



Weighing Up at the Supermarket

Things to Consider

Verify the scale
display reads zero

Watch the
weighing process

Observe the
displayed weight

Check the item's
labeled weight

Report Problems



Many of the items we buy at the Supermarket are weighed across a scale, and the scales are inspected and tested for accuracy. Still, there is a possibility that the consumer is not getting what they pay for at the check stand or deli. The National Conference on Weights and Measures advises consumers to develop some basic habits in their shopping routine.

Verify the scale display reads zero

Laws require that a scale display be visible to the consumer. If it's not, ask the store clerk to reposition it. Often it is part of the display on a computer monitor, making it very visible. If the scale does not read zero, ask the clerk to correct it before weighing your items.

Watch the weighing process

Verify the store clerk's hands and any other items are not touching the scale or the items on the scale during the weighment. Busy clerks can make these mistakes unintentionally. Don't be afraid to ask the clerk to put something back on the scale if you see a problem.

Observe the displayed weight

For items wrapped or bagged items such as candies, produce or coffee, the displayed weight is the "gross weight" which includes the weight of the packaging. After the purchase, check the printed weight on the receipt. This will be the "net weight" which is just the weight of the product. It should be less than the weight that was displayed. If the weight on the receipt is still the gross weight, ask the clerk or a supervisor to weigh it again and deduct the tare weight for the packaging.

Check the item's labeled weight

For items that are already pre-weighed and labeled by the store, occasionally place an item on the scale at the check stand to see if the store is deducting the weight of the packaging. The displayed gross weight should be more than the printed net weight on the label. If not, you will be overpaying.

Report problems

If you observe these common problems, always address it with the store. You can also notify your weights and measures authority. They are very responsive to consumer complaints and will assist the store in regaining compliance. The contact information for the state directors of weights and measures is available at www.ncwm.net/resource/state-directors.

