys. Just expect some puzzled looks when other shoppers see you talking to yourself *and* the cookies.

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